

## Keeping Cats Happy Indoors

Owners will swear that their cats will be miserable if they are cooped up in the house all the time. This attitude perpetuates itself if the pet owner makes no effort to provide the cat with a stimulating environment. But with a little attention to what a cat likes and needs, a pet owner can create a home that keeps the cats healthy, safe and happy.

In her April 1990 'Cat Fancy' article, "Bringing the outdoors in" Barbara L. Diamond 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 indoor environment possible". Here are some tips from Diamond {along with a couple of our own} to help cat owners keep their pets amused and fit behind closed doors:

- Open screened windows to let some fresh air in. Fresh air and sunshine are great for cats. Just be sure the screen is secure. If window ledges aren't wide enough for the cats to sit on, shelves are available that attach to ledges for cats to perch on and watch the world go by.
- Plant pots of indoor greens for cats to chew on. Grass, alfalfa, or catnip will provide cats with fresh, tasty treats that aren't exposed to chemicals and pesticides.
- Give cats something to do while everyone is away. Hiding a few treats around the house gives the pet something to look forward to. But cats do catch on to this game quickly, so you have to be sneaky. Open paper bags left out, cardboard boxes or open closets can give cats new frontiers to explore.
- Offer the cats toys that are safe and stimulating. "When choosing toys try to think like a cat" Diamond advises. "Is the toy furry or feathery? Can it be made to hop or fly? Does it move and feel like a small prey?" These kinds of toys will provide cats with the most exercise and amusement.
- Diamond also cautions... "avoid toys with small or loose parts that become lodged in your cat's throat or be swallowed". And don't forget the cat's need to scratch and climb. A scratching post at least two feet high is essential - a floor to ceiling pole with perches is even better.
- Play games with your cat. Human companionship is a very real need for cats. What better way to provide this and make your cat happy than by playing with him or her? In addition to playing with cat toys, a cat may also enjoy games of chase, peek-a-boo around doors, capturing non-toxic soap bubbles, or chasing light spots created with a flashlight or reflective object.

If cats have their owners love and attention and lots to do on the inside, they won't miss the great outdoors, which, after close examination, isn't so great for cats at all.