

# Outdoor vs Indoor Cat



By Stacey Warren with photography by Animax



Clever cat scratch furniture can be found in any quality pet store.

There's a passionate debate that happens amongst cat people—whether cats should be allowed to be outdoor cats or confined inside. Many people maintain the romantic and old school belief that a cat is a creature that needs to be outside, mousing and exploring their territory. However, many cat lovers, veterinarians and rescue organizations will have the opinion that an indoor cat is a much healthier and happier cat and is likely to outlive their outdoor cousins.

## Ancient hiss-tory

It has been 4000 years since the first cats were domesticated. The Ancient Egyptians are thought to be the first to keep cats originally to protect their grain stocks from vermin and other pests. A lot has changed since the ancient times and cats are now viewed more as family members, given the best medical treatment and a healthy balanced diet. Our cats now live longer and healthier lives and don't require their natural hunting instincts to survive. However, being one of nature's best predators, the instinct to hunt and roam still remains as hard wired today as it was since their ancient ancestors prowled the Earth.

## Protect your puss

There's a strong message that keeping cats indoors protects them from all manner of dangers and disease. The perils of outdoor life include the exposure to infectious diseases, injury and even death.

- An indoor cat rarely suffers with abscesses from fighting with other cats. Cats are very territorial and will fight to claim or defend their turf from other cats.
- An indoor cat is unlikely to get hit by a car. Even if you live in a quiet area, free from heavy traffic, cats just aren't naturally car savvy and many meet their end under a wheel.
- An indoor cat is less likely to cause problems with neighbour relations and is protected from human abuse. It's a distressing reality that cats are an easy target for cat-haters and disturbed people.
- An indoor cat is not a threat to wildlife. Even the most 'well-bred' cat, left to their own devices outdoors, will eventually catch and kill their own prey. Many do this purely for 'sport' and as a nod to the hard wiring as a fearless predator—most won't actually eat their catch. Your cat will be less likely to encounter venomous nasties.
- An indoor cat won't get lost or stolen.
- An indoor cat will likely cost you less in vet bills.
- An indoor cat can get plenty of exercise and stimulation by being inside. There are many products available like climbing frames, panoramic viewing stations and hollows that can provide hours of fun.

## A happy meow-medium

There can be a happy medium to making an outdoor cat an indoor cat. By creating a cat run from your house, your cat can enjoy all the sights, sounds and stimulation of the outdoors without the stress. Many cat lovers have either created their own cat runs or commissioned professionals to erect fabulous environments. There are a number of companies that can measure, quote and create unique and attractive cat enclosures.

These enclosures needn't be a caged type of environment—they can be attractive additions to your home if carefully thought through. An amazing example can be found at a cat breeder site <http://www.britzcats.com/enclosure.htm>. This tropical inspired oasis was built by the homeowner and features a pond, waterfall and fountain and is enhanced by natural stone. Tunnels are built out of rocks that run under the waterfall where their cats and kittens like to ambush each other. The owners have a seating area where they can enjoy the tranquillity of the garden environment and watch the cats play.

## Perfect products

Whether you decide to build an elaborate enclosure or want to keep things simple, there are many products on the market that can make your cat's enjoyment of the great indoors stimulating and enriching. Window perches are available from pet stores and these simply fit onto most windowsills so that cats can catch all the action outside.



A specially designed cat window seat is an ideal way for indoor cats to view the outside world.

Scratching posts are an excellent couch saver and provide a surface that your cat can really stretch. Look for a scratching post that has a sturdy base, an interesting and hardwearing material like sisal and the post should be at least the length of your cat in full stretch mode.



The modular Cat-trix activity centre.

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Crinkly bags for fun.

Cats love tunnels and have lots more fun if they're made of soft material and/or have a crinkly sound. The cheaper options are lightweight and can be folded up, concertina style for easy storage. These make excellent bunkers for commando attacks on passing ankles and feet.

Hollows and hidey-holes also come in a range of sizes, shapes and styles to suit most décor. Look for one that has different levels, as cats like to view the world from a range of heights. Some modular versions have interchangeable parts and add-ons like perches and sleeping slings so that you can increase the size and complexity of the structure as your budget allows.

Essentially you can spend a fortune on all these gizmos and gadgets but if you decide to keep your cat inside for her physical well being, you need to be aware of how to provide for your cat's mental well-being. Since cats are both social creatures and predators, they must have opportunities to express their natural behaviours. So remember she'll need some help from you to satisfy these. Not only does this help your cat, it also helps you to forge a stronger human-animal bond.



Excellent products to protect furniture.

# House bunnies are happy bunnies



It might be strange for many people to think that rabbits can be a member of the family and live indoors like a cat or a dog. However, many people around the world are discovering just how wonderful rabbits can be as companion animals and how they can enrich our lives with their love, affection and humour.

Thought by many to be a rather boring creature that lives down the back of the garden, the rabbit is fast winning many hearts and moving out of the hutch and into the family home.

Rabbits are very inquisitive little animals that yearn for affection and attention. They can be witty, naughty, affectionate and playful. Rabbits are, by nature, timid but can show a very pushy side once familiar and comfortable in their surroundings.

Of course there are precautions and preparations to bringing your bunny inside your home. Rooms need to be bunny-proofed (cords covered, furniture protected), litter trays provided and a possible enclosure for comfort and protection.

Exercise is a very important part of a rabbit's day. As rabbits are mostly active at dusk and dawn, this is the time when they will be particularly energetic. The advantage of rabbits living indoors is that they will be active when their human companion is home and can allow their bunny to leap and prance safely around the house.

The average lifespan of the domestic rabbit is approximately six to eight years. However, with the correct diet and a safe and comfortable environment, they can live as long as fifteen years—so a bunny is not just for Easter.

## Care and feeding

Rabbits should be supplied with unlimited hay and fresh water daily (oaten or grass hay is best). The best way to supply hay for your bunny is to use it in their litter tray—line tray with newspaper and top with hay and change daily. A bunny diet needs to be consistent as they don't tolerate changes.

Two cups of greens per day should also be supplied:

Feed - basil, bok choy, carrot tops, celery tops, chicory, common mint, dill, fennel, grass, lemon balm, oregano, pak choy, parsley, red leaf lettuces and thyme

Do not feed - bamboo shoots, beans, bread, breakfast cereals, bunny mix, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, chocolate, citrus fruit, corn or corn products, grains, iceberg lettuce, nuts, pennyroyal mint, onions, peas, potatoes, rhubarb, seeds, tea leaves. Make sure you apply the rule that any old food that you wouldn't eat should not be fed to your bunny.

Rabbits also love to chew. Although there are a variety of fun chew toys found in pet stores, you can supply your bunny with fun, safe and chewable items that are cheap and easily sourced.

Chew toys - unsprayed apple sticks, dethorned rose sticks, old pinecones, cardboard boxes, empty toilet rolls, paper bags and even old phone books

For more information on bunny-proofing, housing, litter training or any other companion rabbit information, please visit: [www.boingonline.com](http://www.boingonline.com)

## Famous Rabbits in film and TV

Bugs Bunny • Brer Rabbit in Disney's Song of the South • Babs Bunny & Buster Bunny from Tiny Toons Adventures • The Were-Rabbit and various other bunnies in Wallace & Gromit—the curse of the Were-Rabbit • Roger Rabbit from Who Framed Roger Rabbit • Thumper from Disney's Bambi • Various characters in Watership Down • Frank the 6-foot tall apocalyptic rabbit in Donnie Darko • The Rabbit of Caerbannog (the killer bunny) from Monty Python's The Holy Grail • Lola from Space Jam • Rabbit from Disney's Winnie the Pooh • Ricochet Rabbit • Mr Whiskers from Brandy and Mr Whiskers • Crusader Rabbit