

Cat – Outdoor or indoors?



Cats – Outdoors or indoors?

There is no definitive answer to the question of whether to allow your cat outside or not.

Certainly, there are dangers for a cat that is allowed outside, such as diseases, traffic, other animals and general injuries. Studies have shown that cats that are allowed outside have an average lifespan less than those kept indoors. On the other hand, strictly indoor cats have a much higher incidence of obesity due to lack of exercise, and may also be more prone to behavioural issues.

Outdoors

If you decide to let your cat outdoors, a gradual and controlled (i.e. supervised) exposure to the backyard from three to four months is advisable. However, please wait until your cat is at least six months old (i.e. after desexing) before letting it out unsupervised. Cats younger than this are often small and unable to defend themselves, and may not have the good sense to avoid dangers.

It is also a good idea to try to keep your cat in at night, as many cat fights and cat road accidents occur at night. If you live on a busy road or if there are a large number of stray cats around the area, it is probably best to keep your cat inside if at all possible.

Indoors

Many of the problems of indoor cats are due to a lack of stimulation. It is important to make time to play with your cat regularly and provide suitable climbing and hiding places for your cat to explore. Many cat toys are available that can be very useful in encouraging activity. Indoor cats also enjoy chewing catnip or 'cat grass' as an occasional treat, and this will help to prevent hairballs and maintain healthy digestion.

Often the best compromise between indoors and outdoors is to set up a 'cat run' or similar outdoor enclosure. This allows your cat to spend time outside without exposure to the dangers they would otherwise face. There are several companies that can provide suitable enclosures. If your yard is well-enclosed, it may also be possible to cat-proof the area so that they can enjoy being outside without escaping.