



## Tips for you and your cat

### Flea control on your cat

If you own cars, they must be involved in the flea control program, or they will carry the fleas to your house, yard, and dogs. Cars are much more sensitive to the chemicals in flea preparations, and organophosphates can not be used on them.

For Cats it is recommended to use pyrethrin spray (Sectrol spray). Pyrethrins are derived from the chrysanthemum plant, and are very safe in terms of human or pet toxicity. Only flea products utilizing this family of insecticide are recommended for use on cats. Many cats do not tolerate spraying, but they can be fooled by spraying the liquid into your (rubber) gloved hand (or a cloth or brush), and rubbing the glove, cloth, or brush into the hair. Pyrethrin sprays, although extremely effective and safe, have little residual effect, and must be used at least two to three times a week.

### Basic checklist for you cat

- Rabies- Your kitten will need its first shot at approximately 4 months.
- Tapeworm- This is contracted from fleas. The signs are small white squiggly segments around anus or dry, brown rice-like ones where the cat sleeps
- Earmites- This is a dark, waxy matter in ears, head shaking, kicking ears.
- Fleas- Use a flea comb and powder. Flea collars not recommended. Flea allergy is common.
- Poisons- Many common household cleaning agents, houseplants, outdoor plants and garden products are toxic to cats (see list). Call vet at once if poisoning suspected; save bottle or piece of plant.
- FeLV. (Feline Leukemia Virus)- A series of vaccinations is now available to protect cats from this major cat-killer; a blood test must be taken before shots are given.

### Care and Training

- Diet- Kittens: several small meals per day; cats: 2 meals per day. Some people leave dry kibbles out at all times if cat doesn't overeat. Feed high quality, low magnesium-ash dry kibble (a quality brand, from pet stores only, is recommended) and canned food, fresh water. No generic food. Not too much "moist meal" or fish.
- Litter Training- Litter pan must be clean (especially of feces), away from food, in a quiet area.
- Exercise- Cats benefit from regular play sessions and they require them if they are kept strictly indoors. Never play roughly with your cat.

- Scratching- Discourage with a squirt bottle or squirt gun, a loud clap, or by saying "No!" Offer acceptable scratching alternatives: logs, scratching post, etc. Keep claws trimmed. **DO NOT DECLAW - IT'S VERY BAD FOR YOUR CAT.**

## **Some Cat Behavior Problems**

**Clawing Furniture:** This is a natural instinct to sharpen claws and keep them sharp.

### **Solution:**

1. Buy or make a scratching post and encourage your cat to use the post by spraying/ rubbing catnip on it and/or by taking your cat's arms and rubbing its claws on the post.
2. Spray animal repellent on the areas the cat scratches.
3. Use a loud noise, such as a handclap, when your cat scratches on the furniture. This will alarm the cat and make him/her stop. Next take the cat to his/her post and rub his/her claws along it.
4. Squirt the cat with water when the animal scratches on something it is not supposed to.
5. Place double faced tape on the area being clawed to discourage the cat from scratching. You can remove tape when cat has learned to avoid the area.

### **Refusal to Use Litter box:**

1. Cat doesn't like type of litter. Many litters have strong deodorants which some cats don't like. Many cats don't like the green litter.
2. Litter box is not clean enough.
3. Cat doesn't like location of box.
4. More than one cat uses litter box.

### **Solution:**

1. Try changing the brand of litter.
2. Change the litter every other day; remove droppings daily.
3. Keep litter box away from food and water bowls, in an accessible area. Don't move it around.
4. You may need more than one litterbox if you have more than one cat.
5. You may need to confine the cat in a small room until he or she consistently uses the box.
6. Continuing problems with litter box use may indicate a health problem. Consult your vet for a thorough exam for your cat.

**Eating House Plants:** Cats naturally like greens.

### **Solution:**

1. Plant a special garden in a low, wide pot for your cat. You can grow catnip and plant birdseed. Supplies can be found in a pet store.
2. Try a loud handclap or a squirt of water from a squirt bottle when you catch you cat nibbling; then, place your cat in from of his/her own garden.
3. Try spraying the plant(s) with animal repellent or perfume.

**Spraying:** Occurs typically in male cats and some female cats. It is a natural instinct to mark territory.

**Solution:**

1. Have your male cat neutered; you will have best results at curbing spraying if neutering is done at seven months of age.
2. There is a hormonal treatment available. Ask your vet about this.
3. Ask your vet for other medical possibilities.

*If you love wildlife, keep your cat indoors because:*

- 4-5 million birds are killed by cats each day.
- Collar bells on cats don't work because birds and other wildlife do not associate bells with being stalked.
- Ground-nesting birds are particularly susceptible to predation by cats.
- Cats will hunt small wild animals, despite how well fed they are.
- Almost all young birds leave the nest before they can fly well and spend a day or two on the ground. As these fledglings are learning to fly, they are frequently caught by cats.
- Most of the birds caught by cats, but not killed outright, die of their injuries or infection.
- Cats that kill small rodents can eliminate a critical food source for owls and hawks.

*If you love your cat, keep it indoors because:*

- Cars kill millions of cats each year.
- Outdoor cats are exposed to serious and often fatal infectious diseases such as feline leukemia and rabies.
- Parasites such as fleas, ticks and intestinal worms pose a health threat to your cat. Some of these can be transmitted to humans.
- Cats outdoors are often chased by dogs or other cats, and killed, injured or hopelessly lost.
- Cats are often shot at, poisoned, trapped or tortured by neighbors annoyed by cats using their gardens as a litter box or hunting birds and other small animals.
- Coyotes, great-horned owls and other wild animals are known to regularly kill and eat house cats.
- Cats that spend time outdoors require more medical treatment and their lifespan is much shorter.

Cats benefit from an annual examination by your North Idaho Animal Hospital veterinarian.

***From Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine***