

September is Happy Cat Month

Courtesy of the CATalyst Council. Here are 10 ways cat owners can keep their cats happy. How many can you check off?



1. Visit the veterinarian. Healthy cats are happy cats. While some owners may dread a trip to the veterinarian with their cat, many veterinary practices are cat-friendly or have doctors who specialize in cats and will gladly show leery owners how pleasant a trip to the veterinarian can be. If a cat has not yet been spayed or neutered, this is an important step to keeping a cat healthy; it will help prevent aggression and decrease the risk of cancer.

2. Microchip your cat. In addition to a collar and identification tag, cat owners should ask their veterinarian about microchipping their feline friend. If a cat ever escapes or gets lost, having this type of permanent ID will make a reunion between cat and owner much more likely.

3. Go outside (appropriately). Yes! Cat owners can safely take cats outside to allow them to broaden their horizons. You can walk cats on a leash with a harness or confine them in a special outdoor area like a catio - always under supervision, of course - so they can periodically and safely experience the world outside their windows.

4. Scratch the surface. Give cats places to stretch and care for their claws. Cat scratching is an important aspect of feline behavior. Providing a long and sturdy scratching post in a vertical, horizontal or angled position is a good way to keep your cat happy - and your sofa, too!

5. Provide preventive cat medications. No one likes fleas, ticks, mites or heartworms, especially your cat. Even if an owner's cat is strictly indoors they can still be attacked by these little creepy creatures. Owners should speak with their veterinarians about the best preventive plan for cat parasites. A parasite-free cat is a happy cat - and will keep your family healthier, too.

6. Train together. Cats are smart and can be trained to do fun tricks just like dogs, and the mental and physical stimulation is great for felines. Teaching your cat to sit, for example, is easy, and training your cat to sit on stools instead of counters will make you and your cat much happier. An added bonus is that training will strengthen the relationship between owner and cat, which will certainly make a cat happy.

7. Work for (cat) food. Feline obesity is a huge problem in this country, and one way to combat it is for owners to make their cats work for their food. Food toys are available to channel a cat's natural hunting drive and release kibble in small amounts. Another option is to hide a cat's food in different places so that they have to find it. Working for food makes a cat happy because it's great physical and mental exercise.

8. Get your cat acclimated to the cat carrier. Many cat owners find that the worst part about taking their cats anywhere is getting cats into their carriers. Owners should work with their cat on making their carrier a safe, secure, and inviting place to be prior to veterinary visits or family vacations. When the time comes, the cat will be happy to get into the carrier and go off on an adventure. Visit the CATalyst Council website here to view "Cats and Carriers: Friends not Foes" for tips on how to get cats to love their carriers.

9. Provide prey toys. One of the easiest ways to make a cat happy is with a new prey toy. Cats are natural hunters and love chasing, pouncing, leaping, swatting and stalking prey, even when it's not the real thing. There are many types of prey toys available on the market; with a little creativity, owners can even make their own out of common household items.

10. Consider another cat. Cats are social animals, and owners should consider getting another cat to keep their current kitty company. Cats love to play, and a playmate will make them happy - provided they are properly introduced and have the right places to eat, hide, play and go the bathroom. Visit your community animal shelter or animal control facility to check what feline friends they have to offer. Sadly, there are always many seeking homes. Happily, you may be that home. By the way, the best combination is sometimes not necessarily two cats, but a cat and a dog ... or even two cats and a dog. Dogs and cats can be best pals.

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