

Keep Your Cat Safe Indoors



Cats are America's most popular pets, but they are also the pets most likely to die prematurely from diseases, poisons, attacks by other animals, abuse by humans, or speeding vehicles. The reason is simple: Owners often don't realize that allowing their cat to roam outdoors can be a one-way ticket to trouble.

Millions of cats suffer and die because their owners give them free reign to roam the neighborhood. The vast majority of these owners aren't cruel or thoughtless; many love their animals as much as the rest of us. They just believe that cats are happiest outdoors. In fact, many cat caregivers acquired their felines by "taking in" or caring for someone's cat who was allowed to stray.

A Dangerous Tradeoff

When cats are left outside unsupervised, their freedom to roam comes at a cost because they have a vastly increased chance of being injured, becoming ill, or even dying. The estimated average life span of a free-roaming cat is less than three years—compared to 15–18 years for the average indoor-only cat. Even the cat who only occasionally ventures outdoors unsupervised can fall victim to automobiles, predators, disease, and other hazards. In fact, two out of three veterinarians recommend keeping cats indoors, most often citing dangers from vehicles and disease.

Even cats in "safe" suburban neighborhoods can meet untimely fates and never return home. Fewer than 5% of "found" cats taken in by animal shelters are reunited with their families. That's why many shelters now require potential adopters to commit to keeping their cats safely confined and strongly recommend that cats wear collars and ID tags, and even be implanted with an identifying microchip. Some communities are adopting ordinances aimed at encouraging owners to confine their cats—just as they do their dogs.