

Indoor Cats

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by Donna of **Your Pet Pals**

On my way home, I frequently drive past a little black and white cat. I would guess he is around 9 – 10 months of age. He sits in the long grass on the side of the road mesmerized by something in the grass in front of him. Sometimes I stop and watch him for a few minutes. He sits very still....his ears in a forward position. Suddenly, he will leap from this perfect stillness6 inches into the air and pounce on some unsuspecting creature. He will then run around like a spinning top for a few seconds and then stop and repeat the process again.

He makes me smile....watching his happiness. Simple pleasures entertain this sweet little fellow; freedom, the sun on his little body and other creatures that pass through his world.

However, as I drive away I wonder if I will see him again. After all, his little life is playing out 6 feet from the side of a busy road. He lives and plays by the road that leads to a busy lake. There are dogs on and off leash passing by; kids speeding by on bikes.....well you get the picture.

Over the 10 plus years that we have worked with pet guardians, an ever increasing number of people are realizing the dangers of allowing their cat to roam free outdoors. Some question the best way to care for their cat based on other peoples sad stories.....some have experienced loss first hand.

The **average life** expectancy of an **outdoor cat** is **reported** to be **3 years**.

The average life expectancy of an **indoor cat** is **15 years..... and rising**.

Life outdoors for a cat has many challenges. Here are just a few:

- Dogs - Unfortunately many outdoor cats are killed & seriously injured in dog attacks.
- Cars - Another common fatality in cats. People may want to believe that cats have road sense but this is simply not true. They do however have very acute hearing which causes them to dart and run from noise....often into on-coming traffic.
- Cruel humans – (and I use the term " human " very lightly).Sad but true, not everybody loves animals, and some derive great pleasure in torturing and killing cats (and dogs).

There have been many cases of people who deliberately poison cats, often due to their own lack of soul and conscience. Often it is an unjustified retaliation to the neighborhood cat for using their flower garden as a litter box, or for the cat killing wild birds which they (the perpetrators) may be feeding.

There are many more terrible situations that await the outdoor cat.

When I talk to people about keeping their cat's as indoor cats they often look at that lifestyle from a human perspective. " How would you like to be trapped indoors ? " they ask. Well..... I wouldn't ! However, I do have road sense, I am not furry and fast moving causing me to attract the attention of dogs with high prey drive and.....if my neighbor chooses to hit me with a baseball bat or poison me....the RCMP will come and that threat tends to keep even hateful neighbors in check. (shame we haven't managed to get the same cause and effect going to protect animals yet.....we should all talk about that sometime).

Anyway....let's get to the positive. **Your indoor cat will:**

- Likely live a longer life,
- Likely not suffer pain and require expensive emergency vet care due to injuries from cat fights
- Will not be attacked, injured or killed by the neighborhood dogs
- Will not be attacked by a cruising raccoon
- Will be less exposed to disease
- Will have a reduced chance of picking up a parasitic infection such as fleas and worms,
- Will be less likely to be accidentally poisoned,
- Will not be deliberately poisoned,
- Will not be stolen ...(I won't go into the reasons why this happens but none of the reasons are good).
- Will not innocently annoy your neighbors.
- Will not fall subject to random acts of hate and cruelty from a psychopath

There is actually a bridge between these 2 worlds; a way for an indoor cat to be happy and stimulated. A way to have the benefits of outdoor life without the risk.

We have several indoor cats and they spend lots of time playing outdoors on the big deck, they watch TV and they have their own DVD collection which all involve birds and squirrels. They have toys and each other.

Below are some suggestions on ensuring your indoor cat remains entertained & happy.

- Provide your cat with a screened in porch or outdoor cat enclosure. There are many great cat enclosures & porches online. Enclosures come in all shapes & sizes; they can be home made or supplied by a specialized cat enclosure company.
- Train your cat to walk on a leash. It is quite possible to do this with a little time & effort. I see one gentleman out with his cat most days. They visit the local stores and meet all kinds of people.

- Provide your cat with a cat scratch post. This will enable your cat to indulge in its love of climbing, as well as take care of the all important activity of scratching.
- Place perches on windowsills so your cat can enjoy the sun & watching the outside world.
- Keep a supply of toy's on hand. Indulge in your cat's natural instinct to prey & hunt by providing appropriate toys. These could include toy mice, wand type toys. Your local pet store will have a great array of toys designed to stimulate your cats mind. Cats love to hide, you can provide it with plenty of entertainment just by giving it an old box or two or a paper bag (never use a plastic bag) to play with & hide in.
- Make some time daily to play with your cat, this will not only provide him/her with stimulation but also encourage exercise. It is also much more entertaining than TV.
- Plant some catnip or cat grass in a planter for your cat to nibble on.
- Put a bird feeder or bath outside for your cat's entertainment.
- Most cats enjoy company. Consider having two cats so they can play together. Rescue groups like Victoria Adoptables, GVAC and Dee's Orphan Kitten Rescue always have little souls in need of a break.

Remember, adopting a pet will good deed for little soul in need and will also be a good deed for your own soul.

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