



Otonabee Animal Hospital

“Going the distance for you and your pet!”

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October 2014 Newsletter Your Cat's Environmental Needs - A Guide



WHAT DOES A CAT NEED?



1. All cats need somewhere they can go to be safe & feel protected. This can also double as a resting area. Most cats like small spaces that only they can fit into - a cardboard box from the grocery store is a favourite for many, and costs nothing. ☺ Other examples are a cat carrier and a raised perch or cat tree. There should be at least one space per cat in the household, located away from each other, so the cats can choose to be on their own. Cats love to have choices!

2. Key resources are essential and include food, water, toileting areas, scratching areas, play areas & resting or sleeping areas. Where there is more than one cat, there should be multiple resources separate from each other so that cats can have free access without being challenged by other cats. This not only reduces the risk of competition, but stress and stress-related diseases and behaviours.

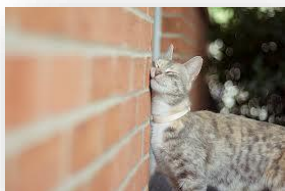


3. Cats should have lots of opportunities for play and predatory behaviour - this allows them to fulfill their natural need to hunt. Early in a cat's life introduce interactive play with toys, so they learn to avoid going after your hands & feet. Play can be stimulated with the use of interactive toys that mimic prey, such as a toy mouse that is pulled across the floor. Cats need to be able to capture the “prey” at least intermittently.

4. Provide positive, consistent and predictable human-cat social interaction. Cats are all individuals and some will enjoy human contact (petting, grooming, being picked up, played with or talked to etc.) more than others. This largely depends on whether they were socialised properly with humans at the critical age of 2 - 7 weeks. It is important to remember that every cat interacts differently & to respect their individual preferences. Remind all guests & household members not to force interaction and let that be the cat's choice.



5. Happy cats live in an environment that respects their sense of smell. Cats use their sense of smell to evaluate their surroundings. They mark their scent by rubbing their face & body to deposit natural pheromones & establish boundaries within which they feel safe & secure. Avoid cleaning their scent off these areas. Some smells can be threatening to cats, such as that of unfamiliar animals or scented products, cleaners &



detergents. Threatening smells & the inability to rub their scent can lead to behavioural problems such as inappropriate elimination, spraying & scratching in undesirable areas. In some cases stress related illness can develop. If any of these problems occur, contact your vet immediately.

The above information comes from the American Association of Feline Practitioners. For more information, please visit www.catvets.com and www.icatcare.org



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