



# CatWatch

Expert information on medicine, behavior and health from a world leader in veterinary medicine



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## IN THE NEWS ...

### A search to detect early kidney disease

Cats receiving treatment for hyperthyroidism, the overproduction of thyroid hormone, can develop decreased kidney function. However, today's methods of predicting which cats will experience post-treatment kidney problems are cumbersome and impractical, the Morris Animal Foundation says. The foundation is sponsoring a study to test whether measuring a protein called TGF-beta in cat urine can reliably predict those at risk.

Lauren A. Trepanier, Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who received her DVM degree and Ph.D. in pharmacology at Cornell, is the lead investigator.

If a test can be developed, it might have wider applications for detecting early kidney disease in older cats and, with early intervention, delay its progression, the foundation says.

Hyperthyroidism and kidney disease commonly occur in aging cats. Early signs of kidney failure, according to Cornell's Feline Health Center, include increased water consumption and urination, inappetence, lethargy, weight loss and vomiting. ♦

## Enhance Healing at Home or the Clinic

*Priorities are reducing stress and increasing comfort, from putting a towel on the exam table to speaking softly*

Don't expect your cat to come to you with pleading eyes to book a veterinary appointment when he's not feeling well. That's because cats have a validated reputation for being both prey and predator. They'll do their best not to let anyone know they're injured or ailing. It's a survival mindset.

Adding to their medical woes is the stress generated by traveling inside a pet carrier in stop-and-go traffic or being in a clinic lobby with barking, lunging dogs while waiting for an exam room to become available.

"Unfortunately, stress can delay recovery or make a cat more susceptible to other dis-



eases," says cardiologist Bruce Kornreich, DVM, Ph.D., Associate Director of the Feline Health Center at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "Stress can contribute to gastrointestinal upset, causing a lack of appetite, and can weaken a cat's immune system."

### Practical Guidelines.

Fortunately, you now have access to practical tips to nurse your cat back to health. The American Association of Feline Practitioners and the International Society of Feline Medicine recently created Feline-Friendly Nursing Care Guidelines aimed at two audiences: owners and the veterinary profession.

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## The Best Candidate for Leashed Walks

*A bold, curious cat who likes to explore drawers and isn't content to sit and purr will enjoy a daily outing*

If you have a confident cat, he may be the ideal candidate to join you for a daily walk. "Certainly, not all cats are suited to take on walks," says Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., emeritus James Law Professor of Animal Behavior at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "You need a bold and curious type of cat — the type who looks around in drawers, looks out the window and is not content to sit and purr. This is the type who will truly enjoy a leashed walk."

Regular walks can help you both maintain a healthy weight. Your indoor cat will benefit by having the opportunity to explore a varied environment and more: "We don't know why for certain, but the incidence of interstitial cystitis is much lower

in indoor/outdoor cats than in indoor cats," Dr. Houpt says.

To achieve a successful outing, she shares these tips:

- ♦ **Ensure your cat is healthy** and up-to-date on vaccinations to reduce the risk of his contracting a contagious disease.
- ♦ **Select a harness and leash designed for cats.** Cats have flexible spines and can wiggle out of dog harnesses. Dr. Houpt likes the Premier Pet Come With Me Kitty Harness & Bungee Leash because it's adjustable, secure and easy to put on. She recommends using a bungee-style leash rather than a nylon or leather leash because it offers more give — cats do not

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# CatWatch

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## SHORT TAKES

### Why they pass on pets

The American Humane Association has set an ambitious agenda. To reduce the number of healthy cats and dogs euthanized annually in the U.S., estimated at 3 million to 4 million, the association's Animal Welfare Institute has launched a three-part study to better understand pet ownership and retention.

The first phase consisted of interviews with 1,500 previous owners and non-pet owners for a report on "Reasons for Not Owning a Dog or Cat." Some of the results were surprising, some expected and others disheartening, the association says. Among the findings:

- ◆ Only 18 percent of former owners adopted their cats from a shelter or rescue organization, despite "massive" public education campaigns encouraging the practice. However, 56 percent of former cat owners said they would adopt a cat from a shelter or rescue organization in the future.
- ◆ One in six previous cat owners, or 17 percent, cited lasting grief over the loss of a pet as an obstacle to getting a new pet.
- ◆ Forty-nine percent of respondents who didn't own a pet as an adult had a dog or cat as a child.
- ◆ Seniors were among the least likely to get pets, despite the widely known physical and emotional benefits of pet ownership for older people. Sixty-six percent of previous cat owners 65 or older would not consider getting another cat.
- ◆ More than a third of non-pet owners said they dislike cats.

Other barriers respondents cited were the cost of owning pets and perceived lack of time to care for them. These results point the way to interventions, the AHA says, adding that the most promising are supporting younger, future cat owners and continuing to assess negative attitudes toward cats, identifying methods to help people work through grief, celebrating the prior pet and re-entering the ownership pool, and providing support to future



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owners adopting pets from shelters and rescue agencies.

The second phase of the study will track the number of dogs and cats remaining in their new homes six months after adoption. The third will test strategies to improve retention. The studies are funded through a grant from PetSmart Charities.

"There are still significant hurdles to overcome in helping to keep more of these healthy, adoptable animals out of the nation's shelters," said Patricia Olson, DVM, Ph.D., chief veterinary adviser for the AHA and head of the research institute. "Using the data gathered and the work to be done in future phases of this study, we hope over time to decrease pet homelessness and relinquishment." ❖

### \$1 million to promote health

The American Veterinary Medical Association will contribute \$1 million to a national campaign promoting the importance of routine veterinary care and the role of veterinary professionals in maintaining pet health.

Despite the fact that cat and dog ownership is at a record high in the U.S., with 86 million cats and 78 million dogs currently owned, veterinary visits have declined. Fifty-one percent of veterinarians have experienced a decrease in patient visits, according to an extensive Bayer Health Care study in 2011.

The AVMA contribution will go to Partners for Healthy Pets, an alliance of more than 20 veterinary associations and animal health companies created by the AVMA's committee on preventive healthcare. ❖



# Are Natural Preservatives Up to the Job?

*Some manufacturers use artificial ones to prevent spoilage, especially in high-fat food*

Food preservatives labeled “natural” sound healthy, but they’re not necessarily better at keeping your cat’s food fresh. Depending on the level of fat in the food, artificial preservatives can sometimes do a better job, says nutritionist Joseph Wakshlag, DVM, Ph.D., Associate Professor at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. “The chemical preservatives are typically used with high-fat products because fats will go rancid pretty quickly,” he says.

Manufacturers add preservatives to foods to prevent spoilage caused by bacteria, molds, fungi, or yeast. The preservatives also slow or prevent changes in color, flavor, or texture, and maintain freshness by delaying the onset of rancidity.

Artificial preservatives include sodium erythorbate, sodium nitrite, sodium benzoate, calcium sorbate, potassium sorbate, calcium propionate, BHA, BHT, and EDTA.

**Rosemary Extract.** Commonly used natural preservatives are tocopherols such as vitamin E and its derivatives. When the label on the bag says “naturally preserved with mixed tocopherols,” that means that vitamin E is on the job. After vitamin E, the second most utilized natural preservative is rosemary extract, Dr. Wakshlag says. It contains ascorbic acid and other types of antioxidants that work to quench free oxygen, which can

damage the proteins and fats in your cat’s food.

Despite their “natural” label, natural preservatives are usually formulated in a laboratory. According to the Food and Drug Administration, some ingredients found in nature can be manufactured artificially. Production in a laboratory is usually more economical and ensures that the preservatives have greater purity and more consistent quality than their natural counterparts, the FDA says.

Your nose is likely not up to determining if a naturally preserved dog food is still good, but if your more scent-sensitive feline turns up his nose at the food or eats with less gusto, it may be going stale. Most dry cat food has a shelf life of approximately one year, but Dr. Wakshlag has his own rule for any food that contains more than 20 percent fat: “I like to use it within six months.”

## THE SMART WAY TO STORE FOOD

The best way to store dry cat food is in the bag. If you place the food into another container such as a metal trash can or plastic bin, that means you have one more thing to clean.

“Once you pour it out of the bag and coat the inner lining of a plastic bin with it, then you have to make sure to clean that on a regular basis because of the oily film that develops on the plastic,” says nutritionist Joseph Wakshlag, DVM, Ph.D., at Cornell. “It’s a better storage vessel, but attention needs to be paid to its cleanliness. Just because it’s sealable doesn’t mean the food is any better protected against rancidity.”

**Common natural preservatives** are ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and tocopherols such as vitamin E and its derivatives.

The main chemical preservatives are BHA, BHT, and ethoxyquin. Many pet owners have raised concerns about their presence in cat food.

- ◆ BHA is short for butylated hydroxyanisole.
- ◆ BHT stands for butylated hydroxytoluene.

Both phenolic compounds are chemical antioxidants that have a preservative effect on fats because oxygen reacts to them instead of oxidizing fats or oils and causing them to spoil. BHA has been found to cause cancer in various animal studies, leading the National Institute of Health’s National Toxicology Program to describe it as “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen.” Both BHA and BHT, however, fall under the category of additives labeled GRAS, or generally recognized as safe. Although no available evidence demonstrates a hazard when BHA and BHT are used at current levels, the FDA says uncertainties exist, requiring that additional studies be conducted.

**Suspected Health Problems.** Ethoxyquin is a chemical preservative that helps to prevent the destruction of some vitamins and related compounds in animal food and to prevent peroxides from forming in pet foods. In the 1990s, pet owners attributed health problems such as allergic reactions, skin problems, major organ failures, behavior problems and cancers to ethoxyquin’s presence in

*(continued on bottom of page 4)*



## Why Do They ... knead with their paws?

*This occasional series explores the reasons for cats' often intriguing behavior. If you would like to submit a question, please write to CatWatch Editor, 800 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT 06854, or email [catwatcheditor@cornell.edu](mailto:catwatcheditor@cornell.edu).*



Bonnie Baker

Theories on cats' kneading or treading — rhythmically moving their front paws up and down while flexing and extending their toes — run the gamut from scent marking to mimicking their ancestors in the wild who tamped down grass to create a nest. Kneading, also known as making biscuits, is certainly one of cats' most beguiling behaviors.

"They always choose soft surfaces like a human lap," says Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and emeritus James Law Professor of Animal Behavior at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. The reason harkens back to kittenhood. "The most likely reason is vestigial kneading to stimulate milk letdown in the mother cat."

Some owners are uncomfortable with their cat's kneading them and try a diversion like brushing them. Not a wise idea, Dr. Houpt says. "Cats are treating us like their mothers because we provide food. Unless the claws need trimming, I see no reason to discourage it. Brush the cat, or put him on the floor if you really want to be a rejecting mother. Otherwise, relax and enjoy the free mini-massage." ♦

**When cats move their paws up and down** and flex their toes on their owners' lap, they may be evoking memories from kittenhood.

## NUTRITION

### PRESERVATIVES ... (cont. from page 3)

pet foods. No scientific evidence supported the claims, but ethoxyquin has been linked in manufacturer studies to increases in the levels of liver-related enzymes in the blood and a dose-dependent accumulation of a hemoglobin-related pigment in the liver.

The health effects of these changes are unknown, but in 2009 the FDA asked the pet food industry to voluntarily lower the maximum level of use of ethoxyquin from 150 ppm to 75 ppm. Most pet foods that contained ethoxyquin never exceeded the lower

amount, even before this recommended change, the FDA says.

Should you worry about artificial preservatives in your cat's food? Dr. Wakshlag says no. "They get a bit of a bad rap because they are not natural chemicals, but most chemically based preservatives in the food industry typically go through toxicity studies. If you give enough of anything, you can cause liver or kidney issues, or you can cause a tumor to develop. Many scientific studies are performed on rodents and everybody claims that 'It caused

disease X to occur in a rat,' but the amounts that are used is 1/1000th of the amount that causes these problems in toxicity studies."

A food's quality is more important than how it is preserved, he says. "I'd rather see my cats eat a very small amount of a chemical preservative and ensure that they aren't eating rancid food. In the best of all worlds, you get a bag that has natural preservatives and you use it within three to four months, and you don't have to worry about chemical preservatives at all." ♦



# WALK ... (continued from cover)



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Once an indoor cat becomes accustomed to walking on leash, he can reap the benefits of good physical and mental health. A daily walk of only 10 to 15 minutes will help avoid obesity and provide a varied environment.

like being suddenly yanked. You don't want to attach a leash to a collar because a sharp pull could injure your cat's trachea.

- ◆ **Be patient.** Introduce your cat to the harness and leash indoors. It may take a few hours or a few weeks for him to become accustomed to it. Start by placing the harness and leash around his food bowl or near his scratching post. Then put the harness and leash on your cat and let him walk around the house. Praise him and give him his favorite treat. If he seems to accept the gear, then test him in a secure outdoor location, such as a fenced backyard, before taking him out on the sidewalk.
- ◆ **Accept the catwalk style.** You can't expect a cat eager to explore to trot alongside you like a dog. Cats like to meander, stop and start, and walk

in various directions, depending on the sight (a bug on the sidewalk) or sound (a robin singing in a nest) that draws their attention.

- ◆ **Stick to a schedule.** Cats crave routines and will look forward to your daily walks. In general, 10 to 15 minutes can provide enough physical exercise. If possible, time the walk when you know neighborhood dogs aren't on their walks.
- ◆ **Pay attention to your surroundings.** Always look ahead and around to avoid spraying sprinklers, lawns sprayed with chemicals, leashed or loose dogs and other potential hazards.

"If a dog off leash comes heading your way, try to shoo the dog away and stand between the dog and your cat," Dr. Houpt says. "Dogs like to look at

their prey, so this maneuver blocks his view. And, if you can, pick your cat up at arm's length so you won't get scratched."

If off-leash dogs roam your neighborhood, consider taking along a canister of compressed air or citronella spray to repel one who might advance on the attack.

Despite your best efforts, if your cat doesn't enjoy walking on a leash, perhaps he would like riding in a screened baby stroller. Or perhaps you could install an outdoor enclosure so he can explore beyond his window ledge free from risk.

"Walks — or safe access to the outdoors — give indoor cats the opportunities to see and smell different things," Dr. Houpt says. "That can go a long way in preventing behavior issues due to an indoor cat being bored with nothing to do but eat and nap." ♦

## 'YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO DEFEND YOURSELF'

If you plan to take your cat for a walk, be aware of possible legal issues that could surface if he's harmed by a dog or if he scratches a person. In the simplest terms, you are legally liable for your cat's actions, whether he's in your home or walking with you, says Jonathan Rankin, an attorney in Framingham, Mass., who specializes in animal law. He recommends that you keep your cat's nails trimmed and fit him with a properly sized harness.

Be cautious, too, about letting strangers pet or pick up your cat

because he may bite or scratch out of fear. "Even if you didn't give permission to someone and they rush up to pet your cat and get injured, you are still on the hook legally," Rankin says.

And if a neighbor's dog bolts out of his house, charges and injures you and/or your cat, you have the legal right to attempt to defend yourself by spraying mace or kicking the canine attacker. If you or your cat gets injured, you can also sue for damages to try to recoup any medical costs incurred.

"If a dog starts to attack you, especially if you are on public property like a sidewalk, you have a right to defend yourself," Rankin says. "The owner of the dog could be found guilty of negligence."

Courts view pets as property, but that mindset is changing, Rankin says. "Courts are becoming more aware that animals mean more to people than a piece of property like a TV or stereo. I predict we will see cases in which animals are seen as family members."



## HEALING ... (continued from cover)

"What I really like about this new set of guidelines is that it reaches out to everyone involved in the well-being of cats and that it is very comprehensive," Dr. Kornreich says. "What you do to treat a sick cat, whether you are a veterinarian, vet tech or owner, does influence your cat's emotional state and well being. Cats are quite good at reading our feelings of stress and anxiety."

The guidelines identify these 10 ways to enhance your cat's healing at home:

◆ *Select a welcoming place to administer medications.* Pick a quiet, private area in your home — one your cat enjoys — to give his medicine. A small, confined space to prevent escape is ideal. Cats equate small spaces with a heightened sense of security.

◆ *Stick with a routine that works.* Cats don't like surprises. If you choose the bathroom, place your cat on a thick bath towel on the counter or even on the sink to add to his comfort.

◆ *Create a positive reinforcement connection.* Be sure to provide a healthy treat or a soothing brushing session so he begins to associate medicine time with rewards.

◆ *Follow the vet's instructions for administering medication.* Some can be taken with food; other medicines may cause gastrointestinal upset or reduced appetite.



**A healthy treat or gentle brushing session** after administering medicine helps a cat associate it with a reward.

◆ *Find ways to enhance food.* Some cats recovering from illness may be off food. Gently heating canned food in the microwave for 10 to 12 seconds can make it more appealing. You can also add a teaspoon of low-sodium chicken broth or tuna juice to canned or dry food.

◆ *Swap the food bowl for a paper plate or flat bowl.* "Cats may not like to have their whiskers scrunched and that may happen when they attempt to eat from small, deep bowls," Dr. Kornreich says. Reaching into deep bowls may also cause musculoskeletal discomfort, depending upon the cat's condition.

## DOES YOUR CAT'S CLINIC OFFER THESE AMENITIES AND SERVICES?

The Feline-Friendly Nursing Care Guidelines recommend these steps for veterinarians to reduce stress and produce a better examination and hospital stay. If your cat's clinic doesn't offer these amenities and services, perhaps you could suggest them.

- ◆ Keep the cat's carrier off the ground and provide an elevated surface like a table or bench in the lobby.
- ◆ Provide a quiet, warm exam room with a non-slip examination table.
- ◆ Distract the cat with wand toys and treats during the physical examination.
- ◆ Bring in all the necessary supplies and equipment in one trip to avoid unnecessary traffic in and out of the room.
- ◆ Maintain separate cat and dog waiting areas and hospital wards, if possible, to speed healing.
- ◆ Use low levels of light as a way to calm anxious cats and encourage them to rest during their hospital stay.
- ◆ Provide cages big enough to allow space for a litter box apart from an area for food and water bowls and space for a cat to hide.
- ◆ Maintain a cat's body heat by providing thick towels, orthopedic bedding or yoga mats.





**Cats may feel more secure** at the veterinary clinic if their carriers are on a bench or table. They can more easily see their surroundings from a height.

Some cats, attempting to eat from a deep bowl, may walk away and fail to consume needed nutrients. "Eating a complete and balanced meal is vital, especially in cats recovering from an illness or a surgical procedure," he says.

◆ **Resist piling on the kibble.** You need to know exactly how much your cat consumes eat day. Measure each portion and serve two or three small meals daily.

◆ **Avoiding forcing medicine.** Don't attempt to forcibly retrieve your cat hiding under your bed to give him medicine. And don't interrupt him while he's grooming, eating or using the litter box because it is time to give him medicine.

◆ **Practice patience and stay calm.** Don't try to give medicine to your cat when you're in a hurry or in a bad mood. Cats can sense our levels of frustration or impatience and can become fearful or anxious.

◆ **Don't skip any appointments.** Even though your cat may seem back to his healthy self, take him to the veterinarian for his follow-up appointment and be sure to completely finish his medicine.

In addition to at-home stress-reducing tips, the feline medical organizations created a brochure called "Getting Your Cat to the Veterinarian" to make vet visits easier. Their experts recommend these six tactics to produce a more pleasant and positive appointment:

◆ **Time your visit during non-peak times.** If your cat hates to ride in a car and feels anxious while inside a carrier in the waiting room occupied by dogs, contact the clinic staff and ask for a specific time to enable you to go directly into an exam room and bypass the waiting room. Once inside the exam room, speak to your cat in soothing, low tones to keep him calm.

◆ **Practice proper cat etiquette.** Avoid actions and vocalizations that will

escalate your cat's anxiety or fearfulness. Avoid staring directly into his face, bear hugging him, invading his personal space or trying to quiet his meowing by making a "shhhh" sound. "The 'shhhh' sound may be interpreted as a hiss to cats and may make your cat more agitated," Dr. Kornreich says.

◆ **Avoid physical punishment.** Tapping your cat's head or giving him stern verbal reprimands to quiet down in a veterinary clinic can backfire and provoke a fight-or-flight response.

◆ **Be positive.** When your cat is being quiet or sitting still, reward him with friendly pets or small treats. Ignore negative behavior rather than trying to correct it.

◆ **Keep your cat in the carrier until you're in a closed exam room and a veterinary staff member tells you it's safe to take him out.** When choosing a carrier, select one with an opening at the top as well as the front for greater ease in placing your cat inside and out.

◆ **If your cat needs to stay overnight at the clinic, you can make his stay more pleasant by bringing bedding or a favorite toy from home.** Alert the staff about the brand of cat litter and food that your cat uses and favorite activities he likes, such as brushing or play time.

In a joint statement, co-chairs of the guidelines committee, Hazel Carney, DVM, DACBP, and Susan Little, DVM, DABVP, acknowledged that their advice may seem daunting: "However, even small improvements and incremental progress in feline nursing care can pay immediate dividends and start building a culture of skilled and compassionate feline care."

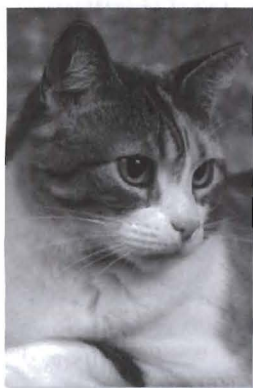
Dr. Kornreich applauds the issuing of the guidelines, adding, "This report offers practical tips and strengthens the communication between owners and veterinary staff. As a result, cats will definitely benefit by receiving better care at the veterinary clinic and at home." ♦

### FOR A COPY OF THE GUIDELINES AND BROCHURE

To download a free copy of the "Getting Your Cat to the Veterinarian" brochure, please visit <http://catvets.com/GetCatToVet>.

To access the feline-friendly nursing care guidelines, visit <http://catvets.com/professionals/guidelines/publications>.





Elizabeth

Elizabeth is thankful for the assistance of **Bruce G. Kornreich, DVM, Ph.D., DACVIM**, Associate Director of the Cornell Feline Health Center, in providing the answer on this page.

**PLEASE  
SHARE YOUR  
QUESTIONS**

We welcome questions on health, medicine and behavior, but regret that we cannot comment on prior diagnoses and specific products. Please write CatWatch Editor, 800 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT, 06854 or email [catwatcheditor@cornell.edu](mailto:catwatcheditor@cornell.edu).

**COMING UP ...**

- ❖  
**ADOPTING  
A STRAY**
- ❖  
**GIVING  
MEDICATIONS**
- ❖  
**RESEARCHING  
A DEADLY  
VIRUS**
- ❖  
**CONTAGIOUS  
RINGWORM**

**Q** Our family is excited about adopting a new kitten from the local shelter (they are so cute!), but we are admittedly kitty illiterate! We were wondering if you might be able to provide some sage advice to us feline rookies.

*Sincerely,  
Eagerly Awaiting Kitty*

**A** I think it's wonderful that you are thinking of adopting one of my brethren. The decision to adopt a kitty is, as you know, not one to be taken lightly, as this involves years of commitment and dedication. Once a prospective cat owner makes this decision, though, there are a few things to think about in preparation for opening your heart and your home to one of my feline friends.

First, it is important to take steps to assure that the kitty is healthy and that measures are taken to maintain his good health. A visit to your veterinarian is the best way to address important health issues such as appropriate vaccination protocols, treatment and prevention of ectoparasites (such as fleas and ticks) and endoparasites (such as tapeworms and hookworms), and proper nutrition for the various stages of a cat's life.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners' vaccine guidelines consider vaccination against feline panleukopenia virus, feline herpes virus, feline calicivirus and rabies virus to be core vaccines. Vaccination for feline leukemia virus is considered a non-core vaccine but is highly recommended in all kittens. Feline immunodeficiency virus vaccination should generally be reserved for cats at high risk of infection. Tests for viral diseases such as feline leukemia virus and feline immunodeficiency virus may also be recommended. With respect to diet, remember that the appropriate diet for a kitten is different from that for a healthy adult cat, which is also different from the ideal diet for a geriatric cat.

Another consideration before bringing a new kitty into your home is making sure that the environment is safe and will support the cat's emotional well-being. Securing and preventing access to toxic substances ranging from antifreeze in your garage to dieffenba-

chia and poinsettia plants in your living room is very important, as cats are pretty inquisitive creatures (trust me, I know).

If there are dogs in your home, a new cat should be gradually introduced, and the introduction should be supervised carefully. Introduction of a new cat to a dog through a partial barrier such as a baby gate may make things easier in some cases, and having the resident dog on a leash for appropriate control is recommended. Educating young children about the appropriate manner to interact with cats is also an important issue, as many children just want to squeeze us cats, which we understand comes from a good place but which drives many of us crazy!

Another thing that drives us crazy is boredom. A lack of interactive and intellectually stimulating activities can depress cats and sometimes make us take part in activities that are not good for us. Appropriate toys and quality time with our owners can go a long way toward keeping kitties happy.

Getting a new kitty accustomed to a new place may take some time, but calm patience is a virtue. We cats can often read your emotions, so make sure to take plenty of time to speak calmly and stroke and groom your new kitty as a form of positive reinforcement. One major adjustment issue may be selection of appropriate type of litter and location for the litter box. Try to avoid scented litter and placement of the litter box in areas where odors may accumulate and/or where your new friend cannot have privacy, and please be sure to clean the litter box daily. I hate going in a litter box that hasn't been cleaned, and I can understand why my friends may eliminate in inappropriate places when their owners don't keep their boxes clean! Positive reinforcement for appropriate usage of the litter is a great idea.

I know this is a lot to think of, but I also know that your decision to take in a kitty will provide you both with years of happiness together. For more information on other important issues regarding adopting a new kitty, please visit the Feline Health Center Website at [www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/](http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/). ❖

*Best regards,  
Elizabeth*

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