

## **Keeping Cats Happy, Indoors!**

Some owners will swear their cats are miserable if they are cooped up in the house all the time. However, cats who live indoors, in a stimulating environment, and whose owners pay attention to what they like and need, will live healthy, safe, and happy (not to mention longer) lives.

In Barbara L. Diamond's *Cat Fancy* article, "Bringing the Outdoors In," she suggests that cat owners "take a few minutes to view the home from the cat's perspective" in order to "shape the healthiest and most rewarding environment possible." Simply put, with a little creative thoughtfulness it's easy to create an engaging and alluring indoor living environment for your cat(s). Here are some tips to help cat owners keep their pets amused and healthy behind closed doors:

- **Open screened windows to let some fresh air in and set up perches** where they can watch birds from the safety of the indoors. Fresh air and sunshine are great for cats. Just be sure the screen is secure. If window ledges aren't wide enough to perch on, shelves are available to create ledges for cats to sit on and watch the world go by.
- **Bring the outdoors in.** Plant pots of indoor green grass for cats to chew on. Grass, alfalfa, catmint and catnip will provide cats with fresh, tasty treats that aren't exposed to chemicals or pesticides.
- **Give cats something to do while everyone is away.** Hiding a few treats around the house gives your pet something to look forward to, though cats do catch onto this game quickly, so you have to be sneaky! Open paper bags, boxes, toys, or open closets can give cats new frontiers to explore.
- **Offer cat toys that are safe and stimulating.** When choosing toys, try to think like a cat. Is the toy furry or feathery? Does it look and feel like small prey? Can it be made to hop or fly? Don't forget cats need to scratch and climb. A scratching post at least two feet tall is essential. Offering different scratching surfaces can be helpful too.
- **Play games with your cat.** Human companionship is a very real need for cats. In addition to playing with cat toys, a cat may also enjoy games of chase, peek-a-boo around doors, or capturing non-toxic soap bubbles. Interactive playtime is always the most engaging form of play for your cat!
- **You might consider adopting a second cat.** By having multiple cats they will provide each other with exercise, social interaction, and other forms of mental stimulation. Cats housed together have more opportunity to "be cats" and this means they are less likely to be destructive or engage in other problematic behavior. But keep in mind that some cats are most comfortable as the only feline family member (or pet) in the home.

