



Cat Behaviour Guide

Keeping Cats Safe



Outdoor free-roaming cats are exposed to many risks. Here are some alternatives to free-roaming that support healthy and happy lives for cats.

Risks to Outdoor Free-Roaming Cats

Indoor cats have a longer lifespan than outdoor cats. There are many risks to cats roaming outdoors, some of which include:

- Injurious interactions with other animals, such as cats, dogs, or predatory wildlife.
- Injury or death by traffic accidents.
- Exposure to adverse weather conditions.
- Exposure to outdoor parasites and infectious diseases.
- Poisoning, animal cruelty, or pet theft.

Outdoor cats can also become a community nuisance. Outdoor cats may spray to mark territory or dig in the yards of neighbouring residences. In addition, cats also prey on wild bird species.

Keeping Indoor Cats Happy

Cats can live quality lives indoors with appropriate enrichment. You can create a home environment that promotes health and mental stimulation for your cat by implementing the following strategies:

- Put your cat's dry food or treats in foraging or treat-dispensing devices and hide them around the house.
- Provide scratching posts or appropriate objects for your cat to scratch.
- Install elevated wall perches that allow your cat to access high spaces.
- Provide plenty of safe enrichment objects, such as cat-safe toys or cardboard boxes. Scenting toys with catnip can help increase your cat's interest and activity.
- Provide quiet areas where your cat can safely retreat from activity in the home.
- Engage your cat in short training sessions using positive reinforcement.

Providing your cat with opportunities for exploration, physical activity (i.e. jumping, pouncing, stretching), and elevated spaces helps support the expression of natural behaviours.



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Safe Outdoor Options

There are safe ways to let your cat experience the outdoors, such as a catio! These are safe, outdoor enclosures for cats. Weather permitting and with your supervision, this is an enriching experience for your cat that eliminates the risks associated with free-roaming.

Another option is having your cat on a harness and leash. You should always supervise your cat on a leash to ensure their safety, and slowly introduce your cat to wearing a harness and leash.

Helpful Tips

In case your cat does escape your home or becomes lost, it is important that they have identification. Ensure that your cat is microchipped or tattooed, has a collar with an ID tag, and is licensed. Having your cat spayed/neutered also prevents your cat from contributing to cat overpopulation in your community!

Additional Resources:

For more information on cat licensing and bylaw information in Edmonton, visit the City of Edmonton Animal Care and Control Centre's website:

https://www.edmonton.ca/residential_neighbourhoods/pets_wildlife/cats.aspx

Did You Know?

You can also ask us behavioural questions by emailing:

askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 40% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. Please [Donate](#).