

Tips for a Healthy, Happy Cat

When it comes to our pets, we want to do our best by them. However, we may not always know how to go about being the best pet parent ever. Here are a few basic things you can do to ensure you have a healthy, happy cat.

- **Food**
Feed your cat the highest quality food you can afford. The first ingredient should be an animal protein and there should be a high moisture content. Cats get the majority of their hydration from their food, so wet food is the best, most biologically appropriate option.
- **Water**
Cats do not have a natural thirst drive, so it is very important to keep your cat hydrated. Drinking fountains and ice cubes can encourage your cat to increase their water intake.
- **Grooming**
Daily brushing can keep you aware of your cat's skin and coat health bonding you to your cat. It also helps distribute oils in the coat. Brushing your cat's teeth is also important to prevent periodontal disease. Desensitize them to the process gradually.
- **Handling**
Desensitize your cat to handling by holding and handling your cat each day. Make sure this is a good experience and never force your cat to remain with you against their will. Pairing touch with food is a great way to build a positive association with handling.
- **Identification**
It's hard to think about your cat becoming a stray, but it does happen. Have proper identification on your cat's collar and keep the microchip implant updated.
- **Litter Box**
See our Litter Box Setup guide.
- **Scratching**
See our Cat Scratching guide.
- **Health**
Visit your vet regularly for check-ups and vaccinations. Research clinics that practice low-stress, fear-free handling and establish a good rapport with the vet. Have your cat spayed/neutered to prevent overpopulation and a number of behavioral concerns. Help your cat have a stress-free visit to the vet by desensitizing him/her to the carrier and handling.
- **Playtime**
See our Cat Play guide.
- **Special Spaces**
Accommodate your cat's natural instincts to perch or hide by offering a combination of hiding spaces (boxes, covered beds) and vertical spaces (cat towers). Window seats are another excellent option to allow your cat to perch and watch wildlife/"cat t.v."
- **Aromas**
See our Plant, Scent, and Food Safety guide.
- **Enrichment**
Cats benefit greatly from mental exercise. Challenge your cat's mind with enrichment, or additions to the environment with which the cat can physically and mentally interact. Good forms of enrichment include: a box filled with ping-pong balls, paper bags, tunnels, cat grass, etc. Rotate enrichment items to prevent boredom.

If you have any behavioral issues with your cat, 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!