

SAFETY CHECKLIST

- ✓ Safe environment
- ✓ Identification (collar and disc, microchip, photograph)
- ✓ Neutering
- ✓ Boarding cattery
- ✓ Vaccination
- ✓ Insurance



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HOW TO KEEP YOUR PET SAFE

Produced by the Leicester & Leicestershire Animal Aid Association's Petfinder Service
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CATS

Cats need peace and quiet, and will only stay with you if they feel safe and secure. Never assume they are self-sufficient. They need a warm, caring home environment. When considering a pet, do bear in mind the responsibility of taking on a cat. Unlike with dogs, there are no laws about keeping a cat, but there are precautions a responsible cat owner can take to help keep his/her pet safe.

Environment

Cats are traditionally allowed almost limitless freedom. Whether or not this should be so, will depend very much on where you live and what sort of environment the cat will live in.

When thinking of having a cat, do ask yourself if the environment surrounding your property is safe enough. Each year many cats are injured or killed on roads. If you live near fast, dangerous roads, think carefully about whether to take on a cat, or whether you should keep one as a house cat. If you have sufficient room in the house this can be an acceptable option as long as you take on a kitten, and not an adult cat that is used to being outdoors. If you do choose a house cat, make sure windows are safe and be very aware about keeping doors closed.



Your cat will need plenty of toys to keep him occupied, as well as a scratching post. He will, of course, need a litter tray. There are some beautiful cat pens available, both lean-to and free-standing, though these can be expensive. If you do have a house cat, bear in mind that he needs lots of company – yours, or perhaps another cat. Use your imagination to ensure your cat remains happy and active in this setting.

Upper flats are dangerous and windows need guards. Many people believe that cats can't fall and that, even if they do, they land safely on their feet. This is not true: cats frequently fall and can sustain serious or fatal injuries.

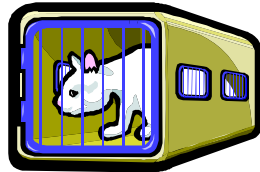
Identification

Collars worn with identification tags can reunite you so easily. There is a small risk that a collar could be dangerous if a cat gets hooked up somewhere, but the elasticated variety should allow the cat to slip a collar in this situation. You have to decide which is the greater risk - your cat being lost without identification, or choking on a collar.

Microchipping is a permanent method of identification with an implant in the neck containing a number which can be read by a scanner. Most vets and many rescue organisations have scanners now, so it is worth discussing with your vet. Make sure you have a good photo of your cat. If he goes missing you can have it made into a poster, and also use the photo as proof of ownership.

Going away? Cattery or someone you know?

The time your cat is most likely to stray is when you go away on holiday. You will have left a supply of food and a long list of instructions with relations, friends or neighbours, and will go away convinced your cat is in good hands. He may well think otherwise. He will miss your company and may well set off to find you or to seek other company. He will often get lost and then establish himself in another home having told these new, kind, people a convincing hard-luck story. Sadly, many cats will get run over or dehydrated through getting locked in some outbuilding or other.



So, do think seriously about putting your cat into a boarding cattery while you are away. He may not be too keen but he should be safe. If you are leaving your cat in a boarding cattery, do check them out first. Alternatively you might find someone to live in while you're away. (See our leaflet on boarding kennels/catteries).

Moving house

This is one of the most stressful times for owner and cat. Cats panic. They feel insecure with all the comings and goings, and the noise of furniture being moved. If a door is left open, they will flee. Many cats are left behind in these circumstances. Arriving at the new house can be equally unsettling for your cat – no familiar smells, and still chaos everywhere. At least that's how it will seem to him.



Consider putting your cat into a cattery until the move is over. Once home, keep him in for as long as you can – several weeks, if possible. Settle him in just as you would a new cat.

Health and Safety

There are good reasons for arguing that neutering is the only responsible option for both male and female cats. A neutered cat is less likely to roam. Feline AIDS (FIV) and feline leukaemia (FELV) are commonly spread by mating. In addition there are far too many kittens born of homeless cats, which then have no chance of a proper home. All they can look forward to is a life trying to survive in a hostile environment, where they will soon fall victim to starvation, disease, or a fatal accident.



Take your vet's advice on vaccinations. It is important that you vaccinate your cat and continue with the annual boosters.

Given the considerable costs of veterinary treatment these days, pet health insurance is well worth considering.