

So, You Adopted a Shelter Cat...



381 McDow Road, Columbiana, Alabama 35051
(205) 669-3916 www.shelbyhumane.org

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Welcome to the Shelby Humane Society Family!

Thank you for opening your heart and home by adopting your pet from Shelby Humane Society (SHS). We want to help you start off on the right paw with your new feline companion. You've made a commitment to your cat, which will pay off in tons of love, purrs and companionship for the rest of your feline companion's life!

Adopted animals will bring you as much love and joy as animals purchased directly from breeders, pet stores or any other source. And the best part is, they come with a lifelong promise that SHS will always be there to help you and your pets.

We do our best to ensure that the pets adopted from SHS are healthy and happy. When a new cat arrives, we evaluate her health and temperament. By the time a cat is adopted, she has been vaccinated against rabies*, feline Rhinovirus, dewormed, and micro-chipped. Dogs and cats are also spayed or neutered before adoption to help bring an end to the tremendous pet over-population issues in our county and beyond.

Although we have attended to your new pet's health needs while with us, it is essential that you take your new pet to visit with your veterinarian within ten days of adoption. This first vet visit is an opportunity to discuss preventative health care with your veterinarian: routine vaccinations, diet, exercise, and flea and tick prevention. You can also ask about the availability of emergency vet care, to insure that you are prepared for the future.

We hope this adoption packet will be a useful tool as you and your pet adjust to home life together. **Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns about your pet's behavior or well being; call us at (205) 669-3916.** Our dedicated staff and many resources are here to help you and your pets.



Many purrs,
Shelby Humane Society

Thank you for adopting your cat and helping to save more lives!

** Kittens must be at least 12 weeks old to get a rabies vaccination.*

Bringing Your New Cat Home

Be prepared

Before bringing your new furball home, outfit your home with all the supplies you could possibly need.

Coming home

The first thing you should know about your new pet is that most cats hate to travel. For the trip home, confine your pet in a sturdy cat carrier. Don't leave him loose in your car, where he might panic and cause an accident, or get out when you open the car door. He may yowl and cry and try mightily to get out of the carrier, but don't give in.

Upon arrival

After the ride home, he will, most likely, not be in the mood for fun. To make his transition to your household as comfortable as possible, select a quiet, closed-in area, such as your bedroom or a small room away from the main foot traffic, and provide him with a litter box, food and water, toys, and a scratching post.

Let your new pet become acquainted with that limited area for the first few days. Be sure to spend plenty of time with him in that room, but if he's hiding under the bed, don't force him to come out. If necessary, sit on the floor to talk to him and offer treats. Let him sniff all your belongings and investigate all the hiding places.

Your new cat may be full of self-confidence and itching to get out and make himself at home. Or he may be more of a shrinking violet who needs more time to adjust.

The first week

Over a few days, slowly introduce him to the rest of your house, including the other pets and household members. Make sure he always has access to "his" room so he can retreat to it if he feels nervous. It will take a little while, but he'll eventually start to feel comfortable at home.

Cats vary in terms of how demanding they are as pets, so let yours guide you to the level of attention he wants, whether it's your hand for petting, or your lap for sitting. By providing him with the creature comforts and companionship he seeks, you will have a content cat.

Cat Care Essentials

Your cat might act independent, but he still counts on you to provide him with food, water, safe shelter, veterinary care, a clean litter box, love, and more. Take care of these essentials, and you'll develop a rewarding relationship with your feline companion.

1. Keep your cat safe by keeping him indoors, safely confined to your property, or walked on a harness and leash. Doing so is best for you, your cat, and your community. Provide your cat with safety and security. Always use a cat carrier when transporting your pet.

2. Outfit your cat with a breakaway collar and visible ID that includes your name, address, and telephone number. No matter how careful you are, there's always a chance he may slip out the door. Your cat is more likely to get home safely if he has ID.

3. Take your cat to the veterinarian for regular check-ups and vaccinations. Medical care is as essential for your cat as it is for you. If you already have dogs or cats at home, make sure they are up-to-date on their shots and in good general health before you introduce your new cat.

4. Spay or neuter your cat. This will keep him healthier and help decrease the number of cats put down every year because of cat overpopulation.

5. Feed your cat a nutritionally balanced diet and provide fresh water 24/7. Educate yourself on your cat's nutritional needs, or ask your veterinarian for advice on what and how often to feed your pet.

6. Keep the litter box clean. Cats are naturally fastidious, and most will instinctively use a litter box; you just have to show yours where it is. Don't place your cat in the box and make little scratching motions with his front paws. This will likely upset your cat and may make him leery of the box. Scoop the box at least once daily and periodically wash it with dish liquid and hot water. Because cats also value privacy, place the litter box in a convenient but quiet spot.

7. You may need to experiment with litter to find one your cat likes. Cats are creatures of habit and if you suddenly switch to another litter or don't keep the box clean, he may not use it.

8. Groom your cat often. All cats, whether long- or short-haired, should be brushed regularly to keep their coats and skin healthy, prevent matting, and reduce shedding and hairballs. They also need to have their claws clipped to keep them from growing into their paws. Grooming is a good opportunity to discover any lumps, fleas, injuries, etc., and bond with your kitty.

9. Make time to play and provide entertainment. Cats often entertain themselves, but regular play sessions with your pet will provide him with the physical and mental stimulation he needs and strengthen the bond you share.

10. Provide your cat with some basic training to help him get along in your home. It's true that cats usually have their own ideas about how to do things. Even so, most cats can be taught not to scratch the couch, eat plants, or jump up on the kitchen counter. With repeated, gentle and consistent training, your cat will learn the house rules.

Preventing Your Cat from Getting Outside

Cats kept exclusively indoors live longer, healthier lives than outdoor cats. If you allow your cat to go outside, he might come into contact with wild animals that carry parasites and disease. He may also meet other outdoor cats who may fight with him, greatly increasing his risk of getting feline leukemia virus (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). Your cat might encounter predators, like dogs, foxes and coyotes that could seriously harm or even kill him. He could be hit by a motor vehicle. He may also be exposed to poisonous substances like lawn chemicals, antifreeze and rat bait.

Because of these and other dangers awaiting the outdoor cat, it's estimated that a cat allowed outdoors in the United States lives an average of one quarter as long as a cat living exclusively indoors. Keeping your cat indoors is the best way to prolong his life. Of course, cats don't understand that they're safer staying indoors, and some cats will do everything in their power to escape. This is especially true of indoor cats with a history of going outside.

Your cat can learn to be happy indoors if you provide him with an enriched environment and give him opportunities to be by himself. However, if you have a cat who keeps trying to escape, it's vital to make sure he isn't successful! Cat-proofing your exits and deterring him from hanging around the doors are essential management steps for you to take.

Welfare

The Hunt

Here are suggestions to help fulfill your cat's need to engage in predatory behavior:

- Provide toys that your cat can throw around himself and toys that require your participation, such as those you wiggle and dangle from a wand or stick. Move the toys in such a way that they mimic the movements of a rodent or bird.
- Provide your cat commercially available "cat videos." The most popular ones show close-ups of birds and small rodents.
- Position bird and squirrel feeders outside windows where your cat can observe animals coming and going during the day.

Social Concerns

Another need a cat has that can affect his welfare as an indoor cat—and affect whether he attempts to escape—is alone time. We recognize this need in ourselves but don't always consider it when thinking of our pets. Cats actually have a greater need for personal space and alone time than people do—it's their nature. To meet an indoor cat's social needs, you'll want to provide him enough space to be comfortable and enough perching and hiding places to be alone.

Outdoor Excursions

Teach Your Cat to Walk on a Leash

Besides indoor enrichment, another approach to meeting your cat's needs while keeping him from running loose outdoors is to take him on safe outings. One option is to train your cat to walk on a leash with you.

Create a Secure Outdoor Enclosure

A secure outdoor enclosure allows your cat access to the exciting sights, sounds and smells outdoors, enlarging his home territory. Enclosures for cats should be completely enclosed, such as a screened-in porch, or constructed so the cat can't climb up the walls and jump out. Walls should be at least seven feet high and should not be accessible to trees or climbing vines. In addition, the top of the wall should be capped with a fence ledge that angles toward the interior at least one foot, as an added deterrent for jumping and climbing cats.

Cat Proofing Your Exits

Even if you do a great job providing enrichment for your cat, if your cat has been allowed loose outdoors in the past he'll likely try to get outdoors on his own again.

Check the security of your windows and doors. Check that your doors latch securely and that the springs are taut so that the doors close quickly. Be sure your window and door screens are not tattered. Tattered screens invite cats to attempt escape.

Be certain that all family members watch for your cat and any attempts he could make to escape. However, remember that children are easily distracted by friends and activities and may not be able to always keep the cat from escaping. It's helpful to practice with children and show them how to leave the house without allowing the cat out with them. Teach them to watch for the cat, to open the door slowly, and to turn back toward the house as they close the door behind them—with your cat inside!

Collars, Tags: Your Cat's Safety Net

Whether it's an engraved sterling silver disk from a fancy boutique or a make-it-yourself aluminum circle from a pet store, your cat's ID tag is more than feline jewelry. It's a vital safety net for keeping you and your companion together.

Tag - you're it!

For their health and safety and your peace of mind, all pet cats should be kept indoors. But accidents can happen. A door or window inadvertently left open can tempt your feline friend to slip outside. That's why all cats should wear collars and tags.

An ID tag is your cat's ticket home. If you're lucky, a neighbor will find him and return him to you right away. But your pet could be picked up by a stranger or an animal control officer and taken to a shelter. Without an ID tag, he could be mistaken for a homeless stray. A tag tells the staff that your cat has an owner who loves him and wants him back.

ID info

Your cat's ID tag should have your name, address, and a telephone number where you're easily reached. Including a second telephone number or the number of a friend or relative is also a good idea.

You should check your pet's ID tag regularly to make sure it's still readable—a heavily scratched or broken tag won't do any good. And, of course, if your contact information changes, you should update the tag immediately.

An ID tag is even more important if you and your cat are traveling or moving. Pets have been known to get loose on airport tarmacs or at roadside rest stops, and you'll have a much better chance of recovering your pet if he has an ID. Make sure his tag bears your cell phone number or the number of someone who can contact you or take responsibility for your pet if you're out of reach.

****Even if your cat is microchipped, it's still good to have a collar with tags****

Collared

A breakaway collar features a fastener that automatically releases when it's pulled. Since these fasteners don't click into a locked position, they allow your cat to slip free if the collar gets snagged on window blinds, furniture, or fencing. A regular collar, in these situations, could strangle your cat. Other breakaway collars feature a short length of elastic fabric woven into the collar that expands when you tug it. This kind of collar will also release your cat if he gets caught on an object. The weight of his body, or pressure applied to the collar by tugging, stretches the elastic and lets him escape. You can find breakaway collars at most pet supply stores or online for about the same price as a regular collar.

It's a good idea to keep a spare collar and tag on hand. If your cat loses his collar and tag, you can immediately outfit him with a replacement set. This is a cheap way of ensuring that your feline friend will spend his life where he belongs—with you!

Cat Chat: Understanding Feline Language

You and your cat might speak different languages, but you can still communicate with each other.

Indicators such as the look in your cat's eyes, the tone of her voice, the position of her ears, and the motion of her tail can provide important clues that reveal her feelings and intentions. You can learn to "read" these signals so you'll get a good idea of what's on your cat's mind.

Vocalizing: Something to talk about

You'll learn a lot from your cat's wide vocabulary of chirps and meows. You'll know when it's time to get up (at least in your cat's opinion), when your cat's feeling affectionate, or when your cat's feeling threatened or is in pain.

Meow is an all-purpose word: This can be a greeting ("Hey, how ya doin'?), a command ("I want up, I want down, More food now"), an objection ("Touch me at your own risk"), an announcement ("Here's your mouse"). Some cats even walk around the house meowing to themselves.

Chirps and trills are how a mother cat tells her kittens to follow her. Kitty wants you to follow him, usually to his food bowl. If you have more than one cat, they will often converse with each other this way.

The purr is a sign of contentment: Cats purr whenever they're happy, even while they're eating. Sometimes, however, a cat may purr when he's anxious or sick, using the purr as a way to comfort himself, like a child sucking his thumb.

Growling, hissing, and spitting: This indicates a cat who is annoyed, frightened, angry or aggressive. Leave this cat alone.

The yowl or howl is a loud, drawn-out meow: Your cat is in some kind of distress—stuck in a closet, looking for you, in pain. In unneutered and unspayed cats, it's part of the mating behavior (and very annoying). Elderly cats sometimes suffer from cognitive disorder (dementia) and may howl because they're disoriented. Screaming means your cat is in terrible pain.

Chattering, chittering, twittering is the strange noise your cat makes when he's sitting in the window watching birds or squirrels. Some experts think that this is an exaggeration of the "killing bite," when a cat grabs his prey by the neck and works his teeth through the bones to snap them.

Body language

Rubbing

When your cat rubs her chin and body against you, she's telling you she loves you, right? Well, sort of. What she's really doing is marking her territory. You'll notice that she also rubs the chair, the door, her toys, everything in sight. She's telling everyone that this is her stuff, including you. But she does love you, too.

Kneading

In the cat world, this is called "making biscuits," because the cat works her paws on a soft surface as if it she's kneading bread dough. This is a holdover from kittenhood, when a nursing kitten massaged her mother's teats to make milk flow. When your cat does this, she is really happy.

The Flehman response

You've surely noticed times when your cat, while sniffing your shoe perhaps, lifts his head, opens his mouth slightly, curls back his lips, and squints his eyes. He's not making a statement about how your shoe smells, he's gathering more information. Your cat's sense of smell is so important to him that he actually has an extra olfactory organ that very few other creatures have—the Jacobson's organ. It's located on the roof of his mouth behind his front teeth and is connected to the nasal cavity. When your cat gets a whiff of something really fascinating, he opens his mouth and inhales so that the scent molecules flow over the Jacobson's organ. This intensifies the odor and provides more information about the object he's sniffing. What he does with that information, well, we'll never know.

In the mood

Is your cat playing, meditating, or having a bad day? Here's how you can tell:

Content: Sitting or lying down, eyes half-closed, narrow pupils, tail mostly still, ears forward, purring. A really happy cat will often knead on a soft surface.

Playful: Ears forward, tail up, whiskers forward, pupils somewhat dilated. Playing is hunting behavior; your cat may stalk his prey (a toy, a housemate, you), then crouch down with his rear end slightly raised. A little wiggle of the butt, then ... pounce! Kitty grabs his prey, bites it, wrestles it the floor, and kicks it with his hind feet. His toy is now dead.

Irritated, over-stimulated: Pupils dilating, ears turning back, tail twitching or waving. The cat may growl or put her teeth on you as a warning to cease and desist. Intense play can quickly turn to overstimulation in some cats, resulting in biting and scratching.

Nervous, anxious: Ears sideways or back, pupils dilating, tail low or tucked between legs. The cat may slink through the house close to the floor, looking for somewhere to hide. He may turn his face to the wall to shut the world out.

Frightened, startled: Think Halloween cat. Ears back and flat against head, whiskers back, back arched, fur standing on end, tail erect or low. May yowl, growl, hiss, and spit.

Defensive: Crouched position, ears flattened, whiskers back, tail between legs or wrapped around body, pupils dilated. He may meow loudly, growl, hiss, and spit.

Angry, aggressive: Ears back, pupils very constricted - tail up or down with fur standing on end. An aggressive cat will stare down the other cat and growl or yowl until the other cat gives way. Cats don't really want to fight; they prefer standoffs, but this can progress to fighting if one of the cats doesn't back down.

Favorite Hiding Places

Cats love to hang out in small, dark, enclosed spaces. That's why you find them inside paper bags, cardboard boxes, drawers, closets, and plenty of other strange places. It gives them a sense of security and uninterrupted snooze time. And it seems the fatter the cat is, the smaller the space is! Your cat will run to the nearest hiding spot to make herself invisible whenever she is frightened. That might mean sticking her head under your arm at the veterinarian's office. A loud noise, a sudden movement, an active child, a stranger, a traumatic event, or the appearance of the dreaded cat carrier can all make her run for cover.

Come out, come out

Unless you're rushing to make that veterinarian appointment or catch a flight, leave your cat alone. She'll probably come out later when she's feeling safer, wants to play, or is hungry. But seek out your cat if she misses her next meal, or if she won't come out of her hiding place for a longer amount of time. That could mean she's sick.

You can reassure her by quietly talking to her in her hiding spot and leaving a few treats for her there. Many cats will respond to your voice and venture out of their hiding place. Don't force her out—she'll become fearful of you and even injure you.

Wherever you are

When you're looking for your cat, check all the regular spots first, then start getting creative. Here are some common hiding places:

Under the furniture, behind the furniture, and sometimes inside the furniture!
The back of a closet
In the fireplace
Behind books on a bookshelf
In a drawer
In a laundry basket
Behind the drapes
Behind an open door
On top of the kitchen cupboards
Under the bedspread
In an empty dryer (always check inside before closing the door!)

Still can't find her? She's just gotten even more creative. Don't panic—just open a can of cat food or shake her treat bag!

Introducing a New Cat to Other Pets

First, recognize and accept that you can't force your pets to like each other. We don't have a crystal ball to predict whether or not your pets will be friends, but we do have techniques that will increase your chances of success. Most importantly, choose a cat with a similar personality and activity level. For example, an older cat or dog might not appreciate the antics of a kitten.

You need to move slowly during the introduction process to increase your chances for success. You shouldn't throw your pets together in a sink-or-swim situation and hope they'll work it out.

The nature of cats

Cats are territorial, and in general they don't like to share. A cat who's unhappy about a newcomer may express his displeasure by fighting with the other pet and marking territory (peeing on the floor, wall, or other objects). Cats also dislike change, and a new cat in the house is a huge change. These two character traits mean you could have a tough (but not impassable) road ahead.

Some cats are more social than other cats. For example, an 8-year-old cat who has never been around other animals might never learn to share her territory (and her people) with other pets in the household. But an 8-week-old kitten separated from her mom and littermates for the first time might be glad to have a cat or dog companion.

All of this means that your current pet and your new cat need to be introduced very slowly so they can get used to each other before a face-to-face meeting. Slow introductions help prevent fearful or aggressive behavior from developing. Below are some guidelines to help make the introductions go smoothly. Be aware that the introduction process can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, or even a few months in extreme cases. Be patient.

Confinement

To allow time for the newcomer to adjust to you and her new situation, keep her in a small room with her litter box, food, water, scratching post, toys and a bed for several days to a week.

Feed your resident pets and the newcomer on each side of the door to this room, so that they associate something enjoyable (eating!) with each other's smells. Don't put the food so close to the door that the animals are too upset by each other's presence to eat.

Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until your pets can eat calmly while standing directly on either side of the door.

Try to get your pets to interact with a toy. Tie a toy to each end of a string, then place it so there's a toy on either side of the door. Hopefully, they'll start batting the toys around and maybe even batting paws.

Be sure to spend plenty of time with your new kitty in her room, but don't ignore your resident cat.

The old switcheroo

To animals, smells are far more important than appearances, so you want to get your pets used to each other's scent before they meet face-to-face.

Swap the blankets or beds the cats use or gently rub a washcloth on one cat's cheeks and put it underneath the food dish of another. If there are more than two animals in the house, do the same for each animal.

When the pets finally do meet, at least their scents will be familiar.

Once your new cat is using her litter box and eating regularly while confined, let her have free time in the house while confining your other pets to the new cat's room. It's best to introduce your new cat to a room or two at a time and increase her access to other rooms over a few days. This switch provides another way for them to experience each other's scents without a face-to-face meeting. It also allows the newcomer to get familiar with her new surroundings without the other animals frightening her.

You can do this several times a day, but only when you're home to supervise. If you have to leave the house, put your new kitty back in her room.

Next, after you've returned the cats to their designated parts of the house, use two doorstops to prop open the dividing door just enough to allow the animals to see each other.

Repeat the whole process over a period of days—supervised, of course.

Slow and steady wins the race

It's better to introduce your pets to each other gradually so that neither animal becomes afraid or aggressive. Once the cats are face to face, though, there will be some kinks for them to work out.

If you're really lucky (and your cats are inclined), they may do some mutual sniffing and grooming, and you're on your way to success. They may sit and stare at each other. You can provide distraction by dangling toys in front of them at the same time. This may encourage them to play together.

They might sniff each other, hiss, and walk away. That's to be expected. This may go on for a few days or so, and then you'll probably find them both sleeping on your bed.

Break it up

If you're not so lucky, they may be very stressed. Fortunately, they may only posture and make a lot of noise. But, as soon as there are signs of increasing aggression (flattened ears, growling, spitting, crouching) make a loud noise by clapping your hands or throw a pillow nearby to distract them. If the

standoff continues, very carefully herd them into separate parts of the house to calm down. This could take up to 24 hours and the cats may take out their stress on you.

Be careful

If the cats fight repeatedly, you may need to start the introduction process all over again and consider getting advice from a vet or animal behaviorist. Note: Never try to break up a cat fight by picking one up - you're bound to get hurt.

Reducing tension

There are other things you can do to help ease tension between feline roommates:

- Have your cats examined by your vet before introductions to make sure they're all healthy.
- Have one litter box per cat plus an extra one.
- Try to keep your resident pets' routine as close to what it was before the newcomer's arrival.
- Make sure all cats have a "safe" place to escape to.

Preventing Litter Box Problems

Keeping your cat's litter box up to his standards is very important. The following suggestions should keep your cat from "thinking outside the box."

Location, location, location

Most people tend to place the litter box in an out-of-the-way spot to minimize odor and prevent cat litter from being tracked throughout the house. But, if the litter box ends up in the basement next to an appliance or on a cold cement floor, your cat may be less than pleased.

So you may have to compromise.

- Keep the litter box in a spot that gives your cat some privacy yet is also conveniently located. If the box is too hard to get to, especially for a kitten or an elderly cat, he just may not use it.
- Avoid placing litter boxes next to noisy or heat-radiating appliances, like the furnace or the washing machine. The noise can make a cat nervous, while the warmth of a dryer or furnace can magnify the litter box smell, which could make him stay away from it.
- Put the box far away from his food and water bowls. Cats don't like that smell too near their food and may not use the box.
- Place at least one litter box on each level of your house. That way your cat has options if access to his primary box is blocked (the basement door is closed or your dinner party has him holed up in the bedroom.) If you have more than one cat, provide litter boxes in several locations so that one cat can't ambush another cat using the litter box.
- If you keep the litter box in a closet or a bathroom, be sure the door is wedged open from both sides to prevent your cat from being trapped inside or locked out. Depending on the location, you might consider cutting a hole in a closet door and adding a pet door.

Pick of the litter

Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litters, presumably because they have a softer feel. The scoopable (clumping) litters usually have finer grains than the typical clay litter and are very

popular because they really keep down the odor. But high-quality, dust-free clay litters are fairly small-grained and may be perfectly acceptable to your cat.

There are several different types of cat litter on the market. The most popular ones are traditional clay litter, scooping/clumping litter, crystal-based/silica gel litter, and plant-derived/bio-degradable litter.

If your cat has previously been an outdoor one and prefers dirt, you can keep him out of your houseplants by placing medium-sized rocks on top of the soil and/or by mixing some potting soil with your regular litter. A cat who rejects all types of commercial litters may be quite happy with sand. Once you find a litter your cat likes, stick with it. Switching litters constantly could result in your cat not using the litter box.

Smelling like a rose

Many people used scented litter to mask litter box odors, but those scents can put off many cats. For the same reason, it's not a good idea to place a room deodorizer or air freshener near the litter box.

A thin layer of baking soda placed on the bottom of the box will help absorb odors without repelling your cat. And if you keep the box scrupulously clean, it shouldn't smell.

If you find the litter box odor offensive, your cat, with his keen sense of smell, probably finds it even more offensive and won't want to go there.

How many?

The general rule of thumb is one box for each cat plus one more. Then none of them will ever be prevented from eliminating in the litter box because it's already occupied.

It's not possible to designate a personal litter box for each cat in your household, as cats may use any litter box that's available. That means a cat may occasionally refuse to use a litter box after another cat has been in it. In this case, you'll need to keep all of the litter boxes extremely clean, and you might even need to add additional boxes. However, it's best not to place all the boxes in one location because your cats will think of them as one big box and ambushing another cat will still be possible.

Under cover

Some people prefer to provide their cats with a covered litter box, but doing so may introduce some potential problems. To discover which type your cat prefers, you may want to experiment by offering both types at first.

Some cats, especially those who are timid or like privacy, may prefer a covered litter box. Others will not, especially if it's not clean. Covered boxes can decrease the amount of litter that flies from the box when your cat buries his business.

Pros and cons:

- You may forget to clean the litter box as frequently as you should, because the dirty litter is "out of sight, out of mind."
- A covered litter box traps odors inside, so you'll need to clean it more often than an open one. A dirty, covered litter box is to your cat what a port-a-potty is to you!
- It may not allow a large cat sufficient room to turn around, scratch, dig, or position himself in the way he wants.
- It may make it easier for another cat to lay in wait and "ambush" the user as he exits the box.

Other types of litter boxes

There is a wide variety of litter boxes on the market today. Keep in mind that some fancy litter box innovations are for the owner's convenience, not the cat's. In fact, some of these features may actually turn your cat off. It's really best to keep it simple—a basic box, litter, and a scoop.

Keeping it clean

To meet the needs of the most discriminating cat, you should scoop feces out of the litter box daily. How often you actually change (replace) the litter depends on the number of cats you have, the number of litter boxes, and the type of litter you use.

Twice a week is a general guideline for replacing clay litter, but depending on the circumstances, you may need to replace it every other day or only once a week.

If you clean the litter box daily, you might only need to change clumping litter every two to three weeks. If you notice an odor or if much of the litter is wet or clumped, it's time for a change.

Scrub the box every time you change the litter. Use mild dish detergent to clean it, as products with ammonia or citrus oils can turn a cat off, and some cleaning products are toxic to cats.

Liner notes

Box liners are strictly a convenience for the owner; supposedly, the liner can be gathered together and tied just like a garbage bag, but the truth is that most cats shred it to bits while scratching in the box. However, it might work if your cat doesn't work too hard to bury his waste.

Depth of litter

Some people think that the more litter they put in the box, the less often they'll have to clean it, but that's a mistake. Most cats won't use litter that's more than about two inches deep. In fact, some long-haired cats actually prefer less litter and a smooth, slick surface, such as the bottom of the litter box. Adding extra litter isn't a substitute for scooping and scrubbing.

"Litter training" cats

There's really no such thing as "litter training" a cat in the same way one would housetrain a dog. You actually don't need to teach your cat what to do with a litter box; instinct will generally take over. You do need to provide an acceptable, accessible litter box, using the suggestions above.

It's not necessary to take your cat to the litter box and move her paws back and forth in the litter. In fact, we don't recommend it, as such an unpleasant experience is likely to make her afraid of the litter box and you.

If you move, however, you will need to show your cat where the box is, though his sensitive nose will probably find it first.

Solving problems

If your cat begins to go to the bathroom outside the litter box, your first call should always be to your veterinarian. Many medical conditions can cause a change in a cat's litter box habits. If your veterinarian examines your cat and gives him a clean bill of health, your cat may have a behavior problem that needs to be solved.

Punishment is not the answer, nor is banishing your cat outdoors. For long-standing or complex situations, contact an animal-behavior specialist who has experience working with cats.

'In Touch' With Your Cat's Health

Regular visits to the veterinarian are an essential part of keeping your cat healthy. An excellent way for you to keep tabs on him in between vet visits is to do your own nose-to-tail checkups at home. Get in the habit of running your hands all over your cat's body whenever he's cuddling with you or you're grooming him. This is the best way to discover problems before they become serious. Call your veterinarian if you find any of these conditions.

Skin deep

While petting your cat, feel for any lumps, scratches, scabs, swelling, or any other irregularities. Dandruff, oily fur, and missing fur can indicate skin or internal problems. Part the fur to look for fleas; specks that look like black pepper are actually "flea dirt" (flea feces that contain your cat's blood and turn red when wet).

Lend an ear

The hairless part of your cat's ears should be clean and odorless. If your cat is having problems, he may shake his head a lot and scratch his ears. Check for flaking, scabs, foul odor, or discharge. If you see a black, gritty substance inside, he probably has ear mites, a parasite that causes severe itching and is contagious to other cats.

Eye spy

Look for bright, clear, evenly focused eyes. Redness, discoloration or discharge, squinting, or the emergence of the third eyelid can signal that your cat has a problem.

Open wide

Healthy gums are pink, pale or bright; red gums may mean something is wrong. Drooling and pawing at the mouth are cause for concern as well. Brown streaks and tartar build-up on the teeth may indicate a dental problem. Your cat's breath should not be so bad that you can't stand to have him near you.

Get nosey

Cats' noses should be clean, and, depending on his activity level and the ambient temperature, his nose may be cold or warm. If he paws at his nose, sneezes frequently, or there is a discharge, contact your veterinarian.

Don't be a pill! Never give your cat any medications without your veterinarian's advice. Many common human drugs (like aspirin and acetaminophen [Tylenol]) can poison cats.

Tall tails

Look under his tail. If you see what looks like grains of rice or spaghetti, contact your veterinarian. Your cat has parasites—some of which may be spread to you or other pets.

Foot the bill

Most cats don't like to have their feet touched, but if yours doesn't mind, look for stuck-on litter, torn claws, cuts, swellings, or infections. Also, check your cat's claws regularly to see if they need to be trimmed; untrimmed claws can inadvertently scratch you, get caught on carpet and furniture, and grow into the paw.

Brush it off

If your cat likes to be brushed, finish off your exam with a nice grooming session. Brushing is good for removing loose fur, distributing oils, and stimulating blood flow. Brushing also helps prevent hairballs, which cats cough up when they've swallowed too much fur from grooming themselves or another cat in the household.

Book smarts

All owners should have a book on cat care (recommended by a veterinarian) that includes a section on emergency first aid. You should never try to be your own veterinarian, but there are some emergency procedures that could minimize damage and keep your pet relatively comfortable on the way to the veterinarian. Familiarize yourself with these procedures before an emergency happens.

Destructive Scratching

Some people think a cat's scratching behavior is a reflection of his dislike of your favorite piece of furniture or an attempt to get even. Cats actually scratch objects in their environment for many reasons.

For instance, cats scratch to remove the dead outer layer of their claws, mark their territory by leaving both a visual mark and a scent (they have scent glands on their paws), and to stretch their bodies and flex their feet and claws.

Scratching is a normal, instinctive behavior, one that you don't want to discourage completely. Instead, the goal is to get your cat to scratch acceptable objects (herein referred to as "posts").

Step 1: Watch and learn

What is an acceptable object? Certainly not the couch, carpet, or banister. Let's look at the what, when, and how of cat scratching.

What do cats scratch? Anything with a nubby, coarse, or textured surface, something they can really sink their claws into.

When do they scratch? When they wake up from a nap, when they want to mark their territory, or when they're excited about something, like you coming home from work.

How do they scratch? Some cats like to stand up against a vertical surface; others get horizontal and stick their butts up in the air for a good stretch. Some cats enjoy both angles.

Step 2: Don't scratch here

Once you've figured out your cat's preferences, you're halfway to the finish line

- Cats are all about texture, so cover the "naughty" spots with things yours will find unappealing on her paws, like double-sided sticky tape, aluminum foil, sheets of sandpaper or a plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up.
- Many cats don't like the odor of citrus or menthol. Try attaching cotton balls soaked in cologne or a muscle rub to the "bad" patches.
- You may have to keep these items in place until your cat is using the scratching posts consistently, which could take weeks or months. Then, remove them one at a time.

Cats just want to have fun

There are many things that can satisfy your cat's need to scratch:

- A sturdy rope-covered upright post, a flat scratch pad of corrugated cardboard, the back side of a square of carpet, even a small log with the bark still on (be sure it hasn't been treated with chemicals before bringing it inside.)
- A scratching object can be free-standing, lie on the floor, or hang from a doorknob, whatever your cat desires. Some cats don't care, just as long as they can scratch, so why not have a variety?
- Rub a little catnip into the post or attach a toy to the top to make it even more attractive.
- Praise your cat for using the post or any other object that is acceptable to scratch.

Step 3: Location, location, location

Put the posts where your cat wants them—next to her sleeping spot for a quick stretch after a nap, or by the front door for a really intense session after she greets you.

Put a post on each level of the house so she doesn't have to go far to indulge.

Once your cat is regularly using her post, you can move it little by little to where you'd like it. But, really, why tempt fate? Better to leave it in her favorite spot so she leaves your favorite things alone.

Where it's at

Scratching posts and pads are available in all shapes, sizes, and materials at pet stores, animal shelter, and on the Internet. If you're industrious and want to make it yourself, you can find building plans online.

Stop kitty

Scolding your cat only works if you catch her scratching off-limit items. If you correct her after the fact, she won't know what she's done wrong and could learn to be afraid of you.

- Never yell at or hit her as punishment. She may start to avoid you altogether.
- If you do catch your cat shredding a "naughty spot," interrupt her by making a loud noise (clap your hands, shake a can of pennies or pebbles, slap the wall) and redirect her scratching to one of the acceptable items. Do this consistently to teach her "sofa bad, post good."

Trimming a Cat's Claws

Clipping claws

Indoor cats don't wear down their claws as quickly as outdoors ones do, so they can overgrow. Untrimmed, claws can grow into the cat's pads, leading to infection, pain, and difficulty walking and using the litter box. Check your cat's claws every couple of weeks to see if they need to be clipped.

Trimming a cat's claws every few weeks is an important part of maintaining your pet's health and protects him, you, your family and visitors as well as the sofa, curtains and other furniture. But if the idea of trimming a cat's claws has you biting your nails, know that all it takes is some patience and a bit of practice to sharpen your skills.

1: Stay on the cutting edge

There are plenty of tools available to trim a cat's claws; use the one that works best for you and your pet.

Some people prefer a special pair of scissors modified to hold a cat's claw in place, others prefer human nail clippers, and still others choose pliers-like clippers or those with a sliding "guillotine" blade. Whatever your tool of choice, be sure the blade remains sharp; the blunt pressure from dull blades may hurt an animal and cause a nail to split or bleed. Keep something to stop bleeding, such as styptic powder, cornstarch, or a dry bar of soap (to rub the bleeding nail across), nearby.

2: Take paws, part I

If you approach a cat with a sharp object in one hand while trying to grab a paw with the other, odds are you'll come up empty-handed. Because cats' temperaments and dispositions vary greatly, there is no "perfect" way to handle a cat while trimming his claws.

Some cats do well with no restraint at all, but most cats need to be held firmly but gently to make sure that no one gets hurt. Try resting the cat in the crook of one arm while holding one paw with the other hand. Or, place the animal on a table and lift one paw at a time. You may even be able to convince a particularly sociable cat to lie back in your lap.

3: Take paws, part II

If you've got a helper, ask him to hold the cat while you clip the nails, or just ask him to scratch your cat's favorite spot or offer up a special treat.

4: Take a little off the top

Now that you're in position and the cat's in position, put the claw in the right position, too. Take a paw in your hand and use your thumb and pointer finger to gently press down on the top and bottom of the paw on the joint just behind the claw. This will cause the claw to extend so you can quickly but carefully snip off the sharp tip and no more.

Don't get too close to the pink part of the nail called "the quick," where blood vessels and nerve endings lie. Just like the pink part of a human fingernail, the quick is very sensitive; cutting into this area will likely cause bleeding and pain.

If this happens, apply a little pressure to the very tip of the claw (without squeezing the entire paw, which would only increase the blood flow), dip the claw in a bit of styptic powder or cornstarch, or rub the nail across a dry bar of soap. Don't continue if he's too upset, but keep an eye on him to be sure the bleeding stops.

It's common to only cut the front claws, but take a look at the rear claws just in case they've gotten too long or their sharp tips hurt you when your cat leaps on or off your lap. Since most cats fuss more about having their rear claws clipped, start with the front claws.

5: Take it one at a time

If you aren't able to trim all 10 nails at once, don't worry. Few cats remain patient for more than a few minutes, so take what you can get, praise your pet for cooperating, then be on the lookout for the next opportunity—maybe even a catnap—to cut things down to size.

Declawing Cats: Far Worse Than a Manicure

Declawing is a topic that arouses strong feelings. Some people believe it's cruel and unnecessary, while others think it has its place.

Why people declaw cats

People often mistakenly believe that declawing their cats is a harmless "quick fix" for unwanted scratching. They don't realize that declawing can make a cat less likely to use the litter box or more likely to bite.

People who are worried about being scratched, especially those with immunodeficiency or bleeding disorders, may be told incorrectly that their health will be protected by declawing their cats. However, declawing is not recommended by infectious disease specialists. The risk from scratches for these people is less than those from bites, cat litter, or fleas carried by their cats.

Cats are usually about 8 weeks old when they begin scratching. It's the ideal time to train kittens to use a scratching post and allow nail trims. Pet caregivers should not consider declawing a routine prevention for unwanted scratching. Declawing can actually lead to an entirely different set of behavior problems that may be worse than shredding the couch.

What is declawing?

Too often, people think that declawing is a simple surgery that removes a cat's nails—the equivalent of having your fingernails trimmed. Sadly, this is far from the truth.

Declawing traditionally involves the amputation of the last bone of each toe. If performed on a human being, it would be like cutting off each finger at the last knuckle.

How is a cat declawed?

The standard method of declawing is amputating with a scalpel or guillotine clipper. The wounds are closed with stitches or surgical glue, and the feet are bandaged.

Another method is laser surgery, in which a small, intense beam of light cuts through tissue by heating and vaporizing it. However, it's still the amputation of the last toe bone of the cat and carries with it the same long-term risks of lameness and behavioral problems as does declawing with scalpels or clippers.

A third procedure is the tendonectomy, in which the tendon that controls the claw in each toe is severed. The cat keeps his claws, but can't control them or extend them to scratch. This procedure is associated with a high incidence of abnormally thick claw growth. Therefore, more frequent and challenging nail trims are required to prevent the cat's claws from snagging on people, carpet, furniture, and drapes, or growing into the pads.

Because of its complications, tendonectomy may lead to declawing anyway. Although tendonectomy is not actually amputation, a 1998 study published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* found the incidence of bleeding, lameness, and infection was similar for tendonectomy and declawing.

After effects

Medical drawbacks to declawing include pain, infection and tissue necrosis (tissue death), lameness, and back pain. Removing claws changes the way a cat's foot meets the ground and can cause pain similar to wearing an uncomfortable pair of shoes. There can also be a re-growth of improperly removed claws, nerve damage, and bone spurs.

For several days after surgery, shredded newspaper is typically used in the litter box to prevent litter from irritating declawed feet. This unfamiliar litter substitute, accompanied by pain when scratching in the box, may lead cats to stop using the litter box. Some cats may become biters because they no longer have their claws for defense.

What you can do

Scratching is normal cat behavior. It isn't done to destroy a favorite chair or to get even. Cats scratch to remove the dead husks from their claws, mark territory and stretch their muscles. The Humane Society of the United States opposes declawing except for the rare cases when it is necessary for medical purposes, such as the removal of cancerous nail bed tumors.

Many countries feel so strongly about the issue that they have banned the procedure. But you don't have to let your cat destroy your house. Here's what you can do:

- Keep his claws trimmed to minimize damage to household items.
- Provide several stable scratching posts and boards around your home. Offer different materials like carpet, sisal, wood, and cardboard, as well as different styles (vertical and horizontal). Use toys and catnip to entice your cat to use the posts and boards.
- Ask your veterinarian about soft plastic caps (such as Soft Paws) that are glued to the cat's nails. They need to be replaced about every six weeks.
- Use a special tape (such as Sticky Paws) on furniture to deter your cat from unwanted scratching.

Unnecessary procedures

Declawing and tendonectomies should be reserved only for those rare cases in which a cat has a medical problem that would warrant such surgery, such as the need to remove cancerous nail bed tumors. Declawing does not guarantee that a cat will not be taken to a shelter if other problem behaviors occur, such as biting or not using the litter box.

Declawing is an unnecessary surgery which provides no medical benefit to the cat. Educated pet parents can easily train their cats to use their claws in a manner that allows everyone in the household to live together happily.

Cat Toys

Play is a vital activity, not only for kittens, but for adult cats, too.

Cats are athletic creatures with amazing strength and agility. Nature made them into perfect machines for leaping, jumping, and dashing. Just because your house kitty doesn't have real prey to chase doesn't mean she can't act out her inner predator.

Why play?

Toys and regular playtime are part of providing your cat with a stimulating environment, which makes for a happy and healthy cat. Play gives them an outlet for their energy, mental and physical stimulation, the opportunity to satisfy their instinctual hunting drive, and a chance to bond with you.

What to play with?

Cats are experts at amusing themselves. It takes very little—a crumpled ball of paper, a pen left on a desktop, a newspaper spread open on the floor—to engage your kitty in what, to her, is the most fascinating of games.

Your cat's imagination can turn almost anything into a wonderful toy that she'll bat around or chase to her heart's content. Typically, cats most enjoy playing with small, light objects that are "flickable," such as a cork or a Ping-Pong ball, which they can swat and then chase.

Cats also love empty paper bags to investigate and "hide" in. Remove the handles so your cat doesn't get caught in them. He could be terrified if he's chased by a big paper bag. Empty cardboard boxes are also popular with cats.

Interactive play

Playtime isn't just for cats—it's for their people, too. Your cat's speed and grace will amaze you as she dashes about, trying to catch her "prey."

Toss a crumpled ball of paper for her to chase—she may even bring it back to you. Some cats love to "fetch" so much that they will actually initiate the game by dropping a toy in your lap for you to throw.

Some cats go wild for the little red light of a laser toy, chasing it around the floor and up the wall. The cat gets a good workout, and you don't even have to get off the couch. Just be sure never to shine the light in your cat's eyes, as it could damage them. When the game ends, offer your cat a toy to finally grab.

Do-it-yourself toys

You don't need to spend a bundle on fancy toys for your cat. In fact, many owners say that their cats ignore the store-bought toys and play instead with a plastic ring from a milk container, a strip of paper, or a gift bow.

Here are some household items that make great cat toys:

- Round plastic shower curtain rings
- Ping-Pong balls and plastic practice golf balls with holes. Try putting one in a dry bathtub, as the captive ball is much more fun than one that escapes under the sofa.
- Paper bags with any handles removed. Paper bags are good for pouncing, hiding and interactive play. Plastic bags are not a good idea; many cats like to chew and swallow the plastic.
- Empty cardboard tubes from toilet paper and paper towels, made even more fun if you "unwind" a little cardboard to get them started.
- Cardboard boxes. Fasten some together and cut out doors and windows to make a fun cat condo.
- You (or your kids) may even enjoy making your own toys, such as sachets, or felt mice stuffed with catnip.

The kitty boutique

There's really no need to buy toys, but there are so many cute ones out there that it can be really hard to resist. Cats really enjoy toys like plastic balls, with or without bells inside, sisal-wrapped toys, which they can dig their claws into, and "fishing pole" toys consisting of a long rod with a length of cord attached that has an enticing lure at the end.

If you are going to buy cat toys, you might need to cat-proof them, too. Remove ribbons, feathers, strings, tinsel, eyes or other small decorations that your cat could chew off and swallow. Also, keep any toys that could be harmful to your cat out of reach when you can't supervise her play.

A word about catnip

Catnip, a member of the mint family, contains a chemical that attract cats. When it's dried and crushed, it gives off an odor that has a powerful effect on some (though not all) cats. Catnip is safe, and your cat won't get addicted to it. Keep a plastic container of dried catnip on hand to give to your kitty, or you could even grow some.

Some cats can get over-stimulated to the point of aggressive play, while others just get relaxed. Genetics determines if your cat is affected by catnip. The ones that do react usually develop sensitivity to it when they're about six months old.

Safe play

It's important to only let your cat play with toys or other objects that are safe. Cat-proof the house by hiding these things:

- String, yarn, ribbon, dental floss
- Paper clips
- Pins and needles
- Rubber bands
- Plastic bags (especially drycleaner bags—she could suffocate)
- Anything else that your cat might chew

Get the most out of toys

Like a 3-year-old child, your cat can become bored with his toys. To keep them "fresh," rotate your cat's toys weekly, making only a few available at a time. Keep a variety of types easily accessible. If your cat has a favorite, like a soft "baby" that she loves to cuddle, you might want to leave that one out all the time.

Provide toys that offer a variety of uses—at least one toy to carry, one to wrestle with, one to roll and one to "baby." "Hide and Seek" is a fun game for cats to play. "Found" toys are often much more attractive than a toy that is obviously introduced.

Many of your cat's toys should be interactive. This kind of play is important for your cat, because she needs active "people time"—and such play strengthens the bond between you and your cat.

Training Your Cat Using Positive Reinforcement

You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. That's the theory behind positive reinforcement. Don't punish your cat for unwanted behavior; instead, reward her for doing something you like.

With encouragement and plenty of treats, you and your cat can accomplish great things.

Do this, not that

If you want your cat to repeat a behavior, reward that behavior. People frequently reward a behavior that they don't really want to encourage. For example, when your cat talks to you, do you talk to him, do you pet him, do you give him a treat? You're teaching your cat that meowing brings rewards. If you don't reward his meowing, in other words you ignore him when he meows, he's unlikely to become a meower. If you really like a quiet cat, reward him when he's not meowing

Crime and punishment

You may be sorely tempted to yell at your cat if you catch her sitting next to a broken vase or clawing the furniture, but punishing your cat after the fact is ineffective. She won't connect the punishment

with something she's already done and forgotten about. Instead, she'll think you're yelling at her for whatever she's doing at that very moment, which might be welcoming you home from work.

Yelling, hitting, and shaking will only make your cat fearful and confused and could lead to her avoiding you altogether.

Motivation

Motivation is the key to training. Money and love are great motivators for people. Toys, walks, car rides, and praise can do it for dogs. For most cats, it's food. They care less about "good kitty" than about good kitty treats.

So to motivate your cat, you're going to reward her with a treat every time she uses the scratching post, lets you brush her, or brings you a beer from the fridge. Scratch her head and tell her she's a pretty girl at the same time, but make sure you give her that treat.

Smart cats will soon link that behavior with getting treats.

Simmer down

Providing a reward can be helpful in training your cat to be calm during procedures she may not otherwise like, such as nail trims, brushing, going into the carrier, or being picked up. But for some cats, discomfort outweighs eating, so it may not work in all cases.

Timing

Timing is everything in training your cat. Cats have short attention spans, so the reward must come immediately (within seconds) of the behavior or your cat may not know what it's for.

For example, if you see her use the scratching post, throw some treats her way while she's scratching and tell her she's a good cat, but don't throw the treats if she has stopped scratching and is starting to do something else or it's that "something else" that she'll think merits the reward.

Consistency

This is an important part of training. Use the same technique each time for each behavior, and make sure everyone in the family does the same.

Oh, behave!

You can also reward your cat for a behavior she does naturally, or you can introduce a new behavior and reward her for learning it.

Natural behavior. An example of rewarding natural behavior is giving treats for using the scratching post (see above) or standing on her hind legs.

New behavior. You use rewards to teach your cat a new routine—to come when you call, for example. Call her name and reward her when she responds. Move to another spot, call her name, and reward her when she responds, and so on.

When to train

The best time to train is right before meal time when your cat is most motivated by food. Only train for short periods at a time (15 minutes max) or your cat may lose interest. As soon as she stops responding, stop training.

Weaning off treats

Because too many treats lead to a fat cat, your goal is to gradually wean her off the food rewards and make her settle for emotional ones such as a "good kitty," a toss of her fuzzy ball, or a scratch under the chin.

Once your cat is displaying the desired behavior reliably, you can start cutting back on food. Give her treats three out of every four times she does the behavior, then reduce it to about half the time, then about a third of the time and so on, until you're only rewarding her occasionally with a treat.

Continue the praise and non-food rewards. Your cat will learn that if she keeps offering desired behaviors, eventually she'll get what she wants—your praise and an occasional treat.

Don't try this at home

There are a couple of things you shouldn't do when training.

Don't force a behavior. Don't pick your cat up and take her to the scratching post or litter box to get her to use them. She won't understand what you're doing and will likely get frightened and run away.

Don't turn your cat into a beggar. Use treats only for training. If you give your cat a treat every time she paws you, she'll quickly learn that pawing=treat and won't leave you alone.

Lost and Found: If you lose your cat...

- 1) **Act quickly!** Begin your search as soon as you realize your cat is missing.
- 2) **Get help!** Call local police and/or animal control officers immediately.

Contact SHS immediately.

- If your animal is micro-chipped, we can take a lost report over the phone by calling 205-669-3916.
- If your animal is not micro-chipped, visit our shelter between following hours to file a lost report and walk through to look for your pet: Mondays 1-3pm and Tuesday through Saturday 1-5:30pm

*Please note that children are strictly prohibited from entering the animal hold areas and the shelter is unable to provide supervision for children.

- Please bring a photo to help us try to identify possible matches. (Photos cannot be returned)
- Although we search the kennels often in an effort to match lost reports with animals, it is important that you come in person to look for your pet at least once a week until he/she is found! Descriptions of mixed breed animals are hard to match!

- 3) **Get the word out.** Signs and posters are very effective tools for finding lost animals. Include a photo, and bring it to SHS. Signs should contain a clear description of your dog and a color photo. Post the signs at grocery stores, schools, community centers, and veterinary offices, at traffic intersections and at neighborhood businesses. Provide your police department with a copy too.
- 4) **Search the neighborhood.** Walk or drive through your neighborhood several times each day; remember to check in the trees. (Early morning and early evening are the best times to look for lost pets.) Ask letter carriers and delivery people to be on the lookout. Distribute the posters door to door. Ask neighbors to check garages or storage sheds where your cat might have accidentally become shut in.
- 5) **Advertise.** Place advertisements in newspapers and with radio stations immediately. Don't forget to monitor the "found" ads in the classified section of the local newspapers.
- 6) **Offering a reward.** Offering a reward on your posters adds an incentive for people to become involved. Be cautious before giving money to anyone claiming to know the whereabouts of your pet.
- 7) **Don't give up!** Even when you have little hope left, don't stop searching. Animals who have been lost for months have been reunited with their owners. Be persistent. Keep visiting your shelter and checking with area businesses where you have placed signs.
- 8) **Prevention is the best defense!** An ID tag is your pet's ticket home!

ID tags can mean the difference between life and death for a pet. Any pet (even an indoor one) has a better chance of being reunited with her family if she always wears a collar and ID tag with current information. Make sure your pets all have ID tags, or at least write your phone number on their collars with a permanent marker.

Keep a current photo of each pet handy to use on a lost and found poster.

Important Medical Reminders for Your Adopted Cat

1. Make an appointment for your pet's health check up at a veterinarian within 10 days of adoption for a general physical and to obtain flea/tick preventative medication.
2. The animal you adopted has come through Shelby Humane Society's Columbiana shelter facility. Usually little or nothing is known about the history of the animals, so we rarely have any medical history to give you. Of course, any known medical or behavioral conditions or issues will be disclosed to adopters prior to adoption. If your pet was in foster care, the foster parent may be able to answer some questions about the animal's habits, eating patterns, and behavior. While we have given the animal its initial vaccinations, additional vaccinations may be recommended. **ALL KITTENS WILL NEED ADDITIONAL VACCINATIONS** in order to be fully protected from common illnesses. Please consult with your vet concerning recommended vaccinations and schedule. The cost of additional vaccinations or treatment after adoption is your responsibility.
3. Shelter animals may have been exposed to upper respiratory illness but show no signs of illness at the time of adoption due to the long incubation period of this illness. Upper respiratory is similar to a cold in humans and is very treatable. Symptoms are a dry hacking cough, eye or nasal discharge, and/or sneezing. If left untreated, it can lead to more serious conditions such as pneumonia. The cost of treatment is the adopter's responsibility after adoption. Shelby Humane Society is not responsible for any fees charged by the vet once the adoption paperwork is completed. If treatment is required, the adopter may treat at their own expense or return the animal to Shelby Humane Society.
4. Your pet needs to be vaccinated annually for rabies and for a variety of common illnesses. Your vet should set you up on a schedule at your well checkup within 10 days of adopting.
5. Take time to get familiar with your new pet's habits and routines. Animals may instinctively hide illness or injury. A change in your pet's normal routine may be your first sign that something is wrong.

A final note

Be loyal to and patient with your cat. Make sure your expectations of your companion are reasonable, and remember that most problems have a solution. If you're struggling with your pet's behavior, learn how to solve problems with humane and effective techniques. Please do not hesitate to contact us—we are a resource for you throughout your pet's life.



Shelby Humane Society

381 McDow Rd. • Columbiana, AL 35051 • (205) 669-3916 • (205) 669-3819 – FAX www.shelbyhumane.org

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