



Other dietary needs

- 2.12** Cats that are pregnant, feeding their kittens, ill, old or young may well have different dietary needs from the average healthy adult cat. Your vet is the best person to advise you about the care of your cat in these circumstances.
- 2.13** As the person responsible for your cat you are expected to:
- provide food suitable for your cat according to its age and condition;
 - provide enough food to keep your cat healthy but not too much to cause obesity; and
 - make sure that there are as many food and water bowls available as there are cats. Spread these around so that each cat can eat separately without feeling threatened by the others. Check that all of the animals are getting adequate food and water suitable for their individual needs.



Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats
Section 3 - Behaviour





Behaviour

Its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

- 3.1** This section offers guidance on your cat's behaviour.
- 3.2** Although cats have lived with us in our homes for centuries, their behaviour is still very close to that of their wild ancestors. Cats look and behave as they do because they are basically hunters and still need to have an outlet for these natural behaviours. Cats have learnt to adapt to our domestic routines and how we live our lives, but they also need to be able to display their natural behaviour patterns.

Early experiences

- 3.3** Some cats are naturally more confident than others. However, the way that each cat behaves is also influenced by experiences during the first eight to ten weeks of life. Generally, cats that are well 'socialised' at this early age will be able to cope confidently as adults with most new situations and people. You should ensure that your kitten meets and interacts with people, including children, with dogs and with other cats as well as coming into contact with normal household sights and sounds.
- 3.4** Adult cats that have not had these early experiences may find it difficult to cope with day-to-day family life. They may find it stressful and be very nervous, hiding away a great deal of the time. As kittens may not go to new homes until around 8 weeks old or older, it is up to the owner or breeder of the litter to make sure that the kittens are well socialised if they are to develop into confident, happy pet cats.

Boredom and frustration

- 3.5** Cats that are kept indoors or prefer this lifestyle rely on you to provide everything for them, including entertainment. You should ensure that your cat has enough mental stimulation from you and from its environment to avoid boredom and frustration. It is your responsibility to provide opportunities for your cat to satisfy all of its behavioural needs, such as play (hunting behaviours - see section 3) and companionship.



- 3.6** Some cats that are frustrated may begin to exhibit behavioural changes such as withdrawal, overeating, sleeping more and possibly aggression or over-grooming.

Signs of stress

- 3.7** Cats respond to stress in different ways and it is important that you can recognise any changes in the behaviour of your cat. In most cases, where cats are afraid, they prefer to run away to a quiet and hidden location. This is normal behaviour, but is reason for concern if it happens more than just occasionally.
- 3.8** When a cat is frightened or cannot escape, this can lead to aggression. A cat that is not used to people may hiss, spit or lash out when cornered.
- 3.9** Some cats that are afraid may not carry out their normal routine activities, such as eating, sleeping and grooming. Your cat may soil in the house if afraid to go outside or to the litter tray. A cat may also spray urine indoors if stressed; this is especially the case if other cats are causing it to feel stressed.
- 3.10** When cats are stressed over a longer period of time, they can develop abnormal behaviours. These may include:
- being quiet and subdued or going missing for a few days;
 - being very nervous and watchful;
 - being unusually aggressive to people or other cats;
 - stopping eating, drinking or grooming;
 - overeating;
 - being restless and not sleeping/sleeping excessively;
 - howling or making unusual vocal sounds;
 - panting;
 - soiling or spraying urine indoors;
 - persistently hiding away;
 - being unusually affectionate;
 - pacing or 'patrolling' around the house;
 - excessive grooming of the coat, or pulling out fur;
 - being hypersensitive or over-reactive.
- 3.11** It is important that you can recognise any of these signs of stress in your cat; some may also be signs of illness. If you are concerned, you should contact your vet who may refer you to an animal behaviourist.

Avoiding danger

- 3.12** Fear and anxiety are responses that enable animals to avoid dangerous situations. Animals that are put in situations where they are constantly fearful, however, become very stressed and this can affect their health and welfare.



- 3.13** Part of a cat's natural behaviour is hiding from a real or perceived danger as well as from stressful circumstances. Some cats prefer to hide inside or under things while others prefer to climb up high. You should provide a secure hiding place that your cat can easily reach at all times so that it can hide away from stressful situations, such as contact with other animals or people. Make sure that such facilities are available for each cat if you have more than one.

Typical behaviours

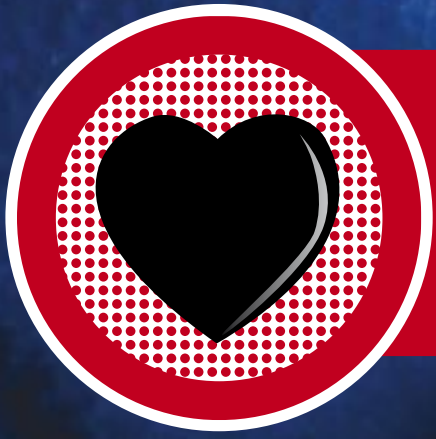
- 3.14** It is natural for cats to display hunting behaviour. This is not linked to hunger, as cats that have recently eaten will sometimes still try to hunt. If your cat does not or cannot go outdoors, you should play with it to mimic these hunting behaviours, using indoor toys and games. These can include a lightweight rolling toy or one that involves catching behaviour, such as fishing rod type toys. Indoor cats can also find mental stimulation in feeding from 'puzzle feeders' that release dried food gradually.
- 3.15** Avoid using your hands and feet when playing with your cat as this may encourage aggressive behaviour in your pet when, for example, someone tries to stroke it.

Scratching or Claw conditioning

- 3.16** Scratching or 'claw conditioning' is part of normal cat behaviour. Cats condition their claws for various reasons, and regular scratching removes the frayed and worn outer claws, exposing the new and sharper claws growing underneath. It also exercises and strengthens the muscles used when the claws move in and out of the paw, which is essential for a cat's normal behaviour of climbing and catching prey. There are also glands between the pads of a cat's feet, so scratching leaves scent marks.
- 3.17** Cats prefer to condition their claws on facilities tall enough for them to exercise at full stretch and stable enough so that it does not fall over when used. This is why cats often scratch furniture to condition their claws. To avoid or reduce damage to furniture you can provide a scratching post; these are available from most pet shops or can be home made. The post should be stable and high enough for the cat to exercise at full body stretch.

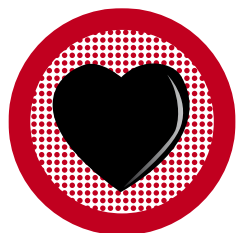
Exercise

- 3.18** Make sure your cat has opportunities to exercise each day to stay fit and healthy. If it does not go outside, provide suitable indoor activities to keep your cat active.



**Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats
Section 4 - Company**





Company

Any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals

4.1 This section offers guidance on providing your cat with suitable company.

Socialisation

4.2 The modern day cat originated from a species that lived a very solitary life, although they may choose to be sociable with other cats. They are, however, not as good at organising themselves into 'social groups' as are a more naturally social species like dogs. Cats don't have the same range of face and body postures to signal to each other as do dogs, so they cannot easily communicate with each other to help avoid conflicts. This is why cats fight regularly and why fighting can result in serious injuries.

Relations with other animals and people

- 4.3** Cats can form social groups with other cats that they have grown up with or know well, but will feel very threatened by cats outside this well-known group. The tolerance of cats towards other cats also varies with their early experiences (see Section 3), so their ability and desire to socialise can vary enormously. It is, therefore, best not to keep too many cats together, especially if they do not have access to the outside.
- 4.4** Where cats come into close contact with other cats they do not like, they may become very stressed; this is the commonest cause of stress in cats. Therefore it is important for you to know how your cats react to other cats, both those kept in the same house as well as those in the neighbourhood. In multi-cat households individuals should be able to avoid each other.
- 4.5** Stressed cats may sit still or hide, trying to avoid interactions with other cats. In some cases they may soil or spray indoors or exhibit other signs of stress (see Section 3).
- 4.6** Adults or children who do not understand the needs of cats, or how to handle them correctly, can cause them stress. Responsible adults should ensure that cats in their care are handled properly and are not stressed or endangered by other adults, children or animals. Dogs should be introduced to cats very carefully; the dog should be held safely on a lead at first so that it cannot chase the cat.



When you are away from home

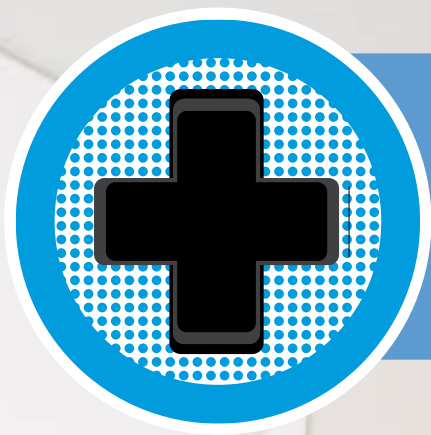
- 4.7** You have a responsibility to make sure that your cat is cared for properly when you go away. Many cats prefer to stay in their familiar environment, but you should take into consideration how your cat will cope in your absence, how long you will be away and whether a neighbour or cat sitter will be able to meet your cat's needs. You should consider whether a good cattery would be better, where your cat can be monitored and cared for more closely by someone knowledgeable on how to look after it. All boarding catteries must be licensed by law. When someone else is looking after your cat they are responsible for its welfare and you should ensure that they understand its needs and any special requirements that it may have.





Numbers of animals

- 4.8** If a lot of animals are kept together, this can contribute to a stressful and unhealthy environment. Large numbers of animals need a great deal of care and you should not keep a large number of cats if you cannot meet their welfare needs. If they are not kept in hygienic conditions the environment can become contaminated with infectious agents that can cause disease, which may spread between animals.



Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats Section 5 - Health & Welfare





Health & Welfare

Its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

5.1 This section offers guidance on the health and welfare of your cat.

Health care

5.2 Good health is an essential part of good cat welfare. Your cat's vet is the best person to advise you about routine health care, such as neutering, vaccination, and internal and external parasite control, as well as any health problems it may have.

As the person responsible for your cat's welfare you need to consider:

- prevention of disease. There are various vaccinations that are designed to protect your cat(s) from certain diseases;
- prevention of parasite problems - many worming and flea preparations are available. Your veterinary surgeon or pet care specialist will be able to advise you about which are suitable for your cat;
- provision of a healthy balanced diet (see Section 2);
- provision of the right environment that minimises the risk of injury and disease (see Section 1);
- prompt action if a cat becomes ill or begins to behave in an unusual way; and
- good dental hygiene.

Illness

5.3 It is important that you are aware of the signs of illness in your cat, and that you consult a vet promptly if these occur.

Indications of illness include:

- a change in behaviour, such as becoming quiet or withdrawn;
- a change in eating or drinking habits, such as a lack of appetite or excessive thirst;
- a change in weight, in either direction;
- signs of injury such as a swollen limb or walking in an abnormal way;
- signs of disease, such as a discharge from the eye, ear or nose, difficulty in going to the toilet, sickness and diarrhoea; and
- signs of pain, such as not wanting to be touched in a sensitive area.



This list is not exhaustive and any change in your cat's behaviour should alert you to the possibility that it may be ill. If you think that there is anything wrong with your cat, call your veterinary practice for advice.

Grooming

- 5.4** Other natural cat behaviours include grooming and keeping the coat free from tangles. However, some cats need help with their coat care. If you have a longhaired cat, remember that you will have to groom the coat at least once a day to avoid mats and tangles. Your cat may also need special attention when recovering from an illness or injury. When cats stop grooming themselves, owners should seek advice from their vet, as this can be a sign of stress or disease.





Neutering

5.5 One particularly important consideration is preventing the birth of unwanted kittens. You should, therefore, consider having your cat neutered. Cats can be neutered from about four months old onwards, but your vet will be able to advise you about the best age. With female cats, it is best to have them neutered before their first season. This usually happens when they are between four to six months old.

Having your cat neutered has many benefits:

- female cats can have as many as three litters a year if not neutered. A cat can have up to five or six kittens per litter, potentially producing up to 18 possibly unwanted kittens a year so you may end up with more cats than you can properly care for;
- motherhood takes a lot out of a cat and having repeated litters may shorten her life expectancy;
- neutering female cats means they will not suffer from infections of the uterus later in life;
- un-neutered male cats are more likely to mark by spraying strong smelling urine inside their homes;
- un-neutered male cats are more likely to wander widely and to fight. Neutering them reduces the risk of abscesses resulting from fights and injuries caused by road traffic accidents;
- un-neutered male cats can cause distress to neighbours by spraying near their homes, fighting with their pet cats and being noisy;
- reproductive hormones can influence the behaviour of un-neutered male and female cats. This can result in the cat advertising their availability by making loud sounds ('calling') as well as fighting, wandering and marking their territory;
- Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) are serious diseases spread through saliva. As neutered cats are less likely to wander and fight, there is less likelihood of them becoming infected or spreading these diseases to other cats; and
- neutering prevents the development of uterine and testicular cancer and reduces the risk of female cats developing mammary tumours.

If you decide not to have your cat neutered and wish to breed from it, there are a number of considerations to be taken into account which include:

- finding suitable homes for the kittens; and
- health screening to ensure that the parents do not carry any inherited defects which may be passed on to their offspring.



You will also need to consider the potential problem of unplanned matings.

Help may be available from various charities who offer neutering at a discounted rate for those on benefits or low incomes.

The pro's and cons of whether to neuter your cat, as well as timing, should be discussed with your veterinary surgeon to decide whether it is in the best interest of your cat.

Identification

- 5.6** Cats are generally identified by two methods (that may be used in combination) to help trace their owner should they become lost. These are:
- microchipping - the preferred method of identification. A microchip is a tiny computer chip, about the size of a grain of rice, that contains a unique identification number. It is injected under the skin of a pet by a vet or trained pet care specialist and the owner's details are kept on a database. This will help you to be re-united with your cat if it is lost as, when a pet is found and taken to a rescue centre or a vet, it will be scanned with a reader to see if there is a chip under the skin. The number shown on the reader will then enable the owner to be traced;
 - wearing a collar that has the cat's owner's contact details. A correctly fitted 'quick release' or snap opening collar is best, as it means that the cat is less likely to be trapped should the collar become caught or tangled. The collar should be of the correct size (neither too tight nor too loose) and you should be able to place two fingers underneath it when the cat is wearing it. A cat's leg or jaw may become caught in an elasticated or ill-fitting collar and this can result in serious injury. A collar can also be lost.



What to do if your cat is missing

- 5.7** You should contact local vets and rescue centres as well those in a wider area as cats can travel for some distance if lost. You can also put up notices locally and ask your neighbours to look in their sheds or garages in case your cat has been accidentally shut in. If your cat is microchipped it may be identified as yours when scanned by a microchip reader and this will speed its return to you.

Appendix 1

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats The Law



Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats





The Law

The Animal Welfare Act 2006

The following sections of the Act are referred to in the code and are set out here for ease of reference:

The boxes below contain extracts from the relevant sections of the Act.

The box shaded grey summarises the relevant offences and penalties in the Act.

Section 3 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides:

Responsibility for animals

- (1) In this Act, references to a person responsible for an animal are to a person responsible for an animal whether on a permanent or temporary basis.
- (2) In this Act, references to being responsible for an animal include being in charge of it.
- (3) For the purposes of this Act, a person who owns an animal shall always be regarded as being a person who is responsible for it.
- (4) For the purposes of this Act, a person shall be treated as responsible for any animal for which a person under the age of 16 years of whom he has actual care and control is responsible.

Section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides:

Unnecessary suffering

- (1) A person commits an offence if:-
 - (a) an act of his, or a failure of his to act, causes an animal to suffer,
 - (b) he knew, or ought reasonably to have known, that the act, or failure to act, would have that effect or be likely to do so,
 - (c) the animal is a protected animal, and
 - (d) the suffering is unnecessary.
- (2) A person commits an offence if:-
 - (a) he is responsible for an animal,
 - (b) an act, or failure to act, of another person causes the animal to suffer,



- (c) he permitted that to happen or failed to take such steps (whether by way of supervising the other person or otherwise) as were reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent that happening, and
 - (d) the suffering is unnecessary.
- (3) The considerations to which it is relevant to have regard when determining for the purposes of this section whether suffering is unnecessary include:-
- (a) whether the suffering could reasonably have been avoided or reduced;
 - (b) whether the conduct which caused the suffering was in compliance with any relevant enactment or any relevant provisions of a licence or code of practice issued under an enactment;
 - (c) whether the conduct which caused the suffering was for a legitimate purpose, such as:-
 - (i) the purpose of benefiting the animal, or
 - (ii) the purpose of protecting a person, property or other animal;
 - (d) whether the suffering was proportionate to the purpose of the conduct concerned;
 - (e) whether the conduct concerned was in all the circumstances that of a reasonably competent and humane person.
- (4) Nothing in this section applies to the destruction of an animal in an appropriate and humane manner.

Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides:

Duty of person responsible for animal to ensure welfare

- (1) A person commits an offence if he does not take such steps as are reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure that the needs of an animal for which he is responsible are met to the extent required by good practice.
- (2) For the purpose of this Act, an animal's needs shall be taken to include:-
 - (a) its need for a suitable environment,
 - (b) its need for a suitable diet,
 - (c) its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns,
 - (d) any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals, and
 - (e) its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.
- (3) The circumstances to which it is relevant to have regard when applying subsection (1) include, in particular:-
 - (a) any lawful purpose for which the animal is kept, and
 - (b) any lawful activity undertaken in relation to the animal.
- (4) Nothing in this section applies to the destruction of an animal in an appropriate and humane manner.



Section 14 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides:

Codes of Practice

- (3) A person's failure to comply with a provision of a code of practice issued under this section shall not of itself render him liable to proceedings of any kind.
- (4) In any proceedings against a person for an offence under this Act or an offence under regulations under section 12 or 13:-
 - (a) a failure to comply with a relevant provision of a code of practice issued under this section may be relied upon as tending to establish liability, and
 - (b) compliance with a relevant provision of such a code of practice may be relied upon as tending to negative liability.

Offences and Penalties

A person who is convicted of an offence under section 4 of the Act may be imprisoned for a maximum period of 51 weeks* and/or fined up to £20,000. If they are convicted of an offence under section 9 (failing to ensure the animal's welfare) they can be imprisoned for the same maximum period and fined up to level 5 on the standard scale.

Proceedings may be brought up to 3 years after the offence was committed. Prosecutions under the Act are brought by the local authority in the Magistrates Court.

*** The maximum period of imprisonment will be 51 weeks when section 281(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 comes into force.**

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats



Appendix 2

Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats

Sources of Information



Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats





Sources of information

- Your vet.
- The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF. The website has a “find-a-vet” facility: www.rcvs.org.uk.
- Local libraries for books on cat care.

Websites such as:

- Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors: www.apbc.org.uk.
- Blue Cross: www.thebluecross.org.uk.
- Cats Protection: www.cats.org.uk.
- Feline Advisory Bureau: www.fabcats.org.
- Governing Council of the Cat Fancy in the UK: www.gccf.org.uk.
- PDSA: www.pdsa.org.uk.
- Pet Care Trust: www.petcare.org.uk.
- Pet Food Manufacturers Association: www.pfma.com.
- Pet Health Council: www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk.
- RSPCA: www.rspca.org.uk.
- The Cat Group: www.thecatgroup.org.uk.
- Welsh Assembly Government website for information on the Animal Welfare Act and to download the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats: www.wales.gov.uk/animalwelfare.





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