



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

Indoors vs. Outdoors?

The “great outdoors” may sound like fun for a cat, but there are many inherent dangers for cats allowed to go outdoors. There are people who feel that cats should be outside, at least part of the time, in order to lead happy lives. The truth is that cats who live exclusively indoors live 5-8 years longer than their outdoor counterparts. If you have time and patience, it is relatively easy to create an indoor environment that will keep your cat happy and satisfied.

Top 10 risks for cats left outdoors

When cats are allowed outside without supervision they are being exposed to several life-threatening situations on a daily basis:

- **Cars** - Cats are not very street wise. They do not understand cars. When cats and cars meet, the cat doesn't come out alive. At night, car headlights can cause temporary blindness, confusing cats and making them defenseless. Cats can climb up under car hoods for warmth, then get caught in the radiator fan when the engine is started. Cats love the taste of antifreeze even though it's poisonous to the point of being fatal if ingested from a puddle or open container.
- **Diseases** -- Feline leukemia, upper respiratory infections, distemper, rabies, and other contagious diseases are much more prevalent in outdoor cats, especially if they are not vaccinated. The risk of coming in contact with infected and nonvaccinated cats is greater for a cat allowed outdoors.
- **Cat fights** - Cats are very territorial. When cats get into fights with other cats it usually results in scratches, abscesses and large veterinary bills.
- **Breeding/pregnancy** - Pet overpopulation is a growing problem especially with cats. The increasing number of homeless and abandoned cats is a tragedy. Spaying or neutering the family felines as soon as possible will insure that you are not contributing to the problem. It is not always

easy to predict when a cat will become sexually mature. Cat allowed outside may breed or become pregnant before you realize they have reached sexual maturity.

- **Encounters with dogs and wildlife** - Outdoor cats can be attacked by dogs and wild animals causing severe injury or death.
- **Becoming lost** - Your cat may go outside one day and never come back. Cats can wander too far from home and become disoriented. They can also become trapped in someone else's garage or basement. Cats should always have on a breakaway collar with identification. If your cat ends up at a humane society or shelter a microchip would be additional insurance that your lost cat would be returned to you.
- **Parasites** - Cats who are allowed outdoors are constantly coming into contact with fleas, ticks, tapeworms, roundworms, hookworms, coccidia and earmites.
- **Environment** - Outdoor cats can greatly affect the population of song birds and small animals within the neighborhood.
- **Garden Hazards** - Snail bait, fertilizers and pesticides can cause sickness and even death if ingested. There are also many plants that can be harmful to cats.

and, finally...

- **Consideration for Neighbors** - Not everybody likes cats. When a cat is allowed to be outside it is impossible to control where the cat goes. People may become irritated by cats urinating and defecating in their gardens, hanging out at their bird feeders and spraying on their firewood.



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Four Alternatives to Free-Roaming, Outdoor Recreation

- Take your cat outside on a harness and leash. This way the cat can enjoy being outdoors but still be under your supervision.
- Construct a trolley system in your backyard which will enable the cat to have some freedom while still being under supervision
- Build a greenhouse window, a cat run or a large screened enclosure to enable the cat to enjoy fresh air without danger of escaping.
- Invest in a Cat Fence-In System to keep your cat in your fenced yard and keep other cats out.
- Finally...expect the unexpected. All cats should wear a collar and ID at all times.

For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.