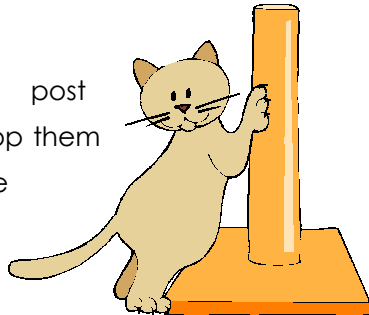


## what do cats need?

- Companionship - to be with other cats or people for at least part of the day.
- A balanced diet of appropriate foods every day. Cats must eat meat.
- A constant supply of fresh, clean water.
- Somewhere warm and cosy to sleep.
- To be desexed at an early age.
- Annual vaccinations.
- To be kept contained, especially at night.
- To have a microchip inserted under their skin in case they get lost.
- Regular flea and intestinal worm treatment.
- To be combed regularly, particularly when shedding. Long-haired cats need to be combed every day.
- An elastic collar with identification.
- A scratching post (which may stop them damaging the furniture).



- Help to clean their teeth. Raw chicken bones several times a week will help.
- To be provided with a clean litter tray in a quiet place, away from their food.
- To be looked after when you go on holidays.
- To be registered with your local council.

## lifespan

On average cats that are contained (kept inside or in a cat park) live for 12-14 years, but they can live for up to 20 years. Cats allowed to roam free at night usually only live for 3-5 years.

## behaviour

Cats are territorial and often do not tolerate other cats unless they are introduced at an early age. They also like human companionship only when it suits them, and often like to be left alone.

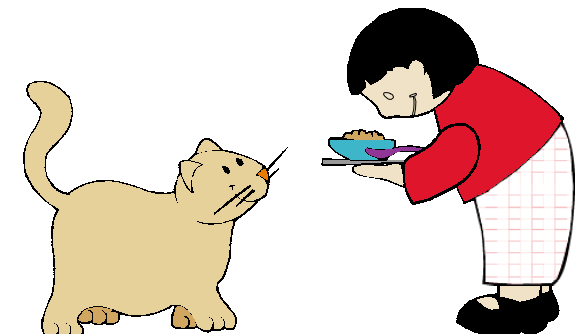
Although cats can enjoy being alone, they still need the company of people or other cats every day. Cats can spend up to 18 hours a day sleeping and enjoy being able to climb and play.

Cats are predatory by nature, and have the instinctive skills and equipment (teeth and claws) to hunt. Cats will hunt for sport regardless of how well fed they are.

## breeding

Hundreds of thousands of unwanted kittens are born each year. The RSPCA strongly advises that cats should be neutered (desexed) early to stop them producing kittens. Neutering is a routine operation that can be performed by a veterinary surgeon when cats are as young as eight weeks old.

Female cats that have not been neutered come into season in early spring and remain "on heat" until the end of autumn. Cats can have up to six kittens in each litter, and can get pregnant while still feeding a litter. Kittens should stay with their mother until they are eight weeks old.



## health

All cats and kittens need to be vaccinated against feline enteritis and cat flu and given regular boosters (further injections) throughout their life usually once a year after an initial series of shots.

Cats should be routinely treated against intestinal worms and fleas. Veterinary surgeons can advise you about the best product.

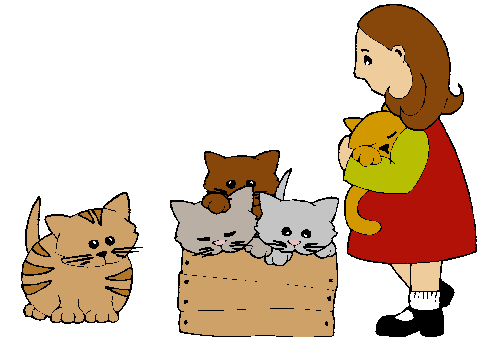
## diet

A good diet is especially important for kittens, feeding mothers and older cats. Any food that you feed your cat should say "a balanced diet" somewhere on the packaging, and the main ingredient should be meat. A poor coat may indicate lack of regular brushing, but can also result from poor diet or parasites.

Cats often eat grass for nutritional value. An indoor cat will enjoy being provided with fresh grass occasionally. It is important to ensure that it is clean and free of pesticides.

## handling

Place one hand beneath the cat's chest and the other around its back legs, so that all its weight is supported.



## cats

### the right pet for you?

Cats are usually very clean and make good companions for many people. However, they can cause damage to furniture and carpets with their claws and may not always want to be stroked and handled. They can also soil in inappropriate areas when stressed.

Cats are predatory by nature and will hunt regardless of how well fed they are. Before getting any pet you should think very hard about whether you can provide everything it needs.

