

Responsible cats carry ID!

Even if your cat is an indoor cat, it's important that he or she has identification. It's easy for indoor cats to slip outside, and if that happens, you should make sure your cat has the best chance of getting home.

A sad fact is that few cats in Canadian shelters are ever reclaimed by their original owners. In fact, less than 5% of cats in shelters are reclaimed by their owners. The problem? Most cats that end up at shelters don't have identification.

The most common methods of identifying your pet are a tattoo, a break-away collar with a tag, and a microchip. Tattoos and microchips are permanent forms of identification. These days, many shelter cats are microchipped or tattooed before you bring them home. Tattooing involves inscribing a unique identifier inside the cat's ear. Veterinarians and animal shelters can trace the origin of the cat from the tattoo.

The microchipping process involves injecting a tiny computer chip, the size of a grain of rice, under the animal's skin, just like having a vaccination. Cats do not need to be anesthetized for this procedure. The microchip carries a unique identification number associated with your pet, which can be read by a scanner. Most veterinarians and shelters have scanners to read microchips.

If your new cat is not microchipped or tattooed, you may want to discuss this option with your veterinarian.

It's best to use both a visual and a permanent form of identification to identify your cat. For example, it would be easier for your neighbour to identify your cat by reading a tag, but if your cat got out of his collar, a microchip or tattoo would ensure that he or she still carried permanent identification.



Regardless of the method(s) of identification you use, it is very important that you notify the veterinary clinic or the facility that tattooed or microchipped your cat as soon as you move to a new location or change your phone number.



A break-away collar is a collar that is intended to come off easily if it gets caught on something, lessening the chance of injury to a cat.

Whose cat is it?

Being a responsible cat owner starts with your own cat, but you can also make a difference to other felines that are not as lucky as your own. While most of the cats that roam in your neighbourhood are likely your neighbours' pets, you may notice some cats that don't seem to have a home. These cats may have become lost or may actually have been "dumped" by their owners, an act that is illegal in many municipalities.

While it may be tempting to feed a stray cat, if you do so without also looking after his or her health, you may be doing more harm than good. Instead, contact your local humane society for the best advice on how to deal with the cat.

Stray cats can spread illnesses to your cat and other cats in your neighbourhood. Also, stray cats may have kittens, which are born feral, or wild. It usually isn't possible to socialize a true feral cat, because these cats have never been around people and don't trust them. Further, feral cats aren't really wildlife, which means that they don't have the necessary skills to fend for themselves, especially during the colder winter months. As a result, they often lead short, miserable lives.

For more information about feral cats, contact the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies at the address at the end of this brochure.



Feral cats tend to live in "colonies", where a few to dozens of cats live together in a common area. Colonies experience a "vacuum effect", which means that if any of the cats are removed, more cats will eventually fill their places. Some communities have trap, neuter and release programs which result in a more stable, healthier population of feral cats. While these programs may be effective, the best solution is to start dealing with the root of the problem - homeless cats.

You are part of the solution!

By being a responsible cat owner, you are doing your part to help curb the problems associated with cat overpopulation. You can further help animal welfare organizations to fight cat overpopulation by sharing what you have learned with friends and neighbours. Most importantly, you can share a long, happy life with your new feline friend.

**Questions or comments? Contact your local humane society or the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies at: 102-30 Concourse Gate, Ottawa ON, K2E 7V7
Tel: 1-888-678-CFHS
email: info@cfhs.ca website: www.cfhs.ca**



Photograph by: Wendy Berry

Giving your new cat a safe and happy home



**Canadian Federation
of Humane Societies**
www.cfhs.ca

A new family member

Congratulations on your new cat! Adopting an animal is an exciting time—and you're bound to be busy over the next few weeks learning all about your new family member.



You can help your new cat adjust by providing several “cat safe” vertical spaces, such as 6- to 8-foot-tall cat trees, keeping other pets confined or on a leash while your new cat is exploring his new home, using baby gates to keep other pets out of your new cat's area for awhile, and keeping your new cat in his or her own “safe room” at night and when you are not at home.

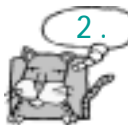
Whether your new cat is a playful kitten or a more sedate adult, you will have many decisions to make about his or her care—and making the right decisions now can save you heartache and money in the future and save your cat from needless suffering.

Here are just a few things to think about as you bond with your new cat:

- ✓ introducing your cat to your household
- ✓ making sure your cat has regular, appropriate veterinary care
- ✓ making sure you have your cat spayed or neutered
- ✓ deciding whether your cat will be allowed outside
- ✓ making sure your cat is clearly identified

Introducing your new cat

Being introduced to a new household is stressful for a cat, especially one that has spent some time on the street or in an animal shelter or pet store. For the first few days, he or she may be frightened and spend a lot of time hiding under furniture. Your cat should be



introduced to the house by starting in a small space, like a bathroom or a spare bedroom. You may need to confine him or her to this space for a few days. Leave the carrier open so that your cat can retreat quickly if he or she gets scared. Make sure your cat can find the litter box, food, and water.

Other factors that may affect how quickly your cat adjusts include whether or not you have other pets, whether there are children in the house, and how active your household is. Be patient, give your cat and other pets time to adjust, and talk to your veterinarian if you have any concerns.

Speaking of which...have you made that veterinarian appointment yet? You should take your cat to a veterinarian for a health check within a few days of bringing him home. Your veterinarian will also let you know what vaccinations are needed.

Spaying or neutering your cat

On your first visit to the veterinarian with your new cat, ask when you can have your cat spayed or neutered.

“Spaying” is another term for an ovariectomy, a commonly performed abdominal surgery where a female animal's ovaries and uterus are removed. Cats usually recuperate fully from this procedure within a few days.



FACT: One pair of adult cats and their offspring could produce a population of 80 million cats within ten years. Every year, more than 150,000 cats end up in humane societies across Canada. Almost 50% of those cats were euthanized because there simply aren't enough homes for them all. Countless more homeless cats suffer and die, never having made it to a shelter for care.



“Neutering” is the common term for castration, in which a male animal's testicles are removed. Neutering is a less invasive procedure compared to spaying, and your cat will likely recover even faster.

Why should you have your cat spayed or neutered before producing even one litter? While some people think it is “good for a cat” to have at least one litter of kittens, scientific evidence shows that spaying or neutering at an early age greatly reduces or eliminates the likelihood of diseases such as infections of the uterus and cancer of the mammary glands. It can also reduce or eliminate undesirable behaviour associated with mating, such as fighting and urine-spraying in males. Most importantly, it prevents unwanted litters of kittens.

Curbing destructive behaviours



Talk to your veterinarian about trimming your cat's nails. With regular nail trimming, your cat will do less damage.

Destructive behaviour is a major reason many cats end up at animal shelters to begin with. Their owners simply became too frustrated to deal with their pet scratching the sofa or digging in plants. The solution? Be aware of the potential problems, and have a plan to deal with them before they arise. For example, scratching, which tones the muscles in a cat's front legs, is a natural reflex. So, rather than trying to stop the behaviour, provide vertical and horizontal scratching posts in the living areas

around your house so that the cat knows where he or she can scratch. When you exercise your cat daily, try to get him or her to chase a toy or a light beam up the scratching post to encourage the cat to use it. The longer a favourite scratching area is used, the harder it will be to break this habit, so start early! If your cat is exhibiting destructive behaviour that you can't control, talk to a behaviour expert or your veterinarian and ask for tips on how to manage the behaviour before the problem gets out of hand.

The indoor/outdoor dilemma

While your municipality may not have a bylaw regulating whether your cat can roam, there are many good reasons for never leaving your cat outside unsupervised—in fact, your local animal shelter is full of them! There are many risks to consider:

- ✗ traffic: vehicles pose a major risk to cats
- ✗ wandering: your cat may stray and become lost
- ✗ other animals: cats are often injured in fights with other cats or wildlife and may pick up illnesses from other animals
- ✗ public nuisance: roaming cats are often considered pests by neighbours, who have a right to enjoy their yards cat free, and they may harm “stray cats” or even your cat!
- ✗ cats are often excellent hunters, and free-roaming cats may have a considerable impact on local urban wildlife populations, especially song birds.

If you really want your cat to enjoy the great outdoors, consider one of the following ideas:

- ✓ leash-train your cat (ask your local animal shelter or veterinarian for training tips).
- ✓ build an enclosed pen for your cat, with adequate shelter from the elements.

For more information on the indoor/outdoor issue, check out the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies' website at www.cfhs.ca or contact the CFHS at the address at the end of this brochure.



FACT: The average life expectancy of an indoor cat is 12.5 years. The average life expectancy of a cat that is allowed outdoors unsupervised is 2 to 5 years.

