

TRAINING A CAT TO COME INDOORS AT NIGHT

If you keep your cat inside at night always provide a litter tray. If the cat isn't used to staying inside, then gradually introduce it to being indoors rather than simply changing the routine in one day. Practice getting your cat to come to you when called at night. Start in the house and offer a tasty treat as a reward if the cat comes to you. If the cat is not motivated by food, then the reward could be a game with a favourite toy. Gradually progress to practising this when the cat is in the garden, then further afield. Your cat will learn that when you call it at night, coming home is rewarding and it will be motivated to keep performing this behaviour. This technique can also be used to encourage cats indoors during times of higher risk, such as when traffic is heavy or during firework displays. See International Cat Care's YouTube video on training your cat to come when called, at <https://youtu.be/gcABqz47C10>



AN INDOOR LIFE: CAN A CAT BE A CAT?

'Domestication' of the cat began approximately 13 million years ago. However, some would say cats are not truly domesticated, as they could survive without us and do not have a shared history with humans in the same way dogs do. Cats are quick and agile, and have excellent eyesight, hearing and sense of smell (even better than many dogs). Should these athletic hunters be confined to a house all day?

For a cat, scratching and urine marking are actually normal behaviours but, when expressed inside the home, these can become a problem for owners. Indoor cats are more prone to obesity, diabetes and other health problems, including lower urinary tract disease. The home is not without dangers: cats like to nibble grass, but indoor cats will instead chew flowers and houseplants. This can result in a cat being poisoned by toxic plants such as lilies.

Frustration and boredom are certainly more of an issue in indoor cats, and can result in inappropriate behaviours such as aggression, or house soiling. Confinement indoors with an incompatible cat can lead to chronic distress when the cats have to share physical space and resources, such as litter trays, beds and food bowls. Keeping a cat successfully indoors requires a motivated owner who can provide opportunities for play, exploration and expression of natural behaviours.

Nervous cats may find the outdoors daunting, and interactions with other cats outside may cause them stress. In 'cat dense' residential areas, these cats may actually choose to stay indoors, however they still need opportunities to express normal behaviours.

Cats who may actually choose to stay indoors still need opportunities to express normal behaviours

