

Indoors vs. Outdoors

Cats are not completely domesticated and, compared to other pets, they have only lived exclusively indoors for a brief period of time. Knowing that cats are natural predators, you may be tempted to keep cats outdoors, or to make them indoor-outdoor cats. There is a large population of exclusively outdoor, or feral, cats. However, there are several reasons why pet cats should remain exclusively indoors.

- **Predators**
The first, and most obvious, reason why cats should remain indoors is the risk of predators. Coyotes, dogs, and hawks are all mortal threats to outdoor cats. Not only that, but feral cats can easily wound, or even kill your indoor-outdoor cat. Even if a feral cat only bites your cat, feral (or “community”) cats have high instances of FIV, which lowers the immune system and could shorten your cat’s lifespan.
- **Man-made dangers**
Natural predators, while a serious risk, are not necessarily the most prevalent threats to outdoor cats. Cars and trains are common causes to outdoor cat mortality. Pesticides can also poison and kill cats.
- **Resources**
Simply put, cats have to hunt for their food outside. Not only do they have to work harder to obtain food, but they also have to rival other animals, making resources scarcer. Food, water, and shelter are all more difficult to consistently maintain outdoors. Keeping your cat indoors helps provide them with all their basic needs.
- **Well-meaning neighbors**
If your cat does not have identification, well-meaning neighbors can easily mistake your cat for a stray and turn him/her into a shelter. Even if your cats do have identification, many areas have laws against free-roaming cats, and reclaiming from a shelter can be costly, depending on their length of stay.
- **Neighborhood indoor cats**
A major negative impact of free-roaming outdoor cats is the effect it has on other indoor cats. When outdoor cats roam around the neighborhood, other local indoor cats see, hear, or smell them and often become territorial. This means increased aggression and urine spraying (yes, even in spayed/neutered cats!). While this may not directly be your problem, it can cause a world of struggle for your neighbors and it is not unheard of for it to lead them to surrender or euthanize their cats.
- **Health Risks**
Statistically, indoor cats live far longer than outdoor cats. Besides the number of concerns noted previously, poor weather, unpredictable lifestyle, and a variety of other reasons can lead to a shorter lifespan. So, bet on a longer life for your cat and keep him/her indoors!

If you have any questions about whether to keep your cat indoors or outdoors- or any other behavioral issue- contact the HAWS Behavior Department at (262)542-8851 ext. 204. HAWS offers 2 complimentary behavior consultations for the life of your HAWS adoptee. We are here to help!