

POINTS TO PAWNDER SERIES

Indiana Proactive Animal Welfare, Inc.
P.O. Box 729
Carmel, Indiana 46082
(317) 345-6773
www.indiana-paw.com



The Debate Over Indoor & Outdoor Cats

Some people believe cats should have the freedom to go outdoors and roam the neighborhood. The truth, however, is that if you allow your cat outside, you are putting her at extreme risk for premature death. Cats who are allowed outdoors are vulnerable to being hit by cars, attacked by other animals, ingesting lethal poisons like antifreeze, contracting deadly diseases, and more. The truth is that cats do NOT have to go outside to lead happy lives, and indoor cats typically live longer, healthier lives than cats who are allowed outdoors. It's also the case that, contrary to myth, you CAN help an outdoor cat become accustomed to living indoors. Below are tips for integrating an outdoor cat into the home.

If You Allow Your Cat Outdoors, Consider The Following:

Cats Who Are Allowed Outdoors Are Vulnerable To The Following:



- Freezing to death;
- Contracting a disease from another animal (including Feline Leukemia and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, which are incurable, lethal diseases);
- Mistreatment by humans (e.g., many people steal cats and use them as "bait" to train fighting dogs);
- Being hit by a car (the idea that cats are "road-smart" is simply a myth);
- Being attacked by another animal;
- Ingesting a fatal poison (e.g., antifreeze, brake fluid, household disinfectants, Turpentine, Aspirin, diet pills, paint and varnish);
- Becoming permanently lost;
- Falling prey to parasites like fleas and ticks;
- Starvation;
- Intestinal parasites (e.g., tapeworm, roundworms, and coccidia);
- Eating toxic plants (e.g., Azaleas, Daffodils, Lilies, Oleander, and Rhododendron);
- Contributing to the tragedy of pet overpopulation (unaltered outdoor cats are the most common contributors to unwanted feline pregnancy – one female cat and her offspring can reproduce 400,000+ kittens in just 7 years); and
- A dramatically shortened life span (outdoor cats have an average life expectancy of just 3 years, while indoor cats have an average life expectancy of 15 years).

Tips For Helping An Outdoor Cat Adjust To Life As An Indoor-Only Cat

Take Steps To Prevent Your Former Outdoor Cat From Escaping

- Keep your windows closed or put in sturdy screens.
- Teach your children and visitors that it's important that they NOT let the cat slip out when they open doors.

What To Give Your Cat To Ease Her Transition From Outdoors To Indoors

- Provide your cat with cat nip, toys, a cat tree, a scratching post, and/or a kitty condo, so that your cat can entertain herself.
- Provide your cat with access to a screened-in porch or a window seat, so that she can still enjoy watching birds and squirrels.

Introduce Your Cat To A Litter Box

- Introduce your cat to a litter box, and be patient as she learns to use it.
- Scoop the litter box on a daily basis, to keep odor to a minimum and to keep the box clean enough for your cat to be willing to use it.
- You'll also need to change the litter anywhere from once to three times a week, depending on the number of cats in your home and the type of litter you use.
- When you change the litter, be sure to NOT use strong smelling chemicals or cleaning products, or your cat may avoid the litter box.

Spend Lots Of Playtime With Your Cat

- Try to spend at least 20 – 30 minutes a day playing with your cat, and familiarizing your cat with her toys (laser pointers are very popular).
- Consider adopting a second cat from a shelter so that your cat has a playmate.

Consider Taking Your Cat Out On A Leash And Harness

- If your cat is having difficulty adjusting, consider taking her outside on a leash and harness.
- Remember, you should NOT allow your cat outside without a leash, EVEN IF you have a fence. Your cat WILL be able to scale your fence and escape your yard.

Be Patient

- Making your outdoor cat an indoor cat will require time and patience.
- Your cat may cry while she's adjusting to indoor-life. But hang in there – she's worth your patience, and by keeping her indoors, you'll add to the quality and length of her life!

Suggested Reading

- The Humane Society of the United States, "Bringing An Outside Cat In," http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/cat_care/keep_your_cat_safe_at_home_hsus_safe_cats_campaign/bringing_an_outside_cat_in.html
- The Humane Society of the United States, "A Safe Cat Is A Happy Cat – And Your Cat Is *Only* Safe Indoors," http://www.hsus.org/press_and_publications/humane_society_magazines_and_newsletters/all_animals/volume_4_issue_1_spring_2002/a_safe_cat_is_a_happy_cat_and_your_cat_is_only_safe_indoors.html

Important Note: Indiana-PAW's POINTS TO PAWNDER SERIES is intended to provide quick tips to help citizens address common pet health and behavior questions. It is not intended to replace consultation with one's veterinarian and/or a trained behavior specialist.