



Living with
your cat

RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP



Summary

This guide has been written solely for general information purposes only and it is not intended for use as a veterinary medical manual in place of veterinary consultations and treatments.

**It is recommended that cats receive regular veterinary health checks.
If you have any questions or need additional information
you should consult a veterinarian directly.**

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Our Collective Responsibility TO ANIMALS

At Royal Canin, we believe that pets make our lives better and that our responsibility extends far beyond the quality of our products and services, to promoting the overall health and well-being of pets, through responsible pet ownership as well as promoting the positive experience of having a pet. We believe that the health and well-being of animals is the responsibility of every person who comes in contact with them.

This is why we aim to continuously share **our knowledge of cats globally**, in order for us all to better understand and care for them. As such, we have developed this guide that will help pet owners like you forge a relationship with your cat that benefits both you and your pet. In this guide, you will find practical information and advice to help you enrich your cat's life, while also enriching your experience as a pet owner.





HOME ENVIRONMENT

Meeting the environmental needs of cats helps to ensure their optimal **well-being and behaviour**, good health and overall quality of life. These needs encompass not only their physical surroundings, but also their social interactions with people and other animals in the home. A familiar and predictable home in which the pet can exercise some control over his physical environment and social interactions, helps to **reduce his stress levels** and enables him to cope with any challenges.

Choose a sleeping area that is warm, calm and free of draughts. Several resting spaces to enable your cat to have some privacy is ideal. They will have to be soft, comfortable and easy to keep clean. Cats will prefer to sleep next to a source of heat (radiators, or in sunlight for example). The sleeping area will have to be away from other resources such as food bowls, water bowls and toileting areas, and ideally shouldn't be located in the bedroom.

Cats need a 3 dimensional environment, meaning that they will need places to rest and play at **ground level**, but also **high-up**. As they tend to react to stress by finding a hiding place, you should provide locations where they will be able to retreat, offering concealment and seclusion, while still allowing them to survey the external environment. As cats love to scratch, it's a good idea to give your cat a purpose-built scratching post, an indoor cat tree or a scratching mat if you want to **keep your curtains and furniture safe**. You can encourage her to use the scratching post by spraying it with Catnip.

When they discover a new environment, cats will need to be **introduced gradually to their new surroundings**.

And as they use their sense of smell to get used to new surroundings, you may want to consider **eliminating cleaning products** with a strong smell from your home. These can interfere with your pet's sense of smell and may therefore **be a source of stress**.

SOCIALISATION

Strengthening the bond between you and your new cat can be extremely rewarding, but it's important to take it step by step. Ideally, the **socialisation process** should begin before 2 months of age for a kitten.

Try to expose your kitten to as many different sights, sounds, experiences and people as possible, getting her used to the world around her. This will help her to be less fearful as she grows up. Start slowly, **interacting with your new cat** regularly but for short periods. Look out for signs that your pet is ready to interact. Cats tend to purr and blink slowly and may approach you or roll on their side near to you. **To gain your cat's trust**, you can initially use treats such as kibbles. This may help **to overcome their anxiety** in the early stages. Make sure treats become less regular over time as they can contribute to obesity. If you have children, watch them closely and help them to understand that your new cat is not a toy; it's a living thing that should only be cuddled under your supervision.

Once your cat is more confident, let new people stroke and cuddle her under your supervision. Aim to expose your cat to people of all ages, a wide range of sounds (telephones, TVs, cars, etc.) and different places. It's also a good idea to introduce your pet to other cats and dogs while he is still young, once his initial vaccination course has been completed.



SAFETY FIRST: ELIMINATING DANGER

Cats are inquisitive by nature and will want to explore all aspects of their new surroundings – with potentially dangerous consequences. Make sure you've prepared your home so that your cat can poke around without harming herself or others. This means **hiding away** any **potentially toxic substances**, medication, vitamins, poisonous plants, electric wires and certain foods like chocolate, which can make animals ill. You should also cover sockets and bins that are in their direct environment.

In the first few days, keep **windows fastened**, doors shut and balconies inaccessible. If you have a **garden**, check fences and gates to ensure they are sturdy and high enough to stop your kitten from escaping until she is familiar with her new environment.

MULTI-PET HOUSEHOLDS

So long as their environmental needs are met, most cats and dogs can **live happily together** in the same household. Harmonious coexistence among cats is best achieved by adopting closely-related and/or socially bonded pairs. When **introducing a new pet** into the home of an existing one, it is often easier for an adult animal to accept a kitten or puppy, than it is for them to accept another unrelated adult.

To help smooth these introductions, try the following steps:

Introduce the animals in a **neutral setting**, such as an outdoor space neither pet knows or a room in your house that the resident pet rarely uses.

- > Make sure cats have access to a **safe hiding place** if they feel threatened.
- > Provide **separate** sleeping places, feeding areas and litter trays for each animal so they can feel safe. Meals, in particular, can lead to conflict if they are shared.
- > Take a toy or blanket used by your new pet and wipe it across the bottom of the walls in your home so your resident pet can get used to **the new scent**.
- > Use **stair gates** to allow a dog and a cat to have separate areas.
- > Carry out introductions gradually to allow familiarity to develop slowly and under supervision the first few times.



HEALTH AND CARE

Preventive healthcare for cats is an essential part of pet health and can help to **reduce a cat's risk of developing a wide range of problems**. A comprehensive approach focusing on nutrition counselling, vaccinations, parasite control, dental care and behaviour counselling can help to mitigate issues such as periodontal disease, fleas and ticks, heartworm disease, obesity or diabetes mellitus.

Vaccinations

Vaccinations are the best way to **protect your cat and your family against illness and disease**.

Some vaccines are compulsory, others are recommended, and this also varies depending on where you live and the extent to which your cat is exposed to the risk of disease. Generally, the first vaccines are given from **the age of 6-8 weeks**, when a kitten is no longer **protected by maternal antibodies** and is particularly vulnerable to disease. The first vaccinations are then followed by regular boosters, some of which are yearly.

Talk to your veterinarian to find out which vaccinations you should consider for your cat and the appropriate timing for the vaccinations.

Worming and parasites

It is recommended to regularly deworm your cat. Kittens are particularly sensitive to **internal parasites** and require a number of deworming treatments. Worms can represent a risk to humans, and particularly to children as they can get them from direct contact with their pets and their faeces. So it is imperative to talk to your veterinarian who will be able to recommend a regular deworming programme, adapted to your cat's lifestyle and location.

External parasites can also be harmful to your cat. **Fleas** in particular, cause irritation and skin problems. The best approach is regular preventative flea control through oral or spot-on products. If you live in an area with ticks, consider using an acaricide to protect your cat. Other common parasites include ear mites, demodex mites and ringworm. Your veterinarian will be able to provide you the best advice regarding prevention of external parasites for your pet.

PET INSURANCE

Medical care for your cat can be costly. From the beginning, you'll need to budget for routine visits to the vet, but if your cat has a **serious illness** or **breaks a leg**, the cost can get extremely expensive. Contracting a pet insurance is a way to help cover these expenses. Pet insurance is either for the **lifetime** of your animal or for a **specified period**. Some policies cover pre-existing conditions and vaccinations, while others are for emergency care only. Third-party liability may also be included, covering expenses if your animal causes an accident by running out into the road, for example.

In Sweden and the UK, pet insurance is relatively common.



Neutering

An awareness of the reproductive potential of cats can help ensure that they do not reproduce freely. The large majority of cat litters are unplanned.

A female cat can have up to three litters a year (5-6 kittens per litter – potentially up to 18 kittens per year). Given the potential for such huge numbers of unplanned pets, many of which might be relinquished to animal charities and shelters, **population control measures are important.**

Neutering consists of castrating male animals (removing their testes) and spaying females (removing their ovaries). As well as protecting against unwanted pregnancies and abandoned animals, neutering can also offer a **number of behavioural benefits.**

While intact females tend to get agitated when in heat, spayed animals will no longer go into heat. Neutered females are also less at risk of **mammary, uterine and ovarian cancer** as well as **pyometra**, a serious infection of the uterus. In males, castration reduces the probability of **testicular disorders** (like testicular tumors). Castrated males are also less aggressive, less dominant and less likely to spray urine or escape from home in search of a mate.

It is important to know that neutering results in **increased appetite** and a **reduction in daily energy requirements.** To limit the risks of obesity, neutered cats must be given a lower calorie food. There are specific diets available for neutered cats and exercise is important. Your veterinarian will be able to advise you regarding the best age for your pet to be neutered and can help you with the best diets for your cat once it is neutered.

TAKE YOUR CAT TO THE VET!

When you first get your new cat, it's recommended to organise a **visit within 48 hours.** The veterinarian will thoroughly examine your cat to make sure she is healthy and have no underlying conditions. This is also an opportunity for you to ask questions and find out about vaccinations and other **preventative care.** For **kittens**, it's recommended to get a **check-up every six months.** You can schedule these appointments to coincide with booster vaccinations.

For adult cats, a **yearly visit** is important for a health check and this can also aid the early detection of diseases and other health problems, helping to reduce complications and suffering.

Dental care

Dental problems are extremely common among cats. **Periodontal disease** attacks the gums, loosens the ligaments attaching the teeth to the jaw bone and eventually causes teeth to fall out. Furthermore, bacteria in the mouth can trigger other infections in other parts of the body.

Your veterinarian will usually be able to help with emergencies, but **the prevention of dental disease is essential**, especially as your cat will often show few symptoms of oral discomfort.

The best preventative care is **to brush your cat's teeth daily** with a special feline brush and special pet toothpaste. Kibbles can also help slow down the development of tartar.

Grooming

Regular grooming is essential for **maintaining good skin and coat health** and condition as well as cleanliness, although different breeds or types of cats vary in the levels of care they need.

In long-haired cats the coat can become matted over a relatively short period of time, which can result in tightening of the skin, discomfort and pain. Short-haired cats require only occasional grooming and some may never need bathing. Pet care specialists and veterinarians can offer advice about **how to carry out grooming** and can supply the details of a reputable grooming service.



Toileting

An **appropriate toileting routine** is key to avoid hygiene issues as well as tension between owner and pet.

Cats are house trained from an early age. However, to encourage appropriate toileting behaviour, you'll need to provide a **litter tray** in an easily accessible spot in a quiet area and to make sure to **clean it regularly** (if you have one cat, it is recommended to **clean the litter once a day** for waste disposal, and once a week for washing the tray and replacing the litter). Cats may exhibit a preference for a particular type of litter and litter tray: open or closed tray, aromatic, with clay, corn or silica gel crystals for example. A relaxed body language during toileting, like tail held loosely, ears forward and slightly to the side, is a good indicator of the preference.

Litter trays should be kept where **dogs or little children cannot access them**. In general, it is recommended to have **one litter tray per cat** in the

household, plus one spare, all of which in different, quiet areas of the house.

Unnecessary and controversial procedures

Unnecessary and controversial procedures are procedures which are not considered essential for medical reasons and are conducted in order to alter appearance or modify behaviour. Declawing of cats for example is **an illegal procedure in many countries**.

These interventions should never be necessary if the animal has been properly trained and socialised or provided with outlets for instinctive behaviour. Education of pet owners about appropriate behavioural and environmental modifications can provide more humane solutions to these problems. For instance, scratching behaviour can be directed to cardboard scratchers or scratching posts.



Older cats

Continuous improvements in **veterinary healthcare** and nutrition have helped **cats to live longer** and has increased the size of the senior pet population. Older cats make **wonderful companions** as they are often content to spend more time around the home and tend to be more laid back and calmer than younger animals. There are a number of health, behavioural and social changes that occur with aging that may require some adaptation in the cat's environment, diet or routine. Owners, in partnership with their veterinarian, have an important role to play in supporting quality of life in older cats.

As they get older, animals tend to be less active and sleep longer. Their **vision, smell and hearing**

usually worsens, and they may develop cataracts or dental disease. Many of these conditions can be relieved, which is why it's essential to have senior cats checked by your **veterinarian more often**.

If well cared for, many cats can live into their mid-teens and some cats may even live into their twenties. Cats are considered to be in their senior years when they reach the last third of their life span.

Behavioural changes such as vocalisation, change in appetite or water intake, house soiling, or changes in the use of the litter tray, may reflect an underlying medical problem that should be investigated by a veterinarian.



NUTRITION

Every cat has **unique nutritional requirements** depending on a range of factors, including their breed, age, lifestyle and environment. A good diet that meets those needs, will help enhance your cat's health and wellness through every stage of life.

It's important to offer your cat a balanced diet, with all the essential nutrients she needs and the right amount of calories. This can help to prevent health issues arising and, if they do, catch them early thereby increasing the chances of a good outcome.

Don't forget to give your cat **constant access to water**. Continuous access to water is vital even if you are feeding your cat with wet food. Water should be fresh, not too cold (not less than 10°C) and the bowl should always be clean. Do not give milk to your cat as they don't digest it.

Respecting your cat's feeding behaviour

Cats have **natural feeding patterns** and rhythms that should be respected.

Cats have an innate instinct to spread food consumption over **10 to 20 meals a day**. This behaviour is a throwback to when they were solitary hunters. As cats may now be more sedentary you can minimise the risk of them putting on weight by **respecting their daily ration** and **making them exercise** for their food with the use of food puzzles for example.

Cats like to have their feeding station in a calm place that has an escape route, another remnant of their past when they had to be vigilant of predators. **Make sure you provide two dishes**, one for **food** and one for **water** and they should be quite separate from each other. Both the food and water bowls should be a certain distance from the litter tray to encourage good hygiene.



Treats and training

A reward is anything that your cat enjoys (e.g. dry food, treats, attention/petting, a fun toy, a play session). The key is to find the reward that truly motivates your cat. Reward based training or positive reinforcement based training is one of the most effective training methods and contributes to a better relationship between owners and their pets.

Don't forget that a fun game with you, or attention in the form of a positive tone of voice or petting can be a better reward than food or treats in some cases and helps to keep excess weight at bay

If you do use treats, be aware that some treats are designed for easy palatability and may be packed with other nutrients to offer additional health benefits such as dental care or joint support.

However, it's important to limit the use of treats as they can contribute to excessive weight gain and may imbalance your cat's diet. As such, if your pet has had treats in the day, adjust his daily food portion accordingly. If you use a lot of food rewards for training you can also use a number of the kibbles from your cat's allocated daily amount as a treat to reward her. Table scraps or human food snacks tend to be more energy rich and lower in nutritional value than treats designed specifically for cats and should therefore be avoided.



HOW TO KEEP OBESITY AT BAY ?

Overfeeding your cat can quickly cause her to become overweight, especially if she is sedentary. Today, obesity is the most common nutritional disorder in companion animals. Indoor cats are particularly at risk. Why does this matter? Because obesity reduces your pet's life expectancy, exposing him to a greater risk of joint problems, diabetes, cancer and urinary issues.

The key to keeping obesity at bay is to measure precise daily portions, not give extra food, encourage exercise, as well as weigh your cat at least once a month and regularly monitor her body condition. The Body Condition Score Chart is a good way to assess your cat. It's based on carefully feeling your cat's body and observing her from different angles. Don't hesitate to talk your veterinarian who will be able to devise a realistic weight loss strategy if needed (and also advise on how to prevent your cat putting on weight).

YOUR CAT'S WELL-BEING

Good welfare should aim to go beyond the basic requirements - like adequate food, water, ventilation and protection from injury or ill health - to include things that will enrich and improve a cat's quality of life and, in turn, enhance the overall owner-pet relationship. Enriched welfare aims to meet a cat's social and behavioural needs and strives for positive outcomes and experiences for both pet and owner. This includes providing cats with opportunities to express natural behaviour. Different ages, breeds and individual differences in behaviour may result in different welfare needs.

Strengthen your relationship with your cat

Positive human contact is usually beneficial for the welfare of cats.

To build the bond with your pet, provide **plenty of personal contact**: physical contact such as grooming and stroking is mutually beneficial and helps owners too by making them feel more relaxed. Providing affection, routine, dependability, and meeting their essential needs will also strengthen the owner-pet bond.

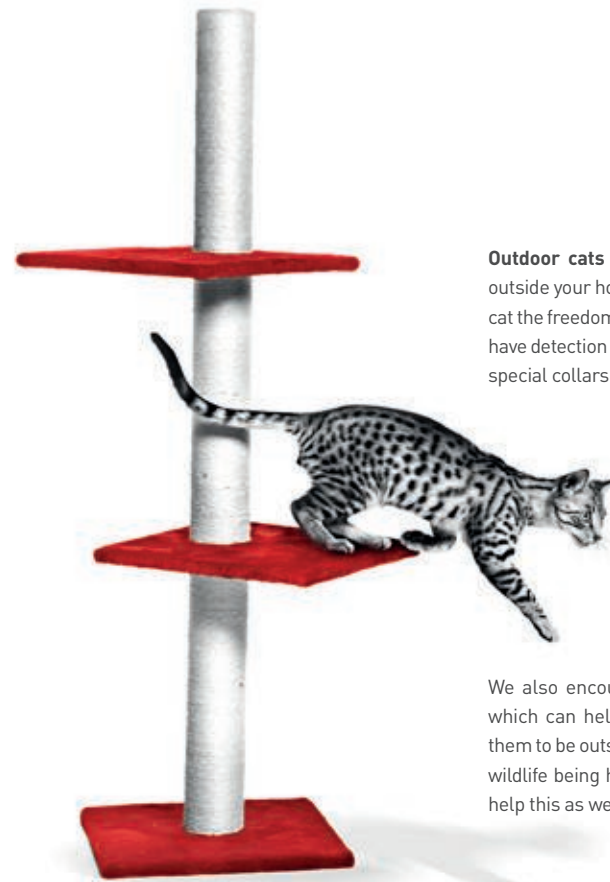
Relationships are built on spending time together and sharing experiences. Spending time having fun, playing are ways to have fun whilst building the bond.

Keeping your cat stimulated

It's important to keep your cat physically and mentally stimulated.

You will need to organise her environment to entice her to move around and play.

The objective is **to encourage her to express her natural behaviour**. It is not only about giving her some toys to play with, but also about adapting the environment to her natural needs. This is particularly important for indoor cats, who need mental stimulation and encouragement to expend energy. If they cannot play or have no social interaction they will seek to alleviate their boredom by spending more time grooming, feeding and sleeping.



Outdoor cats will find stimulation when they wander outside your home. By installing a cat flap, you'll give your cat the freedom to explore when she wants. Some cat flaps have detection systems that use microchip identification or special collars to only let your cat through.

We also encourage the use of outdoor cat enclosures which can help keep your cat safe whilst still allowing them to be outside. Outdoor enclosures also helps prevent wildlife being hurt by your cat. Bells on a collar can also help this as well.

STIMULATING YOUR INDOOR CAT

Cats need to express their **innate behaviours** by spending time up high, observing their environment, running, jumping and pouncing. Try to organise your home so that your cat can climb onto platforms. A **cat tree** can be a great outlet for your pet - and a way to reduce potential damage to your furniture! A scratching post will **relieve her natural instinct** to claw objects (a natural marking behaviour of cats). It's also important to play with your cat daily. Get her to chase a soft toy or fish a floating object such as a ping pong ball out of water. You can also use food puzzles, such as balls that release kibbles as they roll and **make sure you leave toys around** the home when you're out.



Respecting your cat's rhythms

Cats spend more than 70% of their time sleeping. As it is such a prominent activity, make sure you provide not only confident peace, but variety too. Cats love alternating between hang-outs throughout the day, according to a spot's brightness or warmth, but also depending on their mood. When she is not snuggled up against you on the sofa, your cat will have favourite spots, depending on the time of the day. Whether it's a basket, a cat tree, a radiator-bed or even a plain mat, let her choose and above all respect her rhythms: they are essential to her well-being.

Observe how your cat sleeps: if she is lying on her side, she is fast asleep and feeling safe; curled up in a ball, she is retaining body heat, a source of comfort; Sprawled out on her stomach, she may be finding it hard to cope with a heat wave; ears up and sphinx-like, she is probably sleeping with only one eye open, ready to pounce at the slightest stimulation.

In the wild, your cat needs to recoup between hunting expeditions, while remaining alert to stimulation in her surroundings.



Coping with heat

In hot weather, it is essential to protect your cat.


Look out for tell-tale signs such as increased panting, heavy or rapid breathing and weakness. In severe cases, overheating can cause bloody diarrhoea, vomiting and even seizures.

Be particularly vigilant if your pet is a senior cat or if she has a flat face (Persian or Exotic cats for example) and is therefore less efficient at panting. These animals are more at risk of the consequences of overheating.



HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN HELP YOUR CAT BEAT THE HEAT:

- > Make sure she has constant **access to fresh water**. Leave several dishes of water around your home and garden.
- > Ensure your cat has as much **shade** as possible. If she is in the garden, make sure there is a shady spot.
- > Keep your pet away from **heat-absorbing surfaces** like metal or asphalt. Animals can burn their paws and the heat from their feet can also increase their core body temperature.
- > Keep **shutters and curtains shut** in extreme heat to keep the interior cool. Never leave windows open if your pet could fall out. Cats may be agile, but they can still seriously hurt themselves if they fall from a height. You can use a mosquito net to prevent your cat from jumping and still benefit from the fresh air coming in.
- > **Never leave your pet in a parked vehicle**. The temperature inside a car can quickly become dangerously hot, even if it's left in the shade. If the outside temperature is 35°C, the interior of a vehicle can reach 63°C within an hour. In a matter of minutes, your animal could suffer severe overheating or suffocate.

EXPOSITION TIME 	TEMPERATURE BUILD UP WITHIN A CAR IN SUMMER (IN °C)				
	20	25	30	35	40
10 MINUTES	30	35	39	43	47
20 MINUTES	36	45	49	53	57
30 MINUTES	40	49	53	57	61
40 MINUTES	42	51	55	59	63
50 MINUTES	44	53	57	61	65
60 MINUTES	46	55	59	63	67



Behavioural difficulties and signs of distress

The best way to ensure the good behaviour and **well-being of your cat**, is by **understanding and respecting her individual needs**.

Very often, behavioural issues and changes can be the first indicator of illness or other causes of decreased welfare. Cats are more likely to react to poor conditions by becoming inactive and inhibiting normal behaviours such as grooming and feeding rather than exhibiting obvious signs of abnormal behaviour.

Some other **common signs of stress** in cats are diarrhoea, constipation, a poor appetite, excessive sleeping, aggression, hyperactivity or a desire to isolate themselves. Of course, these symptoms

can also have other causes, but they should trigger alarm bells. Cats may start urinating outside of their litter tray or continually meowing, as well as grooming and scratching excessively.

Try to **understand the reasons for your cat's distress**. Has there been a recent change in her environment? A new person, animal or object? Maybe she is being subjected to additional noise? Or it could be as simple as a change in her nutrition or a dirty litter tray. Cats, are very sensitive to change.

To relieve her stress, **address the root cause of the problem** if you can, and then try to spend more time with her.

Hierarchy of needs

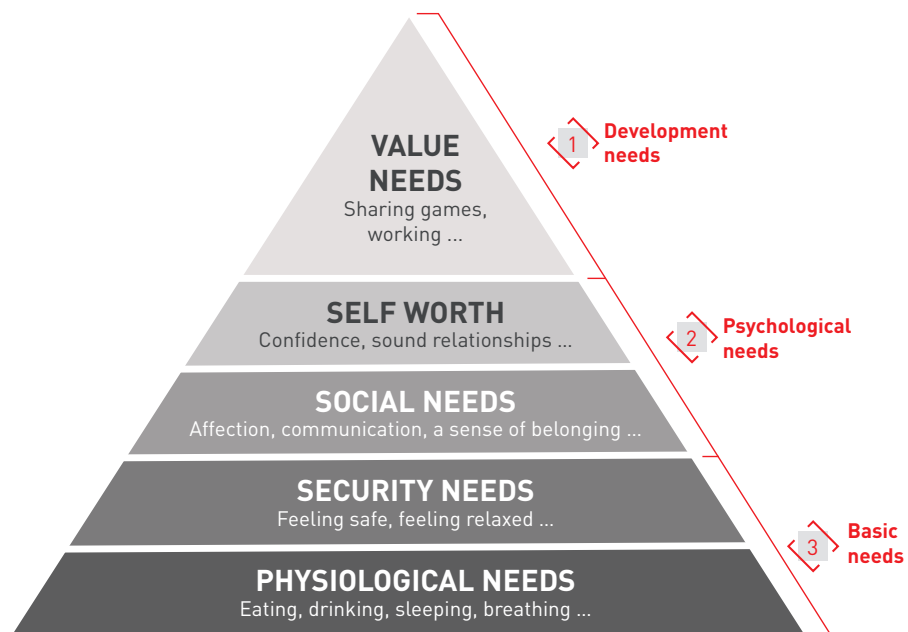
Your pet's different needs can be summarised by a pyramid of hierarchy of needs. Originally designed for humans (Maslow's pyramid), this pyramid can easily be applied to cats. The animal's most essential needs are at the bottom of the pyramid, while secondary needs are higher up. To move up the pyramid, you must first satisfy the needs on the level below.

The **most fundamental needs**, at the bottom of the pyramid, are **physiological**: sleep, nutrition, shelter, etc. Next comes safety – cats need **to feel secure**

in their environment before they can relax and form relations. Once this need is covered, they can move to the next level, **seeking love and belonging through** a trusted relationship with you and your family. Next is esteem, which comes through praise, **reward and positive reinforcement**. Finally, self-actualization is the feeling of confidence and achievement they get through succeeding in play.

It's worth keeping these different needs in mind, as the relationship with your cat develops.

PYRAMID OF THE PET'S NEEDS



Be a responsible cat owner

You should now have a good idea about how to live with your cat and create a strong relationship with her.

Now it's up to you to put theory into practice!

When you welcome a cat into your home, you put her well-being in your hands. By following the advice in this guide, you should ensure her continued health and happiness.

Understanding and respecting your cat for the unique animal she is and getting to know her well is essential to help her thrive and grow in her new environment.

This will allow you and your cat to enjoy a rewarding and long lasting relationship.

A better world for pets 





INCREDIBLE IN EVERY DETAIL