



Journal of **Feline** Medicine and Surgery

Official Journal of the International Society of Feline Medicine
and the American Association of Feline Practitioners

Clinical Practice

Special issue 'Endoscopy and endosurgery, Part 1'

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Your Cat's Environmental Needs

Practical Tips for Pet Owners



We wish to thank Ceva Animal Health for sponsoring this document. Copies of this brochure can be found online at www.catvets.com/guidelines/client-brochures or www.icatcare.org/vets/guidelines.

Your Cat's Environmental Needs

Practical Tips for Pet Owners

Addressing your cat's physical and emotional needs enhances its health and quality of life.

Behavior problems are a leading cause of pets being surrendered or euthanized. These problems often occur in cats because their needs have not been fully met. Cats need resources to perform their natural behaviors and have control over their social interactions. As owners, we can enhance our cats' health and wellbeing by ensuring all their needs are met in the home environment. You might ask: "What can be stressful for a beloved cat with food, water, and a roof over its head?" Read on to find out.

WHAT ARE ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS?

Environmental needs include a cat's physical surroundings – indoors, outdoors, or both – as well as their social interactions with humans and other pets. Cats often do not express obvious signs of stress, pain, or sickness that we can easily recognize. If we are proactive and meet appropriate environmental needs throughout a cat's life, we can potentially avoid environmental stressors that can cause unwanted behaviors and even impact medical health.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUR CAT



1 Provide a safe place. Every cat needs a safe and secure place where it can retreat to so that it feels protected or which can be used as a resting area. The cat should have the ability to exit and enter the space from at least two sides if it feels threatened. Most cats prefer that the safe space is big enough to fit only themselves, has sides around it, and is raised off the ground.

Good examples of safe places are a cardboard box, a cat carrier, and a raised cat perch. There should be at least as many safe places, sized to hold a single cat, as there are cats in a household. Safe places should be located away from each other, so that cats can choose to be on their own.



2 Provide multiple and separated key environmental resources. Key resources include food, water, toileting areas, scratching areas, play areas, and resting or sleeping areas. These resources should be separated from each other so that cats have free access without being challenged by other cats or other potential threats. Separation of resources not only reduces the risk of competition (which may result in one cat being physically

prevented access to resources by another cat), stress, and stress-associated diseases.

3 Provide opportunity for play and predatory behavior. Play and predatory behaviors allow cats to fulfill their natural need to hunt. Play can be stimulated with the use of interactive toys that mimic prey, such as a toy mouse that is pulled across a floor or feathers on a wand that is waved through the air. Cats need to be able to capture the "prey", at least intermittently, to prevent frustration. Early in a cat's life introduce interactive

UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF YOUR CAT AND THEIR BEHAVIOR

The needs of today's cats have changed little from those of their wild ancestor, *Felis lybica*, the African wildcat.



- Cats are solitary hunters, spending much of their day searching the environment for hunting opportunities. They need to protect themselves from perceived dangers, which include unfamiliar individuals or environment.
- Cats are territorial animals. They feel threatened when their territory is disturbed, either by another animal or physically.
- Cats use scent, posturing, and vocalizations to communicate their unhappiness if they feel threatened.
- Cats have a superior sense of smell and hearing. Stress can occur due to strong or strange smells or sounds, which are undetectable or insignificant to us.
- Cats are social animals, but their social structure differs from ours. Cats may be content as a single cat or living with other cats, preferably related cats such as siblings.

play so they learn to avoid going after your hands and feet for play. Using food puzzles or food balls can mimic the action of hunting for prey, and provides more natural eating behavior. You can encourage your cat's interactive play by rotating your cat's toys so they do not get bored and rewarding with treats to provide positive reinforcement for appropriate play. If you have more than one cat, remember to play with them individually.

4 Provide positive, consistent, and predictable human-cat social interaction. Cats' individual preferences determine how much they like human interactions such as petting, grooming, being played with or talked to, being picked up, and sitting or lying on a person's lap. To a large extent this depends on whether, as kittens, they were introduced to and socialized with humans during their period of socialization from 2–7 weeks of age. It is important to remember that every cat interacts differently and to respect the cat's individual preferences. Remember to remind guests and all household members not to force interaction and instead let the cat initiate, choose, and control the type of human contact.

5 Provide an environment that respects the importance of the cat's sense of smell. Unlike humans, cats use their sense of smell to evaluate their surroundings. Cats mark their scent by rubbing their face and body, which deposits natural pheromones to establish boundaries within which they feel safe and secure. Avoid cleaning their scent off these areas, especially when a new cat is introduced into the home or there are other changes with pets, people, or the environment of the home. The use of synthetic facial pheromones, such as Feliway[®] can mimic a cat's natural pheromones and provide a calming effect in a stressful or unfamiliar situation. Some smells can be threatening to cats, such as the scent of unfamiliar animals or the use of scented products, cleaners, or detergents. Threatening smells and the inability to rub their scent can sometimes lead to problematic behaviors such as passing urine or stools outside the litter box, spraying, and scratching in undesirable areas. In some cases, stress-related illness may develop. If any of these problems occur, contact your veterinarian right away.

Addressing environmental needs is essential for the optimum wellbeing of your cat. Most behavior concerns, such as inappropriate elimination, aggression, scratching, and others, can be caused by one of the following:

- not providing cats with the resources they need
- not understanding the cat's social relationships with other cats or people
- an underlying medical problem

By understanding and providing for your cat's environmental needs, you can help your cat to live a long and happy life.

You are an important member of your cat's healthcare team.

You can be instrumental in helping with the success of treatments and improved healthcare for your cat.



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AAFP AND ISFM

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iCatCare

Excellence rewarded in three ways

At the International Cat Care (iCatCare) 2013 awards ceremony in London on September 6, the charity, which is the parent body of ISFM,

recognised contributions made by individuals and companies in improving the lives of cats in three award categories.

ISFM Easy to Give Awards

These awards, recognising the efforts of pharmaceutical companies in making prescription-only medicines (POMs) that are easy to administer to cats, were presented for: **Semintra** (Boehringer Ingelheim), an angiotensin receptor blocker used in the treatment of chronic kidney disease; **Activyl** (MSD Animal Health), a flea spot-on treatment; and **Kesium Chewable Tablets** (Alstoe Animal Health), a palatable form of amoxicillin/clavulanic acid.



Ross Tiffin (far right), iCatCare Strategy and Development Adviser, presents the **Boehringer Ingelheim** team with an Easy to Give Award for **Semintra**. The Easy to Give logo can now be displayed on product advertising and packaging



Claire Bessant (right), iCatCare Chief Executive, presents a Cat Friendly Award to Maggie Roberts (centre) and Nicky Trevorror (left) of Cats Protection

Cat Friendly Awards

These awards, recognising non-POM products that have made a real difference to cat wellbeing and welfare, were given for: **Feliway** (Ceva); **Hide, Perch and Go box** (British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals); and **Feline Fort** (Cats Protection, UK). The two latter products are designed around the cat's need to hide and feel secure, marking the beginning of new thinking in cat rescue.

Welfare Awards

Presented for the first time this year to recognise individuals' outstanding contributions to the welfare of cats, these inaugural awards went to **David Yates** of the RSPCA Greater Manchester Animal Hospital, UK, and **Melvyn Driver** of MDC Exports. David has collected data from thousands of feline neuterings, worked on anaesthetic protocols and made information available to others to use and learn from. Melvyn's traps and squeeze-back cages allow safe handling of cats, especially ferals, with minimum stress.



David Yates (left) receives his iCatCare Welfare Award from Dr Andy Sparkes, Veterinary Director of the charity

Award

Feline research award announced



William Murphy, Associate Professor of Genetics at the Department of Integrative Biosciences, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at Texas A&M University, USA, is the recipient of this year's Excellence in Feline Research Award presented by the Winn Feline Foundation and the American Veterinary Medical Foundation. The award recognises Dr Murphy's contributions to feline genomics, addressing feline species phylogeny and developing comparative maps by radiation hybrid analysis.

The award was presented by Winn Past-President, Susan Little, in August at the Meriel-NIH Veterinary Scholars Symposium, held at Michigan State University. As well as a cash prize of US\$2500, the award includes a crystal cat statue, the 'Winnie'.



Young Scientist Awards 2014

Applications are invited for the European Advisory Board on Cat Diseases (ABCD)/Meriel Young Scientist Clinical and Research Awards 2014, which aim to reward innovative and outstanding work by promising young professionals in the field of feline infectious diseases and/or immunology. The original work should have been accepted for publication in a referenced journal. The £1000 awards, funded by Meriel, will be presented at the ISFM Riga Conference in June 2014, where winners will be invited to give a short presentation or present a poster of their findings.

Application forms and full details can be downloaded from www.abcd-vets.org. Application deadline 1 February 2014.

For more information on these awards go to www.icatcare.org.



Trio of feline themes in Texas

Over 650 veterinary attendees, exhibitors and guests gathered in Dallas, Texas, in September for the 2013 AAFP Conference. The themes were feline dentistry, pain management and nutrition.

Education



Dr Susan Little presents to a packed house during the pre-conference ABVP/AAFP Seminar and Social. She covered stress in feline medicine, senior cats with cancer, feline idiopathic cystitis and kitten diarrhea



Dr Robin Downing (pictured) and Dr Sheilah Robertson showcased many cutting-edge pain management topics, as well as covering end-of-life issues and hospice care



Dr Claudia Kirk (pictured) and Dr Deb Zoran presented an array of nutrition sessions, including nutrition from kittenhood to geri's, hepatic lipidosis, adverse food reactions, management of obesity, nutrition for hospitalized cats, and top nutraceuticals in pet foods, among many others



Dr Elizabeth Colleran and Jim Thomas present during an early morning breakfast session on 'New feline findings and solutions to increase cat visits', which stemmed from the BVCUS III: Feline Findings research



Dr Jan Bellows (pictured) and Dr Cindy Charlier covered a broad range of practical topics in feline dentistry

For more photos from the 2013 AAFP Conference, visit the AAFP's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CatVets.

At the Helm



The AAFP's 2013 Board of Directors assemble for an in-person Board meeting in Dallas

ATTENDEE FEEDBACK

- ✦ 'This (was) my first time at AAFP and I would happily re-attend. The level of material presented seems more advanced than that in most vet conferences. I really learned so much!'
- ✦ 'This was my first AAFP conference. (It was) one of the best conferences I have attended in 31 years.'
- ✦ 'Great lectures, food and sponsors. I am so glad that I came and am looking forward to next year!'
- ✦ 'Excellent as always – AAFP rocks!'