



# Care guide: Cats





Whether you are about to welcome a new cat into your home, or if they have already arrived, we wanted to share some top tips for offering the best care. Providing for your cat's needs is the best way of ensuring their physical and mental wellbeing, so here are our team's recommendations:



#### PROVIDE A SUITABLE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

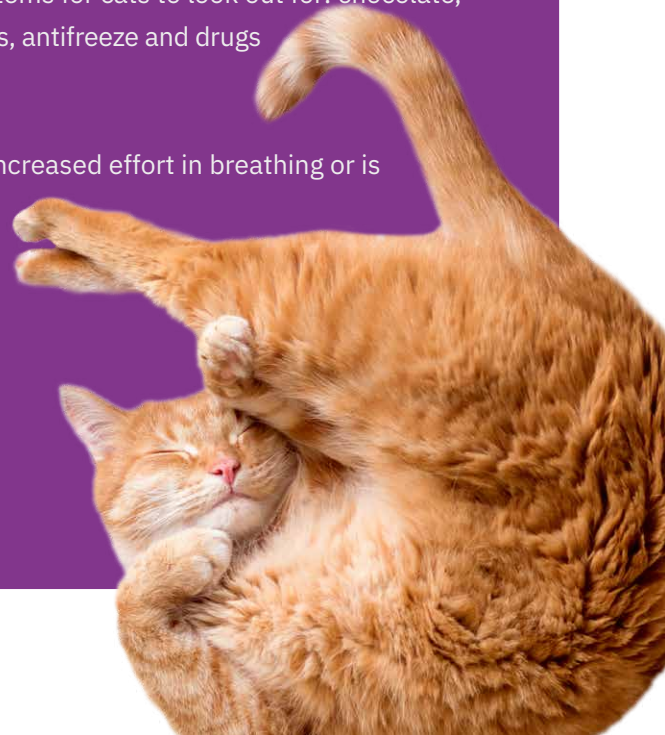
- Create a safe space for the cat in your home that is quiet, away from people and other pets, especially when you first take them home.
- Have multiple places in your home for your cat to sleep and rest. Whilst some cats prefer covered beds that are low down in the dark, most cats feel safest somewhere high up. We recommend providing both options initially to enable your cat to choose where it feels safe for them.
- Use Feliway spray in their safe space and throughout your home to help calm and reduce any stress in your cat. If you travel anywhere, use Feliway spray in your cat's carrier.
- Provide the right number of litter trays (two for one cat) in a quiet place and keep them clean. Cats won't use a dirty litter tray.
- If you want your cat to have access to the outside, wait at least 3 weeks to allow them to build a bond with you first and to settle in their home. Remember, they must be neutered and vaccinated before they're able to go outside.
- If your cat has access to the outside, there is an increased risk of accidents on roads when it's dark. We suggest keeping them inside at night if this isn't stressful for your cat. Be mindful to check sheds, outhouses and garages to ensure your cat is never locked inside.
- In cold weather, provide heat pads or beds that go over radiators to keep your cat warm and comfortable. If your cat has access to the outdoors, make sure they can always get somewhere warm and sheltered in cold weather when needed.
- Firework season can be very stressful for your cat so provide spaces in your home that feel safe for your cat with all their essentials. We also advise keeping them indoors at night during this time, if possible.
- Be considerate of your cat over seasonal holiday times as our homes can often become busier, routines can be different, and there can be new, unfamiliar hazards in your home. Your cat may be curious about your decorations or food which may be dangerous to your cat so make sure any hazards are out of reach, and always make sure the cat has a safe and quiet space to go to if they need to sleep, or rest or hide.
- Your cat carrier can become another safe space for your cat and can help them get used to being in their carrier for any future vet visits. When you're using it as a safe space, make sure to remove the door and put in a cosy blanket so your cat is comfortable and able to leave at any time.



### LOOK AFTER THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Register your cat with a local vet and make sure to take them for annual health checks.
- Be mindful each day to look out for any indications of pain or symptoms of illness. If you're unsure or find something out of the ordinary, reach out to your veterinarian for advice.
- It is important to make sure your cat is up to date with vaccinations to protect against serious and potentially fatal diseases.
- Keep up to date with flea, worm and tick treatment.
- We strongly advise you to maintain pet insurance as cat veterinary care can be expensive.
- In the home and the garden, be aware of potential hazards like toxic plants, human foods or cleaning products that are unsafe for cats. If possible, remove them or make sure they are kept out of reach.
- Depending on the cat's coat length, they may require daily or frequent brushing to prevent matting and to ensure their coat stays healthy. Our team will be able to advise what kind of grooming your cat may need.
- Every cat is different. Depending on health, age and breed, they may need different levels of exercise, but all cats will benefit from getting exercise from playing or exploring.
- You can keep your cat's nails healthy by providing a scratch post that is tall enough for the cat to reach the top and extend fully.
- If your cat uses a litter tray, we advise you to monitor their toilet habits. If you notice anything unusual, get in touch with your vet.
- Whilst we hope your cat doesn't experience emergencies, it is important to be prepared if they do. Make sure to seek immediate veterinary attention if there is an emergency. Here are some symptoms to watch out for:

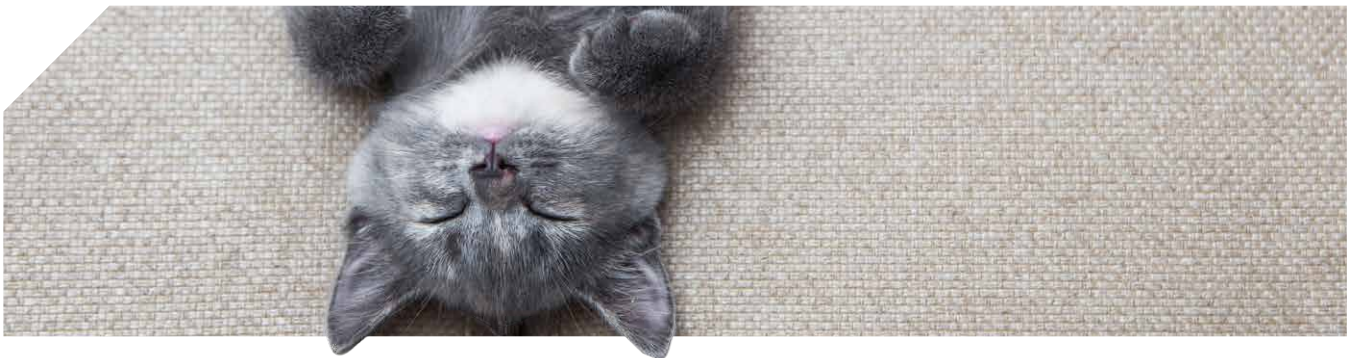
- Your cat's toilet habits have changed, and they have reduced, stopped or are straining while peeing or pooing, or if they have excessive diarrhoea.
- If your cat isn't eating or has shown a change in thirst levels.
- If your cat has eaten something they shouldn't have. Certain objects such as toys, strings and any foreign object can become stuck in the intestinal tract and cause serious problems.
- If they have eaten anything poisonous. Here are a few poisonous items for cats to look out for: chocolate, caffeine, rat poison, slug pellets, herbicides, grapes and raisins, lilies, antifreeze and drugs such as aspirin and vitamin D
- If your cat has collapsed or has a seizure.
- If there is any change to your cat's breathing such as showing an increased effort in breathing or is breathing rapidly.
- If your cat has experienced trauma and/or is bleeding excessively.
- If your cat is showing signs of pain and is not moving, hunched up, hiding away or is yelping.
- If your cat is showing signs of heatstroke, such as vomiting, shaking, bright red or pale gums.
- If your cat's stomach appears bloated and they seem in pain or are lethargic.





### PROVIDE THE RIGHT DIET

- Our team will advise you of any dietary requirements for your cat and what they are currently being fed.
- We recommend you continue to feed your cat the same type of food as what they were fed at the centre when you first take them home, and if you want to change this, do so gradually overtime to prevent upsetting their stomach.
- Cats generally prefer several meals throughout the day, rather than one large meal.
- Always ensure there is clean, fresh water available. When setting up your safe space for your cat, remember that cats prefer to have their water bowl separate from their food bowl.
- Cats dislike their whiskers touching the edges of a bowl, so try to use a shallow bowl for their food and water.
- Cats love a treat! They can be useful to help build a bond with your cat. Make sure to follow the instructions on the pack and avoid overfeeding them, as this could upset their stomach.
- Your vet will be able to advise what is a healthy weight for your cat. If you notice an increase or decrease in weight, it may be that you need to adjust the amount you're feeding your cat, however if there are any drastic changes, speak to your vet for advice.



### PROMOTE NATURAL BEHAVIOURS

- If you find your cat scratching furniture, we recommend spraying the scratch post with catnip to encourage them to use them instead.
- Cats like to climb, but to try to avoid them climbing curtains we suggest providing places for your cat to climb instead – this could be a cat climbing frame or access to shelves.
- Play with the cat and try out different types of toys as some cats prefer certain types of toys, so try various types. Playing with your cat can be a good way to build a bond!
- Give the cat space and allow them time alone to sleep and rest. On average, cats should sleep between 12 – 18 hours a day! If you have children, make sure they know not to disturb a cat if it is resting or sleeping.
- If you already have cats at home, it's important to make sure you have enough bowls, litter trays, toys to reduce the risk of any conflict that may occur.
- If you already have cats or dogs, our team will provide guidance with how to safely introduce the animals together. If you have other types of animals, such as rabbits, hamsters or other small animals, make sure they are kept safe away from the cat and their enclosures are secure.
- Patience is key when your cat gets used to new things in your home. Some cats are scared of noisy items such as the Hoover, the tv or even the dishwasher. Be patient with your cat as they get comfortable in their new home.



### STAY IN TUNE WITH THEIR MENTAL STATE

- Cats are sentient beings and are capable of feeling a huge range of emotions.
- Learn to read your cat's body language as it is key in telling you if they are happy or not. Sometimes signs can be subtle so make sure to look for how they're behaving and changes in their body language, including their eyes, ears, tails, mouth and body.
- If you need behavioural support and want to understand your cat more, we recommend looking at the Animal Behaviour and Training Council Practitioner register to find someone who can support you. This is covered by most pet insurance, so make sure to check before you take out your policy.



We hope you and your cat have had a good adoption experience and are looking forward to your future together. Our team will always be there to support you if you need more advice or further support. Keep in touch with our team as we love to hear about successful adoptions and know how both of you

**For further advice on how best to take care of your cat, please visit our website:**

[www.scottishspca.org/advice/cats/](http://www.scottishspca.org/advice/cats/)