



## INDOOR-ONLY KITTY, PLEASE

In the best of all possible worlds, a cat would be happiest having access to both the indoors and outdoors. Cats love the security and warmth of being inside. They also love the sights, smells, and excitement of the outside. Today's outside world, however, can be dangerous for a cat.

As your cat sits by the door crying to go outside, you may feel guilty, as if depriving her of a fulfilled life. But, since we are stewards of our pets, we must not let them run freely through the neighborhood. If your cat cries to go outside, just say, "NO." Cats live longer and healthier lives if kept inside. Exchange your guilt for the assurance that you are extending your feline companion's life!

The outdoor stray you have just adopted may drive you crazy. After all, she only knows the outside world. A great deal of patience and lots of her favorite food will eventually bring her around. Besides, there are many good reasons for keeping your cat indoors: 1) Getting killed by predators 2) Getting killed by neighborhood dogs, 3) Catnapping for re-sale, dog fighting rings, or research, 4) Poisoning or shooting by neighbors who don't like cats, 5) Cars, 6) Diseases and parasites, 7) Getting stuck in trees or telephone poles 8) Being picked up as a stray and, for lack of identification, being killed at an animal shelter.

There are several things that can be done to keep your indoor cat happy and healthy: 1) Change her physical environment by screening off a porch, giving her a safe outdoor haven, 2) Place a large wire cage up against a door leading to a patio or deck - the opening of the door, or of a swinging pet door, releases her into the cage, 3) Provide a window perch so that she can look outside - special platforms which hang on the windowsill can be purchased.

Get another cat! Two cats will exercise, entertain, and keep each other company. Have plenty of toys around the house—string with paper tied to the end hanging from doorknobs, ping pong balls, or a catnip mouse tied to the end of a fishing line. Cast out the line and reel in the mouse. Cats love this game of chase and catch, and your neighbors, as well, will be entertained. Provide a carpeted kitty condo for your cats to climb on, sharpen claws, and sleep in. Two cats will also enjoy chasing each other up, over, and through this condo.

Be sure to get rid of poisonous house plants. A cat will chew and sometimes swallow them which may result in illness or death. Provide a pot of grass for your cat to nibble if she is so inclined. There are ready-to-grow plants available at most pet supply stores.

The key to keeping an indoor cat healthy and happy is to keep her well-exercised. Lots of playtime with you and/or another cat will take care of this need. Believe it or not, some cats can be taken for a walk on a leash. Have patience, and take your time in helping your cat get used to the idea of walking on a leash. Many cats enjoy walks with their human friends.