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Indoor vs. Outdoor

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Outdoor enclosures facilitate meeting the cat's needs and performance of its normal behaviors. **Photo courtesy of**

Martine van Boeijen

Deciding whether your cat is going to live completely indoors or spend some time outdoors requires careful consideration on your part. First, you need to know all of the benefits and risks associated with each lifestyle for your cat, and for your family. You then need to decide what you believe will be best based on:

- Where you live.
- Health needs of your cat.
- Activity or behavioral needs of your cat.
- Recommendations from your veterinarian.
- Benefits and risks listed below.

Wherever your cat spends most of his time, it is important to make sure he can enjoy natural cat activities such as: [scratching](#), [hunting, stalking](#), and catching prey (real or pretend). This is important to think about because when cats are kept entirely indoors, and if their needs are not met, they can become bored, fearful, and/or anxious. This can lead to unwanted behavior, such as scratching of furniture or [not using the litter box](#). It is important to make sure your cat has an [enriched environment](#) to meet their needs.

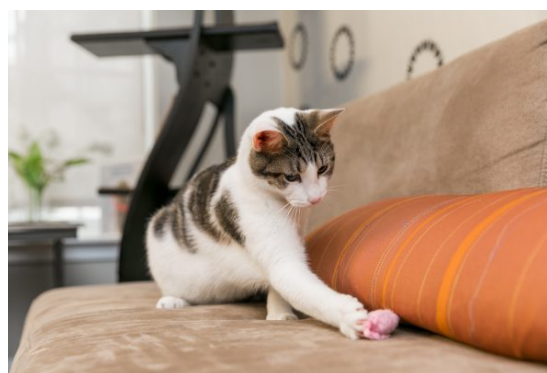
You should speak with your veterinarian to ensure that your cat's emotional, social, and environmental needs are being met. Once you understand the benefits and risks of an indoor-only or indoor/outdoor lifestyle for your cat, it is crucial to minimize the risks and maximize the benefits for your cat.

Indoor Cat

▼ [View Benefits and Risks](#)

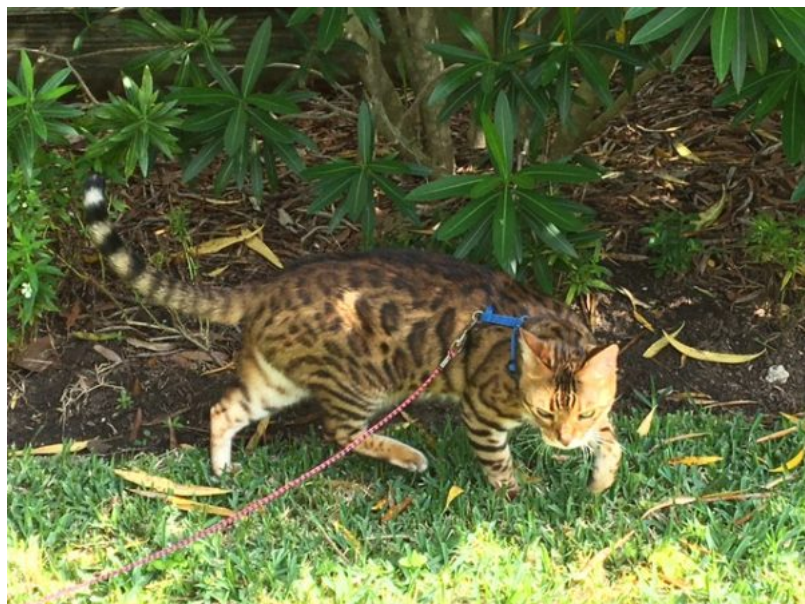
Indoor/Outdoor Cat

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The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) believes that an indoor/outdoor lifestyle for cats **in a safe environment** can keep away most dangers, and provide a more stimulating place for your cat to participate in natural activities. Creating a safe outdoor environment can include walking your cat with a harness and leash, having an outdoor enclosure where your cat can roam freely, and having a fenced-in or invisible fence around your property.

If your cat goes outdoors, to improve safety from predators, it is recommended that your cat go outdoors during the day and is kept indoors (or in an outdoor enclosure with indoor access) at night.



As a safe environment can include walking your cat on a harness and leash, having an outdoor enclosure where your cat can roam freely, and having a fenced-in or invisible fence around your property. Photo courtesy of Joelle Derrick

Young cats and male cats are more likely to engage in activities that increase their risk of injury, and should be monitored more closely.

Indoor-only living is an option, but you will need to work a bit harder to ensure that all of your cat's physical, emotional, and social needs are being met. Speak with your veterinarian for guidance on how to meet all of your cat's needs including:

- Appropriate play and exercise
- Ability to simulate foraging and hunting
- A safe territory with vertical space
- Appropriate and clean toileting areas



Created by the American Association of Feline Practitioners
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