

Dont Let the Cat Out

We have all heard the excuses for letting cats outdoors, "It's only natural for a cat to go outside", "Cats can take care of themselves", "He wants to go out", "I feel guilty not letting him out".

The problem is, they are just that, excuses. It is not "natural" for a cat to be outside. When humans domesticated cats, they removed them from the wild and therefore, changed their ecological role. Cats are no longer wild predators that fit into an ecosystem, but are dependent on humans, receiving the things they need to live from people.

Secondly, cats need humans more than we think. As aloof and independent as they seem to be, people still fill a vital role in their lives, providing them with food, water, shelter, veterinary care, etc. You might be tempted to let your cat out because "He wants to go out", likewise, young children might like to play outside unsupervised, but allowing them to do so would be preposterous and negligent.

If you feel guilty not letting your cat outdoors, consider how guilty you would feel if your cat got hit by a car or contracted a fatal disease? This happens all too often to cats that are allowed to roam outdoors. There are many feline diseases that are spread cat to cat, including FIV (the feline equivalent to HIV), Feline Leukemia, and Distemper. These are all fatal diseases. You have no control over what your cat does outside, where he goes, or what other cats (or cruel people) he interacts with.

There are other unpleasant things that could happen to outdoor cats too. When your cat is let outside, and realizes that there are other cats out there, he may start "spraying" to mark his territory in your house. Also, your cat can bring in fleas, ticks, fungus such as ringworm, dead snakes, bugs and mice. Definitely not something I want in my house!

Obviously it is too dangerous for your vulnerable little cat to explore the "Great Outdoors", so, how can you keep a cat that is kept indoors entertained?

1. Provide plenty of things that are okay to scratch. Put scratching posts in a few different places in your house. It is natural for cats to scratch, so they must be provided something that is "approved" to do so. Scratching helps them remove broken claws, and stretch their muscles. Show them where it is alright to scratch, or put catnip on and around the posts.
2. Give them plenty of cat toys to play with. There are tons of cat toys you can purchase, but even the simplest thing can provide hours of fun for your kitty; empty boxes to climb in, crumpled balls of paper, paper bags to hide in, etc. *NOTE* - Avoid toys with small or loose parts that can be choked on or swallowed.
3. Place a birdbath or feeder outside a window. Windows are like T.V. to cats. If the window sill is too narrow, you can buy perches for cats to sit on at your local pet supply store that attach under the window sill. *NOTE* - Make sure that if the window is open, there is a screen in place. Never leave a cat unattended in a window with a screen - if they push against it, it may fall out. Also, make sure all the cords from blinds are up and out of the way; a cat can hang themselves, choke or get tangled up.
4. Grow some catnip. You can buy catnip, oat grass and wheat grass from your local garden nursery or a pet supply store. It can be grown indoors so your cat can nibble on it.
5. Hide cat treats around your house. Put a cat treat on your cat's bed or on a scratching post, or anywhere

she spends a lot of time (a different place each time). You can buy cat toys that are made to put treats inside so your cat can "hunt" for her snack.

6. Get a companion for your cat. If your cat is the only pet you have, consider getting another cat for companionship. Cats are social animals, and can get depressed if they are left alone on a regular basis.
7. Play with your cat! Daily interaction with your cat is important to build and maintain your bond with her.

Remember, just keeping your cat indoors could add years to her life! The average housecat lives to be 15 to 20 years old, and outdoor cats live on average only 2-5 years.