

Enhancing Your Indoor Cat's Environment

Cats are solitary hunters of small prey. It has been found that cats prefer to be out of each other's sight 50% of the time. There is a significant number of cats who will develop physical ailments from living indoors in an inadequate environment and/or from their social interactions with other family cats. In general, if there are multiple cats and you are seeing health issues, there may be inter-cat conflict present. Ailments developing from an inadequate environment or social interactions may include bladder disease, obesity, diabetes, upper respiratory disease, vomiting, skin conditions, and decreased energy and decreased grooming.

There are steps that can be taken to keep your cats happy and healthy by enriching their environment and modifying the interaction between cats.

Cats should be fed separately, in a quiet place where they will not be startled or threatened. Try a food puzzle.

You can determine a cat's water preference. Some cats like moving water, while others will drink only from a certain type or size of bowl.

Especially important is to give your cats space. Provide things to climb and places to hide and rest. This can be as simple as boxes or crates. Cats also enjoy vertical and horizontal scratching posts.

Litter box problems are common in multi cat households. You should determine the type of box your cat prefers: large? Covered? (i.e. plastic storage container, see "Cats That Eliminate Outside The Litter Box"). There may be an issue with the type of litter. Most felines prefer soft, unscented, clumping, sandy litter (i.e. Fresh Step). The litter box should be kept clean, and located in a quiet, convenient spot with a good escape route. Ideally you should have a litter box for each of your cats, plus one.

Another way to enrich your cat's environment is with play. This can be in the form of petting and grooming, or with a variety of toys that encourage activity and offer challenge and variety.

Occasionally two cats will need to be physically separated, each with their own food, water and litter, to stop inappropriate behavior caused by their negative social interaction.