

FACTSHEET

Essential cat care

Every cat owner needs to provide a few essentials to ensure their cat has a healthy and happy life.

Food and Water

Always aim to feed your cat the best quality food you can afford. At Cat Protection we feed and recommend Hill's Science Diet, as it provides all the nutrients your cat will need. Adult cats will need to be fed twice a day and kittens three to four small meals a day. Follow the feeding guide on the food packaging to help you give your cat the right amount.

Check the label on packaged food – it should be 'complete and balanced'. Foods marked as 'complementary' are not nutritionally complete and balanced and should only be fed as an occasional treat. Avoid over-feeding your cat as this can lead to obesity and health problems including diabetes.

Provide your cat with fresh water. Two bowls are better than one. Never give your cat or kitten milk as cats are lactose intolerant and can become very ill from drinking milk. Pet milk is available from pet stores and supermarkets if you feel you must provide milk for your cat. These products, although lactose free, should be given as a treat only as they can be high in fat causing your cat to gain weight. If you are feeding an unweaned kitten, seek veterinary advice on what to feed them.

Disease Prevention

Fleas - You will need to provide monthly flea treatment to your cat to prevent fleas hatching on your pet. Fleas cannot live on humans but can cause allergic reactions on some pets and humans. To avoid this remember to treat your cat regularly. Spot-on treatments such as Advantage are easy to apply and are not stressful to apply to your cat. **Never use flea treatments intended for dogs on your cat** – these often contain permethrin and can be fatal if applied to your cat.

Worms - Your cat will need worming for their entire life. Intestinal worms like hookworm, roundworm and tapeworm can be killed using a worming tablet or a spot-on treatment. Depending on the product you choose you may need to do this monthly or three monthly. Humans can catch worms from pets and the environment, and your pet can catch them from us, so consider worming your human family as well. Products like Advocate, a spot-on treatment, will treat worms and fleas with one application. Always check if the product you are using kills all intestinal worms to ensure you are providing the best treatment for your cats. Products like Milbemax, an all-wormer tablet, kills all worms. Always follow the directions on the packaging. At Cat Protection, we use and recommend Milbemax.

Vaccinations - Kittens need to be vaccinated at 8 weeks old, 12 weeks old and 16 weeks old. After this your cat will need regular vaccinations but the frequency will depend on the vaccinations and your cat's needs. Talk to your vet about an appropriate vaccination

schedule – the needs of an indoor-only cat will be different from cats who go outside or who are frequently boarded. Vaccinations are an important part of cat care.

Skin Cancer - Many people do not realise cats can get sunburn and skin cancer. Cats with white noses, ears or light coloured pigmentation on the ears and nose are especially at risk. To prevent your cat getting sunburn which can lead to skin cancer, you should keep them inside for the hottest part of the day. If this is not possible apply a pet sunscreen to the ears and nose when they are outdoors (**never use human sunscreens** as these are toxic to cats). Any sunburn on your cat should be seen by a vet as soon as possible. Cats as young as 12 months have come to Cat Protection with quite advanced skin cancer that required surgery.

Ringworm - Ringworm is a fungus, NOT a worm. It appears on the skin as a circular mark that is inflamed and itchy for your cat. It is carried on hair follicles. People can catch ringworm from cats and cats can catch ringworm from people or other cats. It is easily treatable, so any suspect marks on your cat should be seen by your vet; and if you suspect any people in your household have ringworm, they should see a doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible. It is important to take swift action to prevent recurring infection.

Grooming

Although cats groom themselves, it is important that you brush your cat regularly to avoid cat hairs in your house. Grooming also helps you form a bond with your cat. Short haired cats should be groomed once a week and long haired cats daily. Concentrate on areas your cat may have trouble reaching, like behind the legs and back of the neck.

Identification

A microchip contains a number that can be scanned by your vet. This number is on a database with your details. This database can only be accessed by an authorised person for the purpose of reuniting the cat with their owner. A few weeks after adopting your new cat you will receive a letter from your council letting you know they have received your details and to let you know how to register your cat. It is very important that you remember to always keep your details up to date and change them with the council if you move. If your cat is ever lost this is sometimes the **ONLY** way of getting them back! You should also consider a collar and a name tag on your cat if your cat goes outside.

Vet visits

Every cat should have a health check with their vet at least once every 12 months to ensure they are healthy. If your cat is over 8 years old they should visit the vet every 6 months to keep an eye on their health as they get older.

Keeping your cat happy indoors

Cats can live happily indoors. By keeping your cat indoors you are benefiting your cat, yourself, and the environment. We encourage all cat owners to keep their cat indoors, or if outdoors then in a securely fenced area, and always indoors from dusk to dawn.

When you decide you would like your cat to be an indoor cat you need to remember to provide enough stimulation for your cat so they don't get bored. Although cats sleep a lot, you will need to provide at least 30 minutes a day of play time for your cat, even older cats. The following points will ensure your cat has stimulation throughout the day:

- Toys - there is a huge variety of cat toys available to keep your cat happy for hours,

even some you can enjoy as well. You don't need to spend a lot of money on cat toys, often homemade ones are played with the most

- Greenery - provide your cat with some cat grass or catmint in a pot, your cat can chew on the foliage to help their digestion
- An outside run - make a cat enclosure in your garden so your cat can sit outside without the hazards of being on the street. See our factsheet [Cat-proof fencing and enclosures](#) for some of the companies that can help you build these
- Scratching posts - cats need to scratch things in order to shed the dead nail sheath from their claws, leave their scent on things and to stretch the tendons in their paws and legs. Provide your cat with a scratch post, or a few, to protect your furniture. There are a huge variety available, some with cat activity centres attached. To promote use of the post you can spray them with catnip spray or place their favourite treats nearby to attract your cat
- Clean the litter tray - cats are very clean animals so ensure you remove any solid waste from your cat's litter tray daily and provide your cat with a couple of trays to avoid any nasty surprises when you get home
- Get TWO CATS!!! Keep your cat entertained by getting them a friend. This will ensure your cat is never lonely and always has a playmate
- If you decide to let your cat outside always curfew your cat at night, for your cat's safety and the environment.

While all care has been taken in preparing this document, it is intended to provide general information only and should not be taken as constituting professional advice. Mention of a product or business does not mean endorsement by Cat Protection.