



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### **\*Here Are Some Additional Notes About Adopting A Kitten\***

#### **\*The key is to select a cat or kitten that will adapt well to your environment.**

Take into account whether you are single, have a family with children, a multi-cat household, or a house with both cats and other animals. Cats are well known for having “personalities.” Aside from temperament, there are also differences in size, body types, and hair lengths that should be factors in your decision. Researching breeds and learning about gender differences can help you make your choice. It is a myth that females make better pets. Males tend to be more affectionate and do not tend to spray if neutered before hormones set in.

• **Expect to Pay a Fee:** Unless you are answering a “free to a good home” ad, expect to pay an adoption fee. The fee will vary depending on the type of breeder/organization from which you adopt. Remember, these adoption fees go to care for other kittens and cats that are waiting for a home and they often include medical care, including shots, for the cat that you are adopting.

• **It's a Lifetime Commitment:** Adopting a cat should not be done with the idea that if it doesn't work out you'll just give the cat away. Bringing a cat into your home is a commitment that should last the entire lifetime of the cat. If the cat exhibits behavior problems down the road or becomes ill, it is the job of the caretaker to provide what the cat needs. That may include some training to bring the behavior back in line or medical attention to help it recover from a disease.

#### **\*Adopting From Responsible And Reputed Breeders**

For people who wish to buy a purebred cat, there are plenty of reputable breeders out there. By doing a little research, you can be sure that you are dealing with a breeder who has the best interest of the kittens in mind.

\*When dealing with a breeder, you should always visit the place where the cats and kittens are kept. A reputable breeder is not going to have any problem with allowing this. In fact, a breeder who truly cares for the kittens and cats is going to insist on meeting you and perhaps even doing a background check on you before

selling you a kitten or cat. By dealing with reputable breeders, you know that you are not supporting “kitty mills” and others who treat animals poorly.

### **Responsible Breeders**

\*Responsible breeders (and you'll note that a responsible breeder is NOT necessarily a show breeder) is someone who cares enough to know about the breed and who has a purpose in breeding a litter.

\*They are students of the breed.

\*They try to learn all they can about the parents and lines of the cats they are breeding.

\*They don't breed for the market or the money.

\*Normally they breed because they think they can produce a quality kitten and perhaps keep one for themselves. With that in mind, they breed for a sound, healthy cat of their own.

\*Kittens from responsible breeders are going to be costly, simply because the care and health testing (that they can SHOW you - never take anyone's "word" when you're shopping) they do is expensive.

\*A responsible breeder who tests can still produce cats with genetic or medical conditions. That does not mean a breeder is irresponsible.

\*It is the responsibility of the breeder when they find a problem in their bloodlines that will demonstrate their ethics. The purpose of breeding programs is to contribute to the betterment of the breed, and so each new cat and new generation of cats is a learning tool to be used for improving the next generation

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### **Declawing a Cat**

The truth is that many cat owners do not fully understand the procedure of having a cat declawed. Many think it is the same thing as just trimming a person's fingernails. That is far from the truth.

Cats do not walk on the bottom of their feet. Instead, they walk on their toes. Their claws help them achieve balance. When a cat walks on her toes, as her anatomy is designed, it causes the muscles in her legs and back to be in proper alignment.

When a cat is declawed, the surgeon does not remove only the claw. In fact, the entire "toe", or phalanx, is removed. This includes removing bones and ligaments.

When a cat is declawed, she can no longer walk the way that she was designed to walk. When she essentially suffers through the amputation of each of her front "toes", she often will have trouble achieving balance and the absence of those digits causes the muscles in her legs and back to be out of alignment. This can cause the cat to be in constant pain.

### **Physical Complications**

There are serious possible complications that can arise due to the surgery of having a cat declawed. In addition to the back pain mentioned above, other possible complications include hemorrhaging, bone chips and

weakened muscles in the legs and back. There is also the chance that the claw will attempt to regrow. This will occur inside the paw and will not be visible until x-rays reveal the complication.

## **Emotional and Behavior Changes**

In addition to the physical complications, there are emotional complications as well. Small samples of the possible emotional problems are listed below.

- **Defenselessness:**Remember, a cat's main way of defending itself is by using its claws. When the cat realizes that it no longer has its claws, it will feel defenseless. This can cause the cat to feel afraid all of the time. Many declawed cats spend the rest of their lives hiding, because they fear an encounter with a predator against which they no longer have any defense.
- **Aggressiveness:**Once the claws are gone, the only defense that a cat has left is her teeth. Some cats have been known to start biting because they are afraid and feel the need to stave off any possible attack before it even begins.
- **Aversion to the Litter Box:**After surgery, it can be very painful for a cat to step into the litter box. This means that the cat is going to associate the litter box with extreme pain. This causes an aversion to the litter box and the cat is then going to begin relieving herself in other areas of the house.

Many cat owners made the decision to declaw their cat in order to save their carpet or furniture from being scratched. Many of those same cat owners later surrendered the cat to a shelter because they could not deal with the behavior changes, such as the examples above, that occurred after the surgery.

A cat is going to scratch. It is as natural to them as breathing. While you cannot train a cat not to scratch, you can teach the cat to scratch in an appropriate place, such as a scratching post.

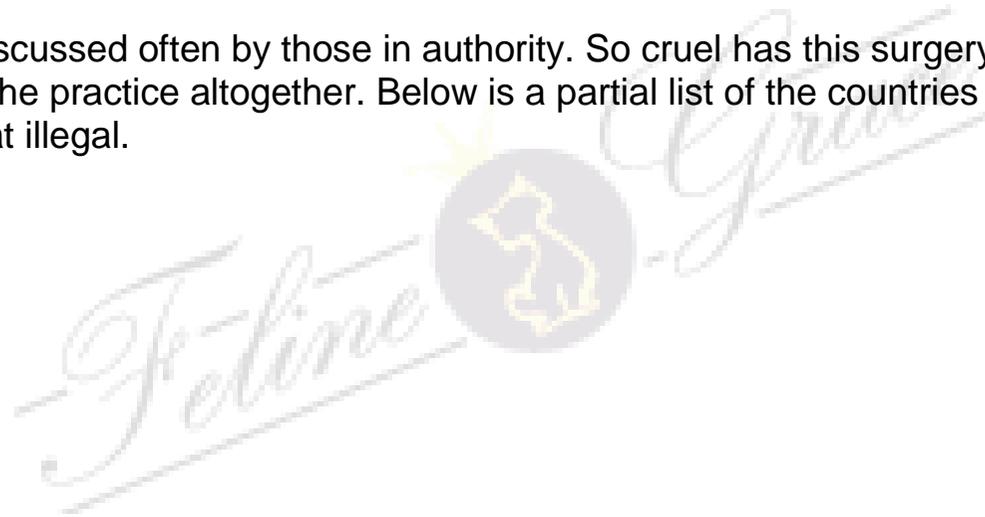
Training a cat to direct his scratching away from inappropriate areas and onto the scratching post is not something that will happen overnight. With a little patience and some trial and error about which type of scratching post your cat prefers, you can teach your cat to scratch in the right places.

While going through the process of teaching your cat to use the scratching posts, there are items that can be placed on your sofa and carpet to discourage your cat from scratching there. Pet stores sell products designed for this purpose, but there are household items, such as tin foil, that can work just as well.

There is absolutely no medical benefit for declawing a cat. It is purely an act that is meant to make owning a cat more pleasant and convenient for the people who should be caring for the cat. No reasonable person would consider removing a dog's voice box to stop him from barking, or his teeth to ensure he will not bite. Why then should anyone be allowed to subject a cat to a surgery that provides zero medical benefits to the cat and, in fact, can do a lot of harm?

This ethical question is discussed often by those in authority. So cruel has this surgery been declared that many countries have outlawed the practice altogether. Below is a partial list of the countries that have made the practice of declawing a cat illegal.

- England
- New Zealand
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- Sweden
- Norway
- Switzerland
- Scotland
- Netherlands
- Germany
- Brazil



Hopefully, as more government officials in more countries learn about how cruel this practice is, the list of countries that ban the surgery will continue to grow.

People shouldn't take an animal and, through the use of potentially harmful surgery, try to change that animal to

make it better fit into the lifestyle of the person. If a cat scratching your couch is something that you just cannot live with, then consider a companion animal other than a cat.

### **Feeding a Cat**

Many cat owners, while trying to do the best they can for their cat, are actually feeding a cat in a way that is not most beneficial. Just like a human has certain nutritional requirements, so do cats.

While many of the pet foods on the market aim to be sure that all of these needs are met, many fall short. Some pet foods contain more filler than they do substantial food, but how can one select the food that is best for their cat?

The first step is to learn about the nutritional needs of the pet

#### **Quantity Depends on the Food**

The amount of food to be given per day depends on the brand of food chosen. Each food will have feeding guidelines listed on the bag, pouch or can. The amount will be based on the cat's weight. It is best to divide the recommended daily amount into two or three feedings rather than giving it to the cat all at once.

If still unsure about which food is best for your cat, your vet can offer recommendations based on the individual needs of your cat. If you find that your cat is underweight or overweight, talk to your vet about special foods that can help bring your cat back around to a healthy weight.

The selected food can be supplemented with cat treats. Treats should be given in moderation, especially in cats that have a weight problem.

Taking a little time to select the best food for your cat is one of the best things you can do for the health of your pet.

## Feeding a Cat

### **Taurine**

Taurine is just one of several amino acids that are required in order to cats to maintain optimal health. While taurine is found in various birds and fish, it is found only in trace amounts in plants. For this reason, cats require that birds and/or fish be included in their diet. It is important to keep this in mind when feeding a cat, because without it, cats can develop serious health problems, including blindness and heart disease.

### **Fats and Fatty Acids**

Fats and fatty acids should also be included in your cat's diet. In fact, cats can safely consume a higher percentage of fat in their diet than humans with no adverse effects. A number to keep in mind is 10%. That is the amount of fat that a cat's food should contain. Most have heard of the importance of omega-3 fats that are vital to keeping humans in the best health. These same omega-3s are essential to a cat's good health as well. If a cat does not get enough omega-3 fats, they are at greater risk for a host of health problems including allergies and arthritis.

### **Vitamins and Minerals**

There are many vitamins and minerals that your cat needs to maintain good health. It is possible for cats to have too much of a certain vitamin, which is why it is important to follow the recommended feeding guidelines of whatever food you select. Vets recommend using a high quality food rather than offering the cat vitamin supplements. Because most foods contain at least some of the vitamins and minerals needed, giving a supplement as well can lead to the cat ingesting too much of a certain vitamin or mineral.

### **Carbohydrates**

Cats need carbs for one of the same reasons humans do: as a form of fuel. Each cat will have different needs when it comes to the amount of carbohydrates that should be included in the diet. Active cats, kittens and cats that are nursing will need more than other cats. Because the need varies from cat to cat, it is a good idea to get some guidance from your vet about how many carbs to include in the cat's diet.

Now that you have an idea of some of the requirements for your cat's diet, we can take a look at the types cat food that is available.

### **Dry**

This food is the most economical choice. There are premium versions of dry food that contain all of the ingredients your cat needs and there are "grocery store" cat foods that contain a high level of filler. This food is convenient in that it can be left out, allowing the cat to eat throughout the day whenever it pleases. Whether this is a good idea will be discussed a bit later in the article. A downside is that some cats will not be as eager to eat dry food as they would another form of cat food. Some cats refuse to eat dry food at all.

### **Semi-Moist**

The moisture content in this food is equal to about 35%. There are high quality versions available. This food is more appealing to most cats. It cannot be left out for free feeding, because it will spoil much more quickly than will dry food. It can be left out longer, however, than the next type of food.

### **Canned**

This food contains about 75% moisture. There are high quality versions of canned cat food available. This food is usually the most appealing to cats. Because of the high moisture content, it spoils rather quickly. Uneaten portions should be removed after feeding times as mold can grow which can cause health problems for the cat if ingested.

### **Vegetarian**

As more and more people are choosing to forgo meat in favor of a vegetarian lifestyle, they are also forcing their cats to eat a vegetarian diet. Feeding a cat this type of diet can be dangerous as one of the important nutritional requirements – taurine – is not found abundantly in plant matter. Pet owners who insist on feeding this type of diet should do so only under the close supervision of a veterinarian.

### **Home Cooked**

Another trend that is gaining steam is that of pet owners who are preparing their cats diet at home and not using commercial cat food at all. When done properly, this diet can certainly meet all of the nutritional requirements of

the cat. This is also one of the most expensive options for feeding your cat, and the food preparation takes some time each week. If this diet appeals to you, be sure to consult with your vet about the types and amount of foods to include to be sure that the cat gets the needed nutrition without being overfed.

### **Do I Need to Use a Premium Cat Food?**

Many pet owners ask the above question. The short answer is “yes” if you want the cat’s nutritional needs to be met. Some wrongly assume that the premium foods cost more simply because of marketing and packaging, but the truth is that the premium foods contain more meat, poultry or fish and less filler.

Even among premium cat foods, there are differences in quality. For this reason, learning to read the label is of the utmost importance. Here are some things pet owners should look for on the label when selecting a cat food.

- In the list of ingredients, you want to see a named protein source. In other words, look for “chicken”, “beef” or “fish” rather than “meat”. This protein source should be the first ingredient listed.
- If the words “animal byproducts”, “bone meal” or “animal digest” appear anywhere on the ingredients list, choose another food.
- Preservatives are just as bad for your cat as they are for you, so avoid foods that contain BHT, BHA or propyl gallate.
- If you see the words “complete and balanced” that means the food has met certain criteria set up by The American Associate of Feed Control Officials. Only foods that have met these criteria can display those words on the bag, pouch or can.

### **More Expensive, But Worth It**

Yes, premium food is much more expensive than grocery store brands, but there are many reasons that it is worth the extra cost when feeding a cat. In addition to being the best choice for your cat’s health, here are some other benefits to choosing a premium cat food.

- Cat will have an increased level of energy
- The cat will eat less of the food as it will be more filling
- Feeding premium foods make it easier for your cat to maintain a healthy weight
- Cat will display a shiny coat and will develop fewer hairballs.

Another common question among cat owners involves how much food to feed their cat.

## **Free Feeding**

While always leaving some dry food in the cat's bowl may be the easiest way to feed the cat, it may cause health problems. Free feeding makes it very easy for a cat to overeat, resulting in cats that have problems with their weight. Of course, if your cat does not overeat and is not overweight, there is no reason not to free feed. Cats that are fairly inactive are at a higher risk for becoming overweight and should not be free fed.

## **Quantity Depends on the Food**

The amount of food to be given per day depends on the brand of food chosen. Each food will have feeding guidelines listed on the bag, pouch or can. The amount will be based on the cat's weight. It is best to divide the recommended daily amount into two or three feedings rather than giving it to the cat all at once.

If still unsure about which food is best for your cat, your vet can offer recommendations based on the individual needs of your cat. If you find that your cat is underweight or overweight, talk to your vet about special foods that can help bring your cat back around to a healthy weight.

The selected food can be supplemented with cat treats. Treats should be given in moderation, especially in cats that have a weight problem.

Taking a little time to select the best food for your cat is one of the best things you can do for the health of your pet.

## **Cat Supplies**

Once you bring your new cat home, you've got to scribble down a quick list of supplies to go pick up. Here are the basic items that you will need to help your new cat or kitten adjust to your home.

### **Litter Boxes**

The very first item on your list of cat supplies will be a litter box. That's usually the second thing that a cat will

look for after food when he or she arrives at a new house, but it is a first priority if you want to avoid an accident on your carpet. Most kittens learn how to use a litter box from their mothers, so once you have one, all you have to place your new cat in front of the box and allow him to inspect the area.

After a few months of scooping bad litter out of the box, you're probably going to start wondering if there is another way. Luckily, there are motorized products like the LitterMaid on the market that will automatically dispose of your cat's waste. Other litter boxes allow you to lift the cover, sift out the good litter, and trash the bad stuff.

If you have multiple cats, the general rule of thumb is that you should have one litterbox to every two or three cats, depending on how finicky they are and how close the cats are to each other.

### **Cat Food**

An experienced cat owner knows the difference between a cheap, filler cat food (also called "grocery store food"), and a premium cat food that is full of the nutrients that a cat needs to become and remain strong. Your vet will probably also explain this difference to you when you bring your new cat in for a checkup.

Many cheap cat foods are full of by-products like wheat and corn gluten. Excessive consumption of foods that contain a lot of these by-products are a major cause of health problems in cats down the line. So be sure that you are buying a premium or all natural cat food for your new kitty.

If you have a kitten, you must purchase a special food that is formulated for kittens. This is because a kitten has different dietary needs as compared to a full grown cat. Because they are still in the growth and development phase, kitten foods have more nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, water, and protein. Senior cat food is not that much different as compared to regular food, it may just have lower calories and protein. Check with your vet to see what formula is best for your cat.

### **Flea and Tick Preventative Medication**

Many cat owners neglect the need to purchase flea and tick products to protect their cats. The news flash

doesn't come through until the owner's home is overrun with fleas or other creepy pests! Head off this problem by getting the right cat supplies in advance.

In addition to flea collars, there are easy to use products that you can place on your cat's skin to kill fleas at the first bite. Revolution is the most effective at treating flea, ticks earmites heartworm hookworms and roundworms.

If you ever have a problem with a flea infestation, you will also need to purchase a flea bomb and flea sprays for your home and the pets in order to fix the problem. Again, order these products and other similar flea and tick supplies ahead of time so that you can treat your cats as soon as there is a sign of a problem.

### **Cat Bed**

If you don't buy a cat his or her own bed from a young age, his or her bed will likely be YOUR bed. Cats generally don't like to sleep on the floor (who does?) —they prefer to be elevated. It is an instinctual thing; they can oversee their surroundings and protect themselves from threats better when they are up off of the ground, especially when sleeping.

If there is anywhere a cat can sleep other than the ground, such as a chair, a table, or other elevated surface that is where he will go, so to avoid this habit get him a nice, comfortable regular or elevated cat bed.

### **Cat Toys**

It's not a dire requirement that you buy your cat toys, but a cat owner who cares about the social behavior and activity level of his cat will understand that recreational items are more of a necessity than an option. A happy cat is active and curious. There are a variety of cat toys that your cat will love, and some that he or she will probably just sit and look at.

The best toys give your cat a sense of accomplishment. Cats like to conquer their "prey" in order to feel contented. A few popular toys are wands, dangles, and devices that make your cat go on the chase. Purchase plenty of toys to keep the cat occupied. You can also make homemade toys, like "catnip in a sock," run around

your house with an iron cord hanging (it looks like a mouse to a cat) or dangle strings of yarn from doors.

### **Scratching Posts**

Finally, if you like the way your couch looks now (you know, the non-shredded look) you will make room in your home for a scratching post. Cats need to stretch and sharpen their claws frequently, and they tend to do so on furniture and carpet. A scratching post will give your cat an alternative surface to dig his claws into. There are scratching posts that double as fun toys, like spinning posts that have dangling objects, or apparatuses with compartments that your cat can hide in (like a jungle gym).

You'll think of even more cat supplies to buy as you spend more time with your cat. Thankfully, cats are usually very low maintenance. Just place the items that they need in the home and they will take it from there. They play by themselves and sleep for the majority of the day. You'll know that they recognize and appreciate all that you do for them when you get an affectionate rub up against your leg or even better—a loving two-eyed wink from your cat!

### **Litter Box Training a Cat**

It is my guess, if you are reading this article, that you have a new addition to your family. Bringing a cat into the home is a very exciting time, as well as a learning experience. A cat, as with any animal, is going to need to be cared for as well as loved.

One of the first hurdles you will come across is litter box training your cat. For the most part this is fairly simple. I am sure you have heard about the people who report that all they had to do is show the cat the litter box once and they went. Well, it does happen, however, not all the time.

### **Getting Started with Your Cat**

When you bring your new cat home, you will need to understand that the cat is adjusting to their new surroundings. This is especially important to small kittens. They are not only tiny in size, where everything looks enormous; they have been through a lot of change in a short amount of time. Make sure you do everything you

can to make this transition as easy as you can for them.

Before you place your cat in the litter box in hopes of litter box training your cat, you will need to make sure the litter box is located in a quiet area that is easy to get to. This is a very important aspect because your cat could get scared to use the litter box if there are noises surrounding it. They also may find it too hard if they have trouble finding it or trouble getting into it.

Keep in mind, if you have a dog, you will want to make sure the litter box is in a place that the dog will not disturb a cat. Moreover, the most common place for people to put a litter box is in a laundry room. This is a very noisy room with the washer and dryer and not a good idea. Although it may be the most convenient place in your house to have it, you might notice your cat going somewhere else.

### **What Size Litter Box Do I Need?**

It is very common for a cat owner to get a litter box that is too small for the cat. You should evaluate the situation to provide the best size for your cat. If you have a kitten, or a cat that has problems in movement, you will want to get a litter box that has lower sides. This helps when climbing in and out of the litter box.

There are many types of litter boxes available for you to purchase. They come with a lid, without a lid, lower sides, higher sides and self cleaning. Each litter box has its perks and drawbacks. For example, if your cat is afraid of loud noises or very skittish, you will want to think twice about purchasing the self cleaning litter box. This is because it can oftentimes be noisy and might scare your cat. For most cats, however, it works perfectly fine.

A hooded litter box should be used for those cats that like to rake their litter all over the place or get very close to the edge. The hood helps keep the cat's wastes into the box and not on the outside.

### **Why Your Cat Might Go Outside of the Litter Box**

If you are finding that your cat is relieving themselves somewhere else that is not the litter box, you need to

evaluate the surroundings. Cats will relieve themselves in different places for many reasons. The most common of these reasons is because the litter box is dirty. This is very trivial, as each cat has its own idea of dirty. Make sure you gauge this item first before jumping to any other conclusions.

It could also be that your cat feels stressed. This could be because you have many people going in and out of your house, there are new people living at the house or children home on vacation from school, or it could be that there are too many cats. Any of these could be the situation, or, it could be a combination of these situations.

### **What You Can Do:**

Let's first start off with what you should not do. The one thing that most people do is punish their cat for soiling on the carpet or furniture. This is an automatic response that we need to control. The cat will think either one of two things if you punish them. They will either first be scared of you, or, they will associate being punished with the litter box. You do not want either of these or a combination of both. The way to get through to a cat is certainly not by punishing or scolding them.

You have to take a different approach when litter box training your cat. You need to praise them when they go in the litter box and prevent them from making a mistake. By doing this, you are setting your cat up to win. Cats do not speak in words; they understand by repetition and create habits. If you want your cat to create a good habit of using the litter box, you will make sure you use positive reinforcement.

Even the slightest traumatic experience can deter a cat from using the litter box. Anything associated with relieving themselves in a negative manner can completely make a cat lose interest in using the box, or even afraid of it.

### **A Final Note on Litter Box Training Your Cat**

If all else fails, check the litter. Your cat might not like the litter that is in there. As stated before, it is usually that

the litter does not get changed as regular as the cat likes, however, some cats cannot stand the feeling of certain litter on their paws. Once you find a litter your cat likes, stick with the same one and do not deviate. This can prompt for an interruption in litter box usage.

### **Why Do Cats Groom Each Other**

Cats are some of the cleanest animals on earth, even though they hate water and avoid it at all costs. How often have you come upon a stinky house cat? And why is this? Because unlike dogs, they groom themselves (thankfully). Cats are meticulous about keeping their coats clean and shiny—it is estimated that a normal cat will spend about 10% or more of his day grooming. Some are so obsessed with cleanliness that they will even resort to grooming other cats who they feel are "dirty." Amazing, huh? If you have witnessed your cats doing this, you may be wondering just why do cats groom each other. Is it a sign of something? Is it sexual in nature?

### **How Does a Cat Groom Itself?**

Have you ever taken a close look at your cat's tongue? Cats have very muscular and agile tongues that are covered with tiny hook-like ridges called papillae. The papillae is made from keratin, the same stuff that makes your nails long and strong. They use their rough, strong tongues to comb through the many hairs in their fur coats—it's almost like dragging tiny, hooked fingernails through the hair. Cats lick and bite at their coats to clear it of dirt, debris, and any parasites that may be trying to set up shop amongst the hairs.

It might seem like your cat isn't doing much when she is sitting there, licking one spot for an extended period of time, but she can sense when an area of their skin or coat needs to be cleansed more than other areas. Since cats groom themselves throughout the day, they manage to get to all of the areas of the coat in cycles.

### **Cats Clique Up**

Cats are not considered to be pack animals by nature, but they do develop alliances. They will usually divide themselves up into small cliques of two or three. Yes, cats are very much like human "mean girls" in this way. If you

have multiple cats in your household, you may have noticed that two or more of them spend a lot of time together, while shunning the other cats. When cats spend extended periods of time together it gets to a point where they do just about everything together at the same time, including grooming.

### **Is It Normal for One Cat to Groom Another?**

So you may have come upon your cats balled together on your couch or your bed, licking each other. One eyebrow goes up slowly.... is this normal? In reality, this is truly nothing to be concerned about. It is not sexual in nature (unless your cats are mating, but even then it's probably just basic affection). In fact, it is something you should be happy about because you have brought the cats up to be tight-knit like a family and non-aggressive.

In truth, one cat grooming another is not normal per se because cats are more likely to fight than to sit around and lick each other in silence. If you have two cats that do this, all that this means is that they are extremely close.

### **Bonding Time**

So why do cats groom each other in the first place? There are a few reasons, one of them being that it is a great way of bonding with another cat that he or she loves. When cats groom each other, it is a sign of great affection. They use this time to bond with each other and show how much they care. Plus, it is relaxing. Being groomed by another cat feels good, like a calming massage.

If two of your cats seem to hate each other and frequently have knock down, drag out fights when they meet, it is highly unlikely that you will ever see them grooming each other.

### **Mothering Instincts**

Mother cats lick and clean their kittens, so it is not uncommon to see this behavior in two adult cats as well. Even a male cat can take on this mothering, or in this case a "brothering" instinct with a younger cat who he becomes close

with. Again, it is a way for one cat to protect and care for another cat that he has taken a liking to.

By the way, have you ever noticed that your cat tries to lick you too? That may be because he or she is trying to groom you! Maybe you need a bath? But seriously, it is just another clear sign that your cats loves you and wants to show you affection. It could also be because she doesn't like a scent coming off of your skin (maybe a soap or perfume) and wants to lick it away.

## **Convenience and Utility**

In many cases, cats will groom each other simply because it is hard to reach certain areas. For example, the top of the head is very hard to reach for a cat. He will have to lick his paw and then rub the paw against his head to get that area clean. Another cat can lick his head clean easily. In fact, some cats will actually walk up to other cats and present their heads for cleaning when they know it is dirty up there. Cats are very smart and resourceful in this way.

Some cats are more selfish than others. You might find that one of your cats does all the grooming while the other just sits there, barely reciprocating. This is just the nature of the relationship and there is nothing that you can really do to change that. It may just be that the main "groomer" is more of the "mother" in that relationship.

## **Hairballs**

The only thing you should really be concerned about when exploring this question of why do cats groom each other is hairballs. When cats groom themselves the hairs sometimes get left behind in the papillae and then get swallowed. Later on the hair balls get chucked up.

If your cat is grooming another cat frequently, he or she will have double the hairballs. You may want to consider feeding that cat a premium cat food with a hairball control formula to help manage the amount and size of these thick, compacted balls in his system.

## **Why do cats purr**

Many cat owners have probably asked the questions “why do cats purr”. A few years ago a company released two similar products. One claimed to be able to interpret the meaning of a dog’s bark. The other claimed to interpret the real meaning behind a cat’s purring and meowing.

Well, many take those claims with a grain of salt and most pet owners did not rush out and purchase the device that supposedly would help them better understand what their dog or cat was trying to say. Still, it would be if there was a way to know.

Sometimes when a cat meows, it has a bit more urgent sound to it. Some owners swear that they can tell exactly what each meow means. But what about purring? When your cat purrs, is she trying to tell you something?

It doesn’t seem that purring is a learned behavior, because within a day or two of birth, kittens start purring. Some think that purring is a way for cats to talk to each other and it may be part of the way that kittens bond with their mother. The sound made by a kitten purring is different than that of an adult cat, but there is no scientific way to know if the meaning is different.

It does seem fairly evident that when a cat purrs, she is happy. They often purr when being petted or when spending time in their owners lap. Eating is another time when many cats can be heard purring. But purring is not reserved only for the times of happiness in a cat’s life.

Many cats also purr when they are about to pass from this life to the next. Some experts say this purring could be in response to pain or anxiety while others hypothesize that cats on the brink of death experience a sense of euphoria and that is the reason for the purring.

Some cats also purr when they are ill. Some experts think that this purring is for the same reason as the purring that occurs in cats that are about to die. They think that purring is a way that the cat is trying to calm himself during a stressful or painful time. This theory would be further proven by the fact that cats that are fearful often purr as well.

Cats, both domestic and feral, can be heard purring when approaching a strange cat for the first time. This could be a show of submission, a way to communicate the desire to be friends. It could also be a show of aggression, a warning of sorts to the other cat. Until cats learn to speak the same language as humans, there is no way to know for sure.

When a cat is giving birth, she often purrs loudly. Is this a show of joy at giving birth or is the purring a result of the pain associated with the birth? It is likely that experts will continue to disagree about this for years to come.

So what about purring that occurs while the cat is napping? That is more than likely a result of contentment. The same goes for a mother cat snuggling with her kittens, when two cats are playing together and while a cat is being petted by their owner.

Even though purring is not always associated with the happiest moments in a cat's life, it is clear that purring provides joy to humans. Many cats have been trained as therapy animals. Their job is simple: Visit the sick and lonely in hospitals and nursing homes, curl up in their lap and purr. Studies have shown that such interactions can lower blood pressure and help with depression in many patients.

This is so well documented that someone has invented a sound machine that mimics the sound of a cat purring. The machine is to be used in "sound therapy" to help patients who are depressed or under a lot of stress. There is much research still needed to determine the effectiveness of such sound therapy.

While it is not possible to answer the question "why do cats purr", there is some insight available as to how they purr. Because there is no physical explanation – in other words there is no special anatomy that is responsible for the purring – scientist must rely on theories and a measure of speculation when trying to figure out how cats purr.

One of the most popular explanations is that when the cat feels happy, stressed or afraid, muscles in the voice box start to vibrate. Then, as the cat breathes, air passes through the vibrating voice box and creates the purring sound. In some cats, this sound will occur both when the cat inhales and when it exhales. When this happens, the purring

seems to be almost continuous.

Another theory that has gained popularity in recent years is that purring is related to the release of endorphins. This theory is well accepted by many experts because it not only explains purring during happy moments, but it would also explain why a cat purrs when in pain, stressed or frightened.

Some think that the reason a cat purrs when it is stressed or in pain is as a way to try and calm itself, much the way a person may sing or hum to try and cheer themselves up. Interestingly, cats are not the only animals that purr. Others include guinea pigs, rabbits and squirrels and even some much larger animals such as gorillas and elephants.

Large wild cats, such as lions and tigers do purr, but not nearly as often as domestic cats. Also, the mechanics of their purring is different as the larger animals make the sound only when exhaling while a domestic cat purrs both when inhaling and exhaling.

Some cat owners become concerned when they think their cat or kitten is not purring. It might be that the cat is purring, but very quietly. The next time you are holding your cat, feel her throat to see if it is vibrating. If it is, she is purring, even if it cannot be heard.

There is nothing wrong with a cat whose purr is very quiet. All cats are different. Some purr loud enough for the whole house to hear and others are very quiet. Some owners say that they cannot even feel a vibration. There is no reason to think there is serious problem if your cat doesn't purr, but it never hurts to bring it up to your vet just in case he wants to be sure the cat is not sick or depressed.

While there may not be any solid answers about how or why a cat purrs, one thing that is sure is that purring is one of the traits that make cats so lovable. Just the fact that humans THINK they are eliciting the purring by rubbing the cat's belly or scratching beneath her chin is good enough for them! Just as the purring helps a mother cat bond with her kittens, it also helps some pet owners feel bonded to their cat.

Research in the years to come may reveal more answers about the hows and whys of purring, but for now pet owners will have to just be satisfied that cats DO purr. And for many of them, that's all they need to know.

## How Long Do Cats Live

There are many factors that can affect the life expectancy of a cat. Some are related to the care the pet receives while others involve issues over which her caretakers have no control. So how long do cats live?

In general terms, the life expectancy of a domesticated indoor cat is 12-18 years. The life expectancy of an outdoor cat is significantly shorter at only 4-5 years.

### **Outdoor Cats**

Outdoor cats face many more dangers than those that are kept indoors. This is why it is recommended that cats kept as pets not be allowed outside. The life expectancy of an outdoor cat is slashed by more than half for a reason.

Many outdoor cats are killed in accidents, such as getting hit by a car. Others are attacked and killed by other animals.

Outdoor cats – even those that do not spend all of their time outdoors – are much more likely to come in contact with viruses and with other animals that have a communicable disease.

### **Indoor Cats**

Indoor cats have much less opportunity to be hurt in an accident. They also have less risk of coming in contact with diseases, but they still need to get all of their vaccinations

Even cats that never go outdoors can contract various diseases that are preventable through vaccinations.

Whether your cat is an indoor cat or an outdoor cat, how long cats live often will have much to do with the care it receives. Here are some things that a pet owner can do to help ensure that their pet lives a long and healthy life.

The first piece of advice would be to try and keep your cat indoors. As stated above, the life expectancy for an

indoor cat is more than double that of an outdoor cat. It may not always be possible to keep your cat indoors, so the here are some measures to take when caring for an outdoor cat.

- **Do Not Declaw** Some cat owners have made the mistake of sending their declawed cats outdoors. This is not a good idea as the cats claws are its only real form of defense against other animals. A cat with no claws cannot defend itself should another animal attack. For that reason, a declawed cat should never be let outside.
- **Have the Cat Spayed or Neutered** Cats that are spayed or neutered will tend to stick closer to home. The closer the cat stays to home, the less danger it will find itself in. Another benefit to having an outdoor cat spayed or neutered is that the cat will tend to be less aggressive. That will mean less fighting with other animals and less of a chance to be seriously injured in such fights. (As a side note: Outdoor cats should always be fixed, even without thought for the health benefits. When an intact cat is allowed to roam free, the result will be more kittens born with no place to call home.)
- **Check the Weather** If you live in a part of the country with severe weather (either very hot or very cold) be sure to keep an eye on the forecast and bring the cat indoors during extreme temperatures. A cat can die from both extreme heat and extreme cold. Even if the cat lives outdoors most of the time, bringing them inside on the coldest and/or hottest days can save their lives.
- **Provide Fresh Food and Water** Be sure that your outdoor cat always has access to fresh food and clean water. Obviously, both are necessary for a cat to survive and if they are provided close to home, the cat will have less reason to stray far away.
- **Bedding** Provide bedding that allows your cat to get warm in chilly weather. As will some of the other tips, this will help keep him close to home.
- **Grooming** It's not just show cats that need to be groomed. If your outdoor cat has long hair, it is a good idea to have the cat groomed at least a couple of times a year. Failing to do so can result in severe matting and harmful

debris can become caught in the cat's fur. Also, if you live in a cold area where salt is used on the roads, the salt can get trapped in the fur and, if ingested, can be harmful to the cat.

- **Veterinary Care** Outdoor cats need regular visits to the vet even more than indoor cats. They come in contact with other animals, some of which may have diseases that could put your cat at risk. Be sure to keep the cat's vaccines up to date and always provide heart worm prevention as well as flea prevention.

Even when cats are kept indoors, there are still situations that can shorten the life of the cat. Here are some things to keep in mind in order to help your indoor cat live as long as possible.

- **Keep Away from Trash** Many indoor cats love to explore the trash. This behavior is encouraged because they often find tasty tidbits of meat or other food items that have been thrown away. The problem is that, along with the food, there are often items in the trash that are poisonous to cats. For this reason, find a way to keep the cat out of the trash. Trying to "teach" the cat to stay away from what he sees as a potential food source is not always going to work. Instead, consider investing in the type of trash can that has a closing lid that will make it impossible for your cat to gain access to what is in the trash can.

- **Houseplants** Many houseplants are poisonous to cats. Every year many cats are treated for poisoning from common houseplants and, sadly, some do not make it. The list of houseplants that are potentially harmful to cats is long. Learn which plants can be harmful to your cat and either remove them from your home or keep them in a place to which your cat has no access.

- **Veterinary Care** Regular visits to the vet are vital to the health of your cat. Annual examinations and routine vaccines should be a regular part of the care that you provide to the cat. Also, heartworm and flea prevention is just as important for an indoor cat as it is for an outdoor cat.

- **High Quality Food** Some cat owners try to save a little money by buying cheaper cat food instead of a higher quality brand. The problem with this is that many of the cheaper foods do not provide all of the nutrition that your

cat needs in order to maintain optimal health. Learn about how to select a cat food that meets all of your cat's dietary needs. Then spend a little bit of extra money on it. It is worth it for the health of your pet.

● **Watch the Weight** When a human is overweight it can lead to a whole host of serious health problems. The same is true for cats. When a cat is overweight he is at risk for diseases such as diabetes, liver disease, arthritis and many others. Some of these conditions can seriously shorten the life of your cat. Keep an eye on your cat's weight. If he is overweight, talk to your vet about a good diet cat food. Also, try to encourage your cat to be more active by spending some extra time playing with him or giving him some new toys. Some cats will not respond to your attempts at getting him to be more active, so cutting back on his food may be the only way to get him to shed a few pounds. The answer to the question "how long do cats live" can vary greatly depending on whether the cat maintained a healthy weight.

You've learned what the average life expectancy for a cat is, but there are steps that you can take to help your pet live a longer, healthier and happier life.

### **Keeping Cats Indoors**

#### **Reasons to Keep Your Kitty Inside**

Many owners wonder whether or not they should let their cats go outside. Given the risks cats face outdoors, an indoor lifestyle is the best choice for health and safety.

Should you let your cat outside? Many owners ponder this question, weighing the risks against the ideal of enabling the cat to come and go freely. When making this choice it is important to consider the fact that outdoor cats face a variety of dangers, including fights, poisons, cars, parasites and diseases.

#### **Fights**

Outdoor cats are often attacked by other cats, dogs, raccoons, coyotes, and in some cases, people. Injuries can be serious or even fatal. Many pets are lost to predators each year and in most cases their owners have no idea what has happened – their cats simply fail to come home one night.

## **Poisoning**

Many people continue to be irresponsible with antifreeze and other toxic substances, leaving them out where children and animals can gain access. People also put out poison to eliminate ants, rodents and other creatures. As a result, many people lose their pets to poisoning each year.

## **Cars**

Large numbers of outdoor cats in city centers and suburban areas lose their lives to vehicles, or suffer severe injuries if they do survive. Veterinary expenses for the care and rehabilitation of cats that have been hit by cars can be enormous.

## **Parasites**

Cats with free access to outdoor space can pick up both external and internal parasites. External parasites include fleas and ticks, the latter of which can cause serious diseases that are fatal to cats. Internal parasites, which cats may pick up when they eat infected animals, can also have serious health consequences.

## **Disease**

Certain diseases, such as feline distemper, are spread more easily when cats go outdoors. Additionally, outdoor cats may be exposed to rabies when they interact with infected wildlife.

## **Unwanted Strays**

An outdoor cat that has not been neutered or spayed will contribute to the population of feral cats in the neighborhood. Large numbers of feral cats are killed each year, and having an un-neutered or un-spayed cat wandering around contributes to this death toll.

## **The Indoor Cat Initiative**

The College of Veterinary Medicine has created the **indoor cat initiative**, which is designed to enrich the lives of indoor cats. This website details the psychological and physical needs of indoor cats, and ways to keep them healthy.

## **Leash Training**

If you feel that it is wrong to keep a cat indoors despite the risks, you could leash train your cat to provide supervised

outings. This eliminates all outdoor cat risks with the exception of external parasites such as fleas and ticks. However, ticks can be checked for and removed after an excursion, and there are methods for **natural flea control** that can be implemented.

### For Cat Owners

#### Getting off to a perfect start with your new cat

To be at their best, cats have some basic needs; providing them will help ensure your cat's long-term health and welfare. If these needs are not met, your cat may feel stressed, which can affect both health and behavior. Listed here are things an "ideal" house for cats might include. Your cat(s) might not need all these features to get along, but making your house more "cat friendly" will ensure that you and your cat enjoy each other's company for years to come.

- The MOST IMPORTANT fact for cat owners to understand is that cats DO NOT respond to force, and that they DO respond to praise! Reprimands only work if you catch your cat "in the act". Punishment that follows an action by more than a few seconds won't stop him from doing it again, and may even cause him to be afraid of you or the surroundings. If you do catch you cat making a mistake, it is better for both of you to create a distraction by making a loud noise or throwing something (NOT at the cat!) that will attract its attention, but not toward you.
- Provide a room or other space she can call her own, complete with food and water, a bed (a cat carrier with a soft pad inside is a good choice), a litter box, a scratching/climbing post, a window to look out of, and some toys.
- Place food and the litter boxes away from appliances and air ducts that could come on unexpectedly, and locate them such that another animal (or human!) cannot sneak up on the cat while she uses them. To keep them appealing to the cat, food and water should be fresh, and the litter box "scooped" every day.
- Give her something to scratch on to ensure that she can "do her thing" without damaging your things. Praise her profusely when you see her use it to let her know that this is hers to use.
- Provide places to climb and look out of windows to help keep your indoor cat(s) healthy and happy.
- Cats seem to prefer to feel like they are "in control" of their surroundings, and to choose the changes they want to make. When you make changes (food, litter, toys, etc.), offer them in a separate container next to the familiar one so your cat can decide whether or not to change.

- Be sure to see your veterinarian regularly. In addition to providing preventative health care through regular check-ups, they also can help you troubleshoot any "issues" before they become problems.

These suggestions are only intended to get you off to a good start. More information is available from your veterinarian, pet food company "kitten care" kits and web sites. You also can search on "kitten care" on the web (some sites are better than others!).

## The Unique Feline

To understand cats, we must first understand how they behave in their natural environment. Even if your cat lives indoors, its behaviors result from their survival value in the wild. In their natural environment, cats hunt for food, hide from predators (often by climbing), and defend their home territories. Indoors, these behaviors may look hostile (biting and scratching) or spiteful (climbing and marking), and we may not like them. The keys to enjoying cats in our lives are to:

1. provide acceptable outlets for their natural behaviors, and
2. reduce their exposure to threats.

The following paragraphs describe natural behaviors of cats, and how the indoor environment can be modified to permit cats to engage in them in appropriate ways.

Cats, unlike dogs and other domestic animals, are not a pack or herd species, which explains a lot about their behavior. Pack species that are predators are mostly group hunters of large prey, whereas the prey species, cattle and horses for example, developed groups for self-protection. In contrast cats are solitary hunters of small prey. This strategy resulted in important differences in cat behavior, which has been carefully studied. We can use our understanding of cat behavior to improve the environment of the indoor cats that share our lives.

**Cats do not have the daily sleep-wake cycle that we and many other animals have.** Rather, they sleep and wake frequently throughout the day and night. This is because cats in the wild need to hunt as many as 20 small prey each day; they must be able to rest between each hunt so they are ready to pounce quickly when prey approaches. This explains why our cats seem to sleep so much during the day when we are awake, and spend so much time awake at night when we need to sleep! We may conclude that cats are nocturnal creatures, but it only seems that way because their sleep/wake cycle is so different from ours. Adding playful activities to your cat's daily routine can

diminish the occurrence of such nocturnal activity .

**Dogs are cats' most common natural predator in the wild.** This is not to say, however, that cats and dogs cannot live amicably together in your home! Cats also may be afraid of other cats, of humans (if not properly socialized), and loud noises such as thunder, automobiles, and lawnmowers. Fearful cats generally have dilated pupils, flattened ears, a flattened or crouched body, and a fast breathing rate. If threatened further, they may hiss or growl, arch their back and puff up their fur, and may even attack.

Cats try to hide when they are anxious or feel threatened. They especially like to hide in high places, which permit a clear view of their surroundings. **This is why it is especially important to provide indoor cats with hiding areas;** these spots must permit the cat to feel safe from people, loud noises and other animals . If it is not safe for your cat to hide on top of the refrigerator, etc., then you will need to provide some other high location for your cat to hide in, such as a climbing tower or closet shelf.

**Cats are not as social as many other species** and they do not communicate in the same ways we do. Contrary to what people believe, cats primarily rely on smell, not sight, to communicate with other cats, locate food, and detect predators. Cats communicate by "marking" objects and other animals. these marks are scents (called pheromones) released from special glands located in their forehead, cheeks, tail base, and paws when they scratch and rub their body on objects. Cats also do not rely too much on sounds from other cats, so they do not pay particular attention to the verbal sounds we humans make. Allowing your cats to mark scratching posts and other appropriate objects in the home will reduce the temptation for them to mark using urine. **It is important that indoor cats have enough litter in a clean litter box** to hide urine scents after covering. In the wild, cats urinate in new clean spots all the time; if we want them to use the same spot each time, we have to keep it clean!

**Cats are carnivores;** they primarily eat small rodents, birds, and bugs. **Because hunting is such a big part of a cat's life, even indoor cats want to engage in hunting types of activity.** Keep this in mind when shopping for toys for your cat; most prefer those that resemble mice, birds, and bugs . If you really want to make it realistic, make the toy move like it really is alive! .

Cats establish their home hunting ranges by scent marking them. Males will physically defend their ranges from other males, but females usually share or overlap their home range with other females. The size of a home range or

territory can be up to 6km<sup>2</sup> (~20 city blocks). Because cats in the wild hunt small prey, they tend to lead solitary lives so each cat gets enough to eat. If a food resource is very plentiful, cats may live in small groups, 2-25, consisting mainly of females. Male cats generally live alone regardless of food source, because they also compete with other males for mates.

Cats can be aggressive when defending territories, fearful when threatened, engage in play behavior with one another (especially as kittens), and groom each other throughout adulthood. Mothers and other females in their group raise the kittens. Kittens begin to sample the mother's kill while still nursing, and begin to hunt alone at 8 to 16 weeks of age. They generally rest and groom together with their mothers until they are 6 to 12 months old. Adult males patrolling the mother's home range usually evict the juvenile males; juvenile females may leave if food resources are low. Adults establish their own home territory (range), and may be dominant or subordinate within the parts of their range that overlap that of other cats.

Sometimes cats play a little too hard and may scratch or bite you. You can teach your cat to inhibit this inappropriate play behavior by leaving the area when your cat is not playing nicely!

Outdoor cats experience a wide range of temperatures. Since cats cannot sweat very well, they learn to seek shade in warm temperatures, and warmth in cold temperatures. Indoor cats use shade, fans, bedding, and blankets to regulate their temperatures throughout the year.

Most cats are so good at grooming themselves that they do not need baths to stay clean. Longhaired (if the hair mats), obese, or sick cats may need extra combing and brushing. While cats in the wild do not have this luxury, you can help your cat stay healthy and clean if he struggles to do it for himself.

### **Preventing Pet Theft**

#### **Protect Your Cats and Dogs from Thieves**

Cats and dogs are stolen for a variety of reasons. If they are lucky, it's simply a case of someone who sees a cute animal and wants to keep it as a pet, but there are many worse fates that stolen pets may suffer, including:

- Being sold to research laboratories or pet stores

- Being subjected to sadistic acts by psychopathic individuals
- Becoming bait or fighters for dog-fighting rings
- Being used as puppy mill breeders
- Being sold as meat to feed exotic pets or humans
- Having their fur made into clothing and accessories

Most random source animals are stolen from people's backyards or while wandering around the neighborhood. Laboratories prefer to work with domestic pets because they are more trusting and friendly toward people.

Class B dealers also obtain animals through "Free to a Good Home" advertisements. "Bunchers" adopt animals and sell them to dealers, who then often sell them to laboratories. Laboratories also obtain animals through pound seizure. Animals taken to certain shelters that are not claimed by guardians or adopted out may be turned over to experimental laboratories.

Those working at the SPCA and other shelters have noticed people loitering in the area, offering to provide good homes for those who are bringing their pets to the pound because they can no longer care for them. Some dealers bring a woman and child along to create the illusion of a loving family. People come to shelters requesting 6 cats, claiming that they want to adopt them for family and friends. Humane societies have reported witnessing dealers travelling through alleys in vans, offering meat or even female animals in heat to tempt pets into their vehicles.

The SPCA is lobbying to make selling animals to labs illegal, and Last Chance for Animals (LCA) gathered evidence that was used to convict a huge pet theft ring of Class B dealers, as well as sparking a number of investigations into the treatment of Class B animals. LCA and In Defense of Animals (IDA) are also advocating on behalf of more aggressive animal protection laws

### **Protect Your Pets**

There are a number of things you can do to prevent your pets from being stolen:

- Attach up-to-date ID tags to your pets' collars.
- Don't leave animals unattended in your car. keep your cats indoors.

- Don't tie your pet up anywhere outside to wait for you unless you can see him while you shop or eat and get to him quickly if necessary.
- Have recent photos of your pets on hand in case they go missing.
- Have your pets fixed – spayed or neutered animals are less likely to stray, and experimental laboratories prefer unfixed animals.
- If someone you don't know asks about breeding or buying your pet, tell him that the animal has been fixed, even if this isn't true, and record the person's name, license plate number, and address.
- Keep pets on a leash when outdoors and cats in their carrier bags.
- Never leave animals alone in your yard, particularly if they are visible from the street, and padlock your gate.
- Never talk to strangers about your pet's value, bloodline, or special abilities.
- Report suspicious activity toward animals in your neighborhood.
- Tattooing and microchipping is a good idea, not only to help recover lost pets, but also because laboratories don't want animals with tattoos and microchips (tattoos should be done on the leg, as ears can be torn in a fight or cut off).
- When expecting guests or repair people, keep a close eye on the door – pets may run out and get lost when the door is left open.

### **Adoptions**

If giving your pet away, make sure that it really is to a good home. Learn as much as you can about the new adoptive home beforehand:

- Visit the homes of the potential adopters.
- Photocopy their picture ID, take the numbers of their drivers' licenses and car license plates, and check references.
- Ask about other pets they have owned and the names of their veterinarians.
- Have adopters sign an adoption contract that allows for follow-up visits.
- Charge an adoption fee unless you're very sure about the home to which you're committing your pet.

### **Additional Ways to Help**

You can help protect other animals from theft and cruelty by:

- Not buying animals from pet stores – many pet stores sell animals that have been stolen or are bred in puppy mills

- adopt from a shelter instead.
- Reporting any stolen animals identified in a dealer's possession to the police
- Lobbying for the abolition of Class B animal dealers.
- Telling family, neighbors, and friends about pet theft and how to keep their animals safe.

