

# FIFI FUREVER

January 2024



## Best Cat Beds

Kitty Dental

Flea-Free Fifi

**Myth Buster: All Body Language Is Equal**

**Next Issue: Toys For Mental Health**



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**Next Issue:** Toys For Mental Health



# KITTY DENTAL

It might not be fun, but your cat is relying on you to help take care of his or her dental needs. Just as you would with a human child, you're going to have to do some training with your kitty to get them used to having their teeth brushed. You can technically begin this training at any age, but if you're able to do it when they're young, it should be much easier.

## WHY DO CATS EVEN NEED DENTAL HELP?

Cats were intended to be born in the wild and live their lives that way, too. But once humans began to domesticate what would become known as the common housecat, their ability to take care of their own teeth became compromised.

If your cat had been born in the wild, he would take care of his own dental needs by chewing on grass and bones. Since they don't have access to these things in your home, it's going to be up to you to keep your cat's teeth pearly white. Another important thing to remember is that cats aren't usually going to tell you if they're in pain.

Therefore, you either have to take preventative care of their teeth or risk having a kitty who spends every day in pain.

## THE TIMELINE OF DENTAL DISEASE

Yet another reason that cats need dental help is that they're obligate carnivores. This comes with a unique set of teeth that make it easy for them to tear and rip into their food, unlike human teeth, which are flatter and were designed for grinding. They also lack the mouth enzymes that help fight bacteria.

Because your kitty has uniquely shaped teeth, it's possible for their food to get stuck between their teeth and their gum line. Once this happens, the combination of food, saliva, and bacteria will create plaque. From there, the gum line can become swollen and painful, AKA, they'll get gingivitis.

## TOOTH ISSUES SET IN BY AGE THREE

If your cat is over the age of three, there is an 80% chance that they've got some dental issues. Therefore, you can see why it's important to begin cleaning their teeth as soon as possible.

Cats begin to accumulate debris, plaque, and bacteria on the outside of their teeth. If you give it enough time, what was once a coating of germs will turn into tartar. This can cause them to have to deal with irritated gums. Even worse, if you still don't address the issue, gingivitis and tooth loss will almost certainly occur. That's because the level of tartar can become so high that there is no other choice than to remove the impacted tooth or teeth.

Have you noticed that your cat is eating and/or drinking less than she used to? She may have inflammation in her mouth from dental issues. It can become even worse if the bacteria from her mouth enters her bloodstream, which can cause damage to vital organs such as the kidneys.

Once it reaches a point where there is progressive destruction happening to her teeth, gums, and the structures that hold her teeth in place, she'll be diagnosed with periodontal disease. This isn't uncommon. In fact, it's the number one disease that cats and dogs deal with, but it doesn't have to affect your kitty.

## CHECKING THE HEALTH OF YOUR CAT'S MOUTH



Checking your cat's teeth and gums is vitally important and must be done on a regular basis.

Most cat owners should be able to do this themselves. However, if your kitty is especially stressed out by this process, you can take them to their vet to have their teeth checked. This can get quite pricey over time, though.

As long as your cat has healthy teeth, you'll find them to be white, clean, and without any chipping. Their gums should be healthy and pink, without any lesions, sores, swelling, bleeding, or redness.

Additionally, you'll need to check their mouth for anything that shouldn't be present such as string. Also, be sure to check the back of their mouth for any signs of swelling, ulcers, foreign bumps, or lesions. If you find anything that looks odd, schedule a visit with their vet ASAP.

What does your cat's mouth smell like? We don't mean right after they eat, but when they're just resting. If they have a generally okay smell, that's a good sign. However, if there is a foul odor coming from their mouth, they may have an infection (either in their mouth or somewhere else in their body). Again, this is a sign that they need to visit the vet ASAP.

Finally, be sure to look for any other signs of dental disease, which can include pawing at their face, difficulty swallowing, drooling, or noticeable changes to their weight and eating patterns.

## KEEPING YOUR CAT'S TEETH NICE AND CLEAN

The best way to keep your cat's teeth nice and clean is to brush them daily. Barring that, you should brush them at least twice a week. However, as we mentioned before, adult cats aren't going to be big fans of this process unless you got them used to it when they were a kitten.

Take a finger cot or a piece of gauze and wrap it around your finger. If they can stand it, use a special cat toothpaste. If not, try putting some liquid from a jar of tuna onto the cot or gauze. This will make it easier for them to deal with having your finger in their mouth.

Once you get them into a regular tooth brushing routine, you'll need to ensure you have all the right equipment. Fortunately, you can purchase a complete dental set from a pet store or veterinary clinic.

No matter what, NEVER expose your cat to human toothpaste. Although humans need fluoride, cats can become seriously ill if they ingest too much of it. Instead, check out the special fluoride-free toothpaste that's been made expressly for kitties. It even comes flavored with chicken or beef to make using it easier.

Now, we're ready to take a closer look at how to actually brush your cat's teeth. Again, take some gauze strips, a finger brush, or a special cat toothbrush, and cradle them from behind to make them feel supported. Gently tilt their head back and then lift up their chin. This will give you easy access so that you can clean each of their teeth.

One thing to note is that you should NEVER, ever use dental floss. It's a fantastic thing for you to use on your own teeth, but it poses too many risks for a cat. For instance, if they were to swallow some, it could cause massive intestinal damage.

## KEEPING THEIR MOUTH CLEAN



It's important to remember that your responsibility to your kitty goes beyond simply brushing their teeth. You'll need to keep an eye on their gums, too. Therefore, once you're done brushing their teeth, you should massage their gums to strengthen and heal them. By doing this one easy thing, you'll reduce their risk of dealing with gum issues later on.

The good news is that there are several products that make it easier to care for your kitty's teeth and gums. First, there are special cat treats that have been formulated to help control tartar buildup, freshen their breath, and remove plaque. Even better, many contain ingredients that will help maintain your cat's overall health, including selenium, vitamin E, taurine, and antiseptics to help prevent them from having a ton of bacteria in their mouth.

Another thing you could try is a dental spray. By spraying it into their mouth once a day, you'll be able to control the levels of tartar and plaque. You could also try a water additive, but be sure to monitor them closely to make sure they accept the way their water tastes.

## SCHEDULE DENTAL CLEANINGS

All of the points listed above will help your kitty have a healthier mouth and teeth. However, the only way to know if they're just starting to deal with periodontal disease is by getting a professional cleaning from their vet. This is because your cat's teeth may look white and healthy, but the disease can be growing slowly under the gum line.

When your cat goes in for a dental cleaning, he or she will be put under general anesthesia. This allows your vet to remove plaque, polish up your kitty's chompers, and do a comprehensive dental exam, which includes checking—and cleaning—under the gums. If necessary, they'll also do x-rays and other various cleaning procedures. This process should be done at least once a year, but older cats may need to have their teeth cleaned twice a year.

## DENTAL FACTS

Here are a few interesting cat dental facts that you probably didn't know.

- Kittens have 26 teeth, but adult cats have 30.
- Your cat has the teeth of a predator—which is why it hurts to be bitten!
- Your cat uses his or her canine teeth to rip and tear, but they use their incisors to help them pick things up.

- Cats may have a lot of dental issues, but cavities are not one of them. It's impossible for a cat to get a cavity.
- However, they can experience tooth resorption, which is a very painful condition.
- Yes, your feline friend will still be able to eat, even after having his or her teeth removed.
- By the time your kitten reaches three months old, their permanent teeth begin to come in.
- A cat can't move its jaw from side to side like humans can. They can only move it up and down.

## HOW MUCH WILL A PROFESSIONAL DENTAL CLEANING COST?



As we all know, veterinarian fees can be extremely expensive. The starting cost for a dental cleaning is around \$100 to \$400. Of course, there are many factors that must be considered. By the time you're done paying for everything, it could easily be \$1,000 or more.

In fact, certain variables can have a huge affect on the cost, including:

### Size

The size of your cat will make a difference due to the amount of anesthesia and medication that needs to be used. This means that someone with a 10-pound cat will definitely spend less than I would with my 21-pound cat.

### Age

If you've got an older cat—and especially if he or she hasn't gone in for a dental cleaning before—your vet will likely need to spend extra time to remove a much heavier accumulation of plaque and tartar.

### Location

Where you live definitely affects veterinarian pricing. If you're in an urban area, it's probably going to cost you more than if you are in a rural area.

### Individual Veterinarian Clinic

Although there are average price points, the reality is that your vet can charge as much—or as little—as they'd like. Therefore, it's a good idea to call around and get a few general price points before you decide where to take them.

## WHAT WILL MY VET DO?

Your veterinarian will put your cat under anesthesia so that they can work above and below the gum line without distressing the kitty. While they're under the anesthesia, any of the following can be done:

### Pre-Surgical Testing

Before your cat is put under, your vet will perform any necessary blood work.

### X-Rays

X-rays are typically necessary if the vet suspects that there may be a bigger issue than they can see with the naked eye.

### Tooth Extraction

Your cat's teeth will be cleaned, but if they need an extraction, you may face additional charges. The average cost of a tooth extraction is around \$50 to \$130, but this may vary.

### Root Canal

If your cat has a tooth that's infected or broken, they may need to perform a root canal. This will

cost significantly more than a tooth extraction. The average cost is between \$1,500 and \$3,000, although certain factors could make it even more expensive.

## Medication

Once their tooth cleaning is complete, your vet may give them some medication. This will help deal with any discomfort they may be experiencing. And, again, this cost is added on top of the dental cleaning.

## IS ANESTHESIA REALLY NECESSARY?



Many pet owners are fearful of anesthesia, but there's almost no reason to be. The fact is that only 0.24% of cats who undergo this procedure will die from it. But if the vet doesn't use anesthesia, your furry friend would have to undergo a horribly traumatic and stressful experience. I would definitely choose to get my cat's teeth cleaned while they're peacefully knocked out than expose them to what would be an awful, awful time.

Despite this, you might have a business near you that offers anesthesia-free dentistry. During this process, the vet will polish and scale your cat's teeth while they're completely awake. However, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) opposes these types of cleanings because they don't allow the vet to look, or treat, below the gum line. What this means is that your cat may be traumatized anyway and they won't have their full dental health taken care of. Not a good combo, huh?

When anesthesia is used, your cat won't have any idea what has happened to them when they wake up. They'll usually begin to stir about 15 to 20 minutes after the procedure. They may be wobbly for the rest of the day, so be sure to watch them carefully so that they don't accidentally hurt themselves.

## HOW TO HELP YOUR CAT DEAL WITH THE AFTER EFFECTS OF ANESTHESIA

It's important to place your cat into an enclosed area, and be sure not to let any other pets into the room. Before you do this, though, be sure to clear the room of any elevated objects. They shouldn't jump for the first 24 hours, and you'll also need to carry them if you have stairs in your home.

Give your kitty a comfortable, safe place to sleep. If it's not comfortable enough, they may be tempted to jump up onto furniture. You'll also want to limit their intake of food and water at first. Give them half of what you normally would, then monitor how it goes. If they keep it down, you can give them more. If they throw up, however, don't give them any more food for at least a few hours.

It's essential to ensure that they have a litter box near them in the room. Even after they leave the room, be sure to keep a litter box located on the same floor as them. Do NOT allow them to go up and down the stairs for 24 hours. Additionally, there should be NO rough play for 24 to 48 hours.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

When it comes down to it, you've got two choices; take care of your cat's dental health or pay a LOT of money to get their teeth fixed/taken care of when they're older. Seems like toothbrushing is easier, yes?



## BEST CAT BEDS

Your cat spends anywhere from 12 to 20 hours per day snoozing, so it's very important that they have some comfy places to choose from for napping. Note that we said places, not a single place. That's because no cat will ever want to stay in the same bed, day in and day out. Instead, you need to offer some variety!

In some homes, this will look like one cat bed and several other places that offer a nice, cozy area that's been covered by a blanket. In others, you'll have multiple cat beds set up. Regardless, though, it's critical that your cat can have quiet, uninterrupted sleep. Think about what you're like when your sleep keeps getting interrupted. Not at your best, right? Well, the same thing can happen to your kitty.

And no, before any nasty rumors get started, your cat is NOT just being lazy when she sleeps the day away. In fact, your cat spends about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of her sleeping time only lightly snoozing. This means that they're still very much alert to what's going on around them, and it's hard to call that type of resting actual sleep.

## HOW MUCH SLEEP IS NORMAL FOR A CAT?

The reason your kitty seems to rest all day is that this is exactly what they've evolved to do! You see, if they were in the wild, they'd need to rely on lots of sleep to help them have the energy necessary for hunting. Even if they're born inside, they'll still have this natural instinct.

Of course, different cats sleep for different blocks of time. Here's a general guideline:

- **Kittens** - Will sleep almost all day, but will have a few quick bursts of energy between their meals.
- **Adolescents** - Cats that have reached adolescence are likely to have erratic sleeping patterns that will include periods of intense play.
- **Adults** - Once a cat reaches adulthood, it will most likely have a set sleeping schedule. They will sleep for 12 to 20 hours per day.
- **Seniors** - Your senior cat probably has reduced mobility and/or less energy, which will make it necessary for them to sleep longer than their younger relatives.

Cats will occasionally have a day where they sleep more than usual, and that's alright. However, if it becomes habitual, there could be something wrong and you should take them to the vet. It can also be an issue if they start sleeping less than usual. Basically, if your cat's sleeping pattern changes for more than a day or two, schedule an appointment with your veterinarian.

## BEST CAT BEDS FOR EACH SITUATION

Before we dig into the beds, let's take a moment to look at your kitty's comfort levels. You see, each cat has its own unique personality, which means that a bed that one cat LOVES may be ignored by another cat.

Does your cat prefer small boxes or large pillows? How about a perch or a large tower? Will they like the doughnut style of bed or be afraid of it?

Unfortunately, for a lot of us, there really is no special way to know what our cats want. This means that you may need to do a LOT of trial and error before you find the right bed. Alternatively, you could use the following list to help you narrow things down!

## BEST CAT CAVE BED - MEOWFIA PREMIUM FELT CAVE BED



If your cat values his privacy above all else, this cozy bed can offer a place to get away from it all. Its den-like design should be helpful if you have a noisy house and a shy cat.

The reason to purchase this specific cat cave bed is that it's made from 100% merino wool. You can move the bed to wherever your cat likes hanging out. And when they're done sleeping in it, you can even flatten it down to give them a sleeping pad instead.

Top Features:

- Available Sizes: Medium, Large

- Materials: Soft wool
- Washability: Hand-wash with soap and water
- Streamlined, modern appearance
- Beautiful patterns and colors
- Probably will NOT be supportive enough for a cat with arthritis

## BEST ORTHOPEDIC BED - PETFUSION ULTIMATE LOUNGE MEMORY FOAM BOLSTER



This is technically a bed for cats and dogs, so it would make a good resting place for a larger cat. For instance, my cat Riley—who is 21 pounds, none of which is fat—would be able to stretch out on this one (as long as you don't get the small size).

The reality is that having an orthopedic bed can make all the difference in the world for your feline friend. In fact, they promote a more restful night's sleep by offering pressure relief and joint support. Of course, they're also going to be more expensive, but you have to pay to get really good materials.

This particular bed is the top of the line for cats that need orthopedic support. It will hold its shape and won't sag. You'll get two inches of memory foam in the small and medium sizes, and a whopping four inches of memory foam for the larger options. Additionally, the bolsters offer great support for the neck. Another nice touch is that the memory foam is 100% waterproof.

Cats that will really benefit from this bed include seniors, those who are injured, obese, and/or arthritic.

Top Features:

- Available Sizes: Small, Large, X-Large, and Jumbo

- Materials: Memory foam interior, cotton cover
- Washability: Cover is machine washable
- Extremely durable

## BEST PLUG-IN HEATED BED - K&H THERMO-KITTY FASHION SPLASH



If you've got a senior cat, a hairless kitty, or a cat with chronic pain, this is a nice way to keep them toasty. Choosing this bed from K&H will provide your cat with an effective heating element and soft fabric. It also features an orthopedic foam base, along with the bolster perimeter that will keep your kitty warm and comfy.

### Top Features:

- Available Sizes: Large (fits two average sized cats or one large kitty)
- Materials: 5.5-foot cord, orthopedic foam interior, faux fur exterior
- Washability: Remove the internal bed warmer and put it in the washing machine!
- Energy efficient heater

## BEST SELF-WARMING BED - ASPEN PET SELF-WARMING BOLSTER BED



Whenever it gets cold, your frisky feline will stop playing and look for a warm place to cuddle

up. Providing a self-warming bed will keep your electricity costs down and be much, much safer to use overnight. In fact, there is no electricity use at all. Instead, the bed makes good use of the kitty's

own body heat by retaining and reflecting it back onto them.

Naturally, this bed is cheaper than most electric models. They also make the perfect choice if you want your cat to be warm but don't want electrical cords all over the place. Between the cat's heat being reflected back onto them and the high bolster-style walls, this is a bed that's perfect for cats who really want a place to snuggle into.

### Top Features:

- Available Sizes: 19-inch, 24-inch, 30-inch
- Materials: Fiberfill interior, corduroy and sherpa cover
- Washability: Machine-washable
- Easy to transport
- Lightweight

## BEST COOLING BED - ARFPETS SELF-COOLING GEL MAT



As you can see, this bed is made for cats and dogs. What it provides is invaluable—a break from dreadfully hot temperatures. Even better, you don't need to use refrigeration, electricity, or water to make it work! Instead, it contains a non-toxic gel (but be careful, if your curious kitty decides to eat it, they may get a sour stomach) that naturally absorbs and then gets rid of your cat's warmth.

As soon as your cat sits on the bed, it will be activated. They'll enjoy a refreshing, but not too cold, temperature for up to three hours. Once they leave this bed for 15 minutes, it will automatically reset itself. If you've got a cat with long, thick fur or a brachycephalic breed, this is definitely a bed you'll want to have in your home.

#### Top Features:

- Available Sizes: Small/Medium, Large/X-Large
- Materials: Gel foam, nylon
- Washability: DON'T machine wash this bed. Instead, wipe it clean with soap and water.
- Keeps your cat cool and refreshed for up to three hours
- Portable

### BEST CAT TUNNEL BED - KITTY CITY CIRCULAR TUNNEL BED



Sleep feels like a dangerous time to your kittens. Any big predator could attack them, or even a vacuum cleaner could come after them! Therefore, this tunnel bed offers several places to hide. Even better, once your cat is done hiding, they can play with it!

Your cat will be offered two different places to rest; the inner bed or the outer tunnel. There is even a toy that comes attached to the 12.5-inch diameter tunnel. Also, the only assembly you'll have to do is zippering two half-moons together. Easy peasy!

#### Top Features:

- Available Sizes: One size fits most
- Materials: Polyester
- Washability: The plush bed can be removed and machine-washed
- Dangling catnip toy included
- Two large entry windows
- Collapses for storage and transportation
- Takes up more space than the average cat bed

### BEST CALMING BED - THE ORIGINAL CALMING DONUT CUDDLER



This is yet another bed that works for small dogs and cats. It's plush, supportive, soft, and meant to alleviate stress. That's why it has

such a deep inner area for your frisky feline to chill out in.

The bolstered sides will make your cat feel completely protected. Unless you have my cat, who is terrified of calming beds—but he's weird because these beds are almost universally loved. It's much more common for pets to steal this bed from each other than to steer clear of it. Therefore, be sure to offer this relaxing retreat to each pet in your house (by buying them their own, of course).

#### Top Features:

- Available Sizes: X-Small, Small, Medium, Large, X-Large
- Materials: Plush fiberfill interior, faux fur exterior
- Washability: Safe to use in a washing machine and dryer
- Multiple colors available
- The nine-inch bolsters and donut shape create a safe haven

## BEST CAT SCRATCHER BED - FLUFFYDREAM CAT SCRATCHER LOUNGE



If your cat likes to scratch things, you've got to get him this lounge! It's unique shape will allow your cat to get some stress relief and enjoy a fantastic source of exercise. And, once they're done scratching it, they can take a nap on it!

This lounge is made from high-quality corrugated cardboard and currently has a 4.7-star average for sturdiness on Amazon. It's also made from 100% recycled cardboard, so you can feel good that you've done your part to help Mother Earth, too.

### Top Materials:

- Available Sizes: One size fits most
- Materials: High-quality corrugated cardboard
- Washability: No, do NOT wash
- Can be setup so it's horizontal or vertical

## BEST ELEVATED BED - K&H COMFY COT



If you've somehow been living under a rock your entire life, then you won't know that cats like vertical space. For everyone else, getting this elevated bed is a no-brainer. There are actually two benefits to giving your feline buddy one of these beds: they'll stay off of chilly floors, plus they'll feel much safer and more secure.

One thing that we absolutely love about this bed is that it can be used indoors or outdoors. Yet it still has a plush, cushioned center that cats will love!

### Top Features:

- Sizes Available: One size fits most
- Materials: Fleece cover, water-resistant denier fabric
- Washability: Cover can be machine-washed (air or line dry)
- Tool free assembly required
- Non-skid rubber feet

## BEST BED FOR A WINDOW - ZORATOO WINDOW SILL MOUNT CAT PERCH



This cat window bed is currently the #1 bestselling new release on Amazon for the category

of window perches, and it's easy to see why. Not only is this bed affordable, but it doesn't use the typical suction cups that can break down over time. Instead, it's hooked in place by 2cm metal hooks. You can also adjust it with a simple process.

Another nice feature of this bed is that it comes with two different fabric covers that you can switch between! One is soft and comfortable, and the other is breathable and waterproof.

Perhaps the best part of this window bed is that it can hold up to 40 pounds of cat! This means that you could easily get two or three normal sized cats on it. You could even put a monster 21-pound cat on this bed and still have 19 pounds left!

### Top Features:

- Available Size: Medium and Large
- Materials: Metal frame, two different fabric covers
- Washability: Hand wash only
- No suction cups for a safer experience
- Holds up to 40 pounds

## BEST WICKER BED - PAWHUT RATTAN WICKER ELEVATED CONDO



This elegant cat bed is expensive (it'll usually run you around \$100), but it also boasts the style and strength of wicker. As a result, it fits in quite nicely with traditional or modern decor. Even better, it's tall enough for cats that love to jump, it's easy to clean, and it'll hold up relatively well to scratching. Additionally,

it provides better air circulation.

### Top Features:

- Available Sizes: One size fits most
- Materials: Hand woven, durable rattan
- Washability: The cushion is machine-washable
- Attractive design
- Not suitable for larger cats

## BEST BED FOR LARGE CATS - FRISCO SHERPA ORTHOPEDIC BOLSTER BED

This bed is made for larger cats (and dogs), especially in its bigger sizes. This is important due to the fact that large cats need increased support for their joints and bones. Having orthopedic memory foam will provide this support, and there are also comfortable bolsters your cat can use to rest its neck on.

### Top Features:

- Available Sizes: Medium, Large, X-Large
- Materials: Memory foam, soft cloud Sherpa
- Washability: Machine-washable
- Double sided cushion
- Spacious and durable

## BEST FLAT BED - FURHAVEN NAP ULTRA PLUSH ORTHOPEDIC BED



If your cat likes to sprawl, then treat them to this flat bed for cats and dogs. There are no bolsters to inhibit them from stretching out. This is also the perfect bed if you have a mobility-impaired or senior kitty, which is why dog beds just might make the ideal choice for your cat.

This warm and inviting bed is topped with fluffy faux fur. Even better, it has a low step and an orthopedic egg crate foam. Whether your feline friend is recovering from surgery or an injury, they'll love sprawling out on this supportive bed. Another nice touch is that your cat will find it easier to regulate their temperature when they're on this bed.

### Top Features:

- Available Sizes: Small, Medium, Large, X-Large, Jumbo, Jumbo Plus
- Materials: Orthopedic egg crate foam, faux fur cover
- Washability: Foam can be hand-washed, cover is machine-washable
- Affordable
- Comfy, orthopedic foam

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Choosing the perfect bed for your cat may still seem a bit overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. Pay attention to the type of materials your cat likes, along with whether she spends the most time sleeping on the ground or at an elevated level. From there, you'll easily be able to narrow down your choices until you've selected the ideal cat bed!

Fleas can make your kitty extremely uncomfortable. Even worse, they can be affected by fleas even if they never go outside. Fortunately, we're going to take a close look at the many ways that cats can get fleas, and we'll also tell you how to get rid of them!

## THE PROBLEM WITH FLEAS

There are billions of different organisms on earth, but none are quite as annoying as fleas. That's because a single bite can cause itchiness, discomfort, and irritation. Once fleas reach adulthood, they're approximately an eighth of an inch long. They'll also be very thin and have a reddish-brown appearance.

Fleas have been around for at least 125 million years. Modern fleas trace their ancestors back around 40–50 million years. In other words, there is absolutely nothing new about these pesky insects. Yet we're still dealing with them today, and our tactics for killing them still haven't provided a permanent solution. This helps explain why it can be so difficult to get rid of the little buggers.

## CHECK FOR FLEAS ON A REGULAR BASIS

Finding fleas on your cat early on will make it so much easier to get rid of them. Unfortunately, many cats hide the fact that they've got fleas and can get rid of the majority of them through normal grooming.

To perform a flea inspection, you'll need to 'reverse rub' your kitty's fur. In other words, lift their hair from their tail to their neck. This will give you a good look at what's going on underneath.

There are certain indicators that fleas are likely present, including:

- Salt and pepper appearance with small light or dark specks
- You see tiny, flat parasites moving away from you
- Red, inflamed scabs or welts

## DO A MORE IN-DEPTH CHECK

Did you see any possible indicators your kitty may have fleas? If you said yes, definitely move on to performing a more careful inspection.



## FLEA-FREE FIFI

Take a fine-toothed flea comb and run it through their fur over the base of their tail. Be sure to repeat this process 10–15 times, and put anything other than their fur onto a white paper towel. This will make it easier to see if you've picked up any fleas or flea poop.

If you find a dark speck, you can try putting a single drop of water onto it. If a red ring develops around it, this is proof that fleas have left their feces on your cat.

Be sure to inspect every animal living in your house on the same day. Although one cat may not have any fleas, you could have another one that doesn't groom quite as well. Therefore, you can't simply rely on the 'one and done' method.

**REMEMBER:** Spotting even one flea means that you've most likely got a flea infestation. Take it seriously and also take steps to eradicate the problem immediately.

## WHAT DO FLEAS ON A CAT LOOK LIKE?



Unless your cat is allergic to fleas, they aren't going to show any visible symptoms. Therefore, giving them a flea check is the only way to know whether they've picked up fleas or not.

In the case of an allergic cat, you'll probably spot:

- Scratching and itchiness
- Red rashes
- Scabs on the topside of their body
- Hair loss

A cat who is allergic to fleas can be made absolutely miserable by only a single flea. To help you find them on your cat's fur, remember that their feces will resemble grains of pepper, and their eggs will resemble large grains of salt. This is where the "salt and pepper" appearance comes into play.

## HOW DO INSIDE CATS GET FLEAS?

Did you know that a single flea is able to lay up to 50 eggs EVERY DAY? These powerful insects also have the ability to leap far distances. Both of these facts can become a major problem if your indoor kitty gets fleas. How exactly does this happen, though? The following list will show you some of the most common ways that your indoor cat has picked up fleas.

## OTHER PETS IN YOUR HOME

If you've got a family dog, you can most likely trace your cat's fleas back to your pup. Even if you give your dog a monthly flea preventative, it may not work well enough to keep them away. Additionally, a preventative can take some time to work, which means that a flea could end up hopping ship and end up on your feline friend.

You should also consider the risk that squirrels, skunks, possums, guinea pigs, raccoons, rabbits, rats, and birds may pose. Each of these species is prone to getting fleas, which means that they can spread them, too. Despite your cat living indoors, he could still have an encounter with one of these critters. It only takes a second if a flea is particularly motivated.

What to Do:

- Check your cat regularly for signs of any insects.
- Use a year-round flea preventative on any cats and dogs in your home.
- Verify that any dog visitors are up to date on their flea preventative.

## PEOPLE IN YOUR HOME

Fleas are well-known for their ability to hop. When a person is outside, a flea can easily hitch a ride on their shoes or clothing. This happens due to a flea's ability to leap very far distances (think of fleas as like the insect version of Superman because they can "leap tall buildings in a single bound" or, more accurately, leap onto tall people in a single bound). They can also attach themselves to a person as that individual stops to pet a dog. And, sadly, the person won't know they've had a hitchhiker until it's far too late.

What to Do:

- If you have any reason to suspect that a guest has exposed your cat to fleas, do a quick examination. Spots to check include the underbelly, along the back by their tail base, and behind your cat's head.
- Clean up your house after a guest stays over. This includes washing your sheets, floors, couches, towels, bathrooms, and upholstery.
- Keep an eye out for flea dirt as you inspect your cat. If you see any of these black specs, you've got a problem, even if you didn't see any fleas.

## RODENTS

There are 2,500 different species of fleas, and around 94% of them prefer to munch down on a mammal instead of a bird. Therefore, it's only natural that rodents such as mice and rats would be carriers. In fact, rodents take the blame for spreading the Black Death, but it's important to realize that they did this by their fleas, not by themselves.

Yes, it's true; the mice and rats who transported the fleas did not do anything wrong by themselves, but it still ravaged Europe for almost 500 years. So, if you've got any issues with mice or rats in or around your home, they could just as easily—and just as unknowingly—pass their fleas to your cat.

What to Do:

- Keep your countertops and floors free of crumbs or food scraps.

- Put metal screens over your ventilation and plumbing pipes, use humane traps, and tighten seals on your windows, screens, and doors. This should prevent mice and rats from entering your home.

## MOVING INTO A NEW HOME

It only takes one previous occupant to make a home into an appealing place for mice and rats. Once they're gone, the realtor or property management company is going to clean up, which means you might not know if there are flea eggs just waiting to cause problems hidden in the carpeting.

Flea eggs can hide easily, even in plain sight. After all, they're only about the size of a dust particle. Once the eggs become larvae, they'll go even deeper into your carpet or furniture. Meanwhile, your family has just moved in, and you've got a cat. How long do you think it's going to take your home's hidden fleas to find Fifi? Hint: about a millisecond.

### What to Do:

- If you know there used to be pets in the house, use a home fogger or other flea preventative.
- Get a professional cleaning company to clean the entire home BEFORE you move in.

## MISCELLANEOUS PLACES YOUR CAT MAY VISIT

Even an indoor cat gets to go on an adventure occasionally. Whether your kitty went to a friend's house while you were on vacation or spent any time at a boarding facility, groomer, their veterinarian office, a shelter/rescue, or a cattery, you'll need to carefully examine them for fleas.

### What to Do:

- Make sure that you have a veterinarian approved tick and flea preventative product and use it on them as directed.
- NEVER substitute a dog flea preventative. Use ONLY a cat preventative and ensure you use the right amount for their weight.
- If your cat has medical issues, be sure to discuss your concerns with your vet. They can still use a flea preventative, but they might have to use a specific kind.

## HOW TO PREVENT AN OUTDOOR CAT FROM GETTING FLEAS

This one is a lot trickier than preventing an indoor cat from getting fleas. After all, outdoor cats will encounter rodents and other small mammals on a regular basis, meaning that they could literally pick up fleas from almost anywhere. You can definitely attempt to keep your cat flea-free, though, by doing the following:

### Give Your Kitty A Bath

More power to you if you have to try this one because we're here to tell you that bathing a cat is NOT easy. However, if you ensure that the water is warm—and keep it out of their face and ears—you should be able to use a flea and tick cleansing shampoo on them.

Do you find that it's just too hard to bathe your cat? Take them to a professional groomer and let them deal with it!

### Spot Treating Fleas

Can't give your cat a bath? That's okay, you can try spot treatments instead. Check your kitty for any signs of fleas. Don't forget to check their bed, too, because flea dirt can easily accumulate there. If you spot any fleas, be sure to immediately give your kitty a flea and tick spot treatment.

### Treat Your Yard

The first step in treating your yard is to cut your grass short. Be sure to discard any and all clippings. Next, you can attach a garden and yard spray onto your garden hose. You should avoid spraying any vegetable gardens, but be sure to spray your entire yard.

Another thing this can help with is protecting any ferals that visit your property. Although they tend to have fleas, many of them will abandon ship once they step foot onto a treated lawn. This is a win-win for your cat and the ferals!

### Treat Your Home

The very best way to take care of your indoor-outdoor cat's flea problem is to attack it on multiple different fronts. For instance, treating your home will make it more difficult for your cat to pick up fleas.

Begin by giving your house a thorough cleaning. Vacuum all the rugs, floors, and furniture (and throw the trash in the canister away outside!). You'll also want to wash your feline friend's bedding, along with your blankets, sheets, and other linens.

The next step is to use a preventative treatment or fogger for your home. You can easily cover 375–400 square feet with a single treatment, and it should last for about a year. Therefore, if you've got a 1,200 square foot home, be sure to use three treatments placed in different areas.

Doing this WILL assist your indoor-outdoor cat. Even if they pick up a flea while they're outside, it should hop off of them as soon as they come back into a treated house.

## WHICH FLEA TREATMENT WORKS THE BEST?

When it's time to pick a flea treatment for your cat, it's easy to become bogged down by all the choices. Four of the more popular brands include:

- Capstar
- Revolution
- Seresto
- Comfortis

The problem is that you've still got a wildcard in your home. You see, as we've already mentioned, a single flea can lay up to 50 eggs per day. Therefore, if you haven't treated your home, your cat can keep getting attacked by these insects. To prevent this, do the following:

- Vacuum every spot your cat hangs out in a few times per week.
- Take the time to machine wash their bedding. This will drown the adults. When you use your dryer, it will dehydrate their eggs and larvae.
- Focus on the crevices around cupboards and the cracks between your hardwood floors.

## KEEP FLEAS AWAY

Did you know that the number one way to take care of a flea infestation is by avoiding it in the first place? It's true; getting rid of fleas is so much harder than preventing them. Be sure to take the time necessary and put it into prevention methods.

## FAQS

Here are the answers to a few commonly asked questions about cats and fleas.

### Can My Cat Get Rid Of Fleas On Her Own?

No, not unless they have a very, very minor infestation. Instead, what's likely to happen is that you will always have at least a few fleas in your house until you fully take care of the problem.

### Does Dawn Dish Soap Kill Fleas?

Yes, Dawn is good for killing fleas and for cleaning up oil-covered wildlife! It does this by actually changing the outside of the flea's body. Once they've been exposed to Dawn, they lose the ability to float and shed water. In other words, the fleas will drown.

### Can A Human Have Fleas?

Yes, they absolutely can. Although a flea prefers a cat or a dog over a human, this doesn't mean that they don't set up shop on humans, too. You can get fleas from your cat, and you can also give fleas to your cat.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Fleas are insidious, and they'll start sinking their teeth into your cat if you're not very careful. Take the time to check your cat for fleas on a regular basis, and if any are found, take immediate eradication steps. Don't wait, as a single flea produces up to 50 eggs a day.

If your cat likes to go outside, be sure to give him as much help as you can. Give him a flea preventative, treat your yard, treat your house, etc. All of these things will help your kitty avoid developing a flea problem.

If your cat lives indoors, it's still a good idea to give them a flea preventative. This is especially true if you have other pets that do go outdoors.

Ultimately, whether your cat gets fleas or not depends primarily on you. Take preventative action now or you're going to have to deal with a flea infestation. And that can make everyone in your home miserable, not just your cat.

Do you know what it means when your kitty rubs against your legs or keeps staring at you? If you guessed that your cat rubs against your legs solely because it wants to show you affection, you've definitely been pulled in by one of the many miscommunications that can happen between felines and humans. But fear not because in this guide, you're going to learn all about the various ways that your kitty tries to let you into his or her world.

## CONTEXT IS KEY

When it comes to figuring out exactly what your cat is trying to say, the first thing you need to focus on is context. These include:

- Physical cues
- Body direction
- Surroundings

Their key body language indicators include:

- Eyes
- Ears
- Body
- Tail

In fact, your cat is going to forecast their intentions, and she'll do that by pointing her body in the direction that she's most likely to go.

Now, the context of the situation can really change your feline's meaning. For instance, let's say your cat lifts her tail vertically and high in the air. Most of the time, this indicates that your kitty is confident, comfortable, and open to being interacted with by their people. However, if there is a strange cat nearby, your cat's tail will also sit vertically and high in the air. In this case, it is indicating her willingness to attack.

So, how are you supposed to tell the difference? Take a few seconds to assess your cat's mood before you approach. If she's feeling confident, it's rather easy to tell from her laid back mood. If there is an intruder on your property, though, she's likely to hiss or growl.

What's the most important thing of all for you to do? Try to see each interaction from your cat's perspective, instead of your own.



Is there anything that could have caused your cat to feel anxious or fearful? Are they in a confined environment or a wide open room? Are they up high or at ground level? Finally, have you considered all of their sensory inputs (smell, taste, hearing, etc.)? Every item on this list will influence the way your feline friend acts in any given situation.

**REMEMBER:** Cats are emotionally intelligent beings. They can feel a wide variety of emotions, including happiness, anger, sadness, being head over heels in love, etc. Although some people have denigrated felines and don't believe they feel or think much of anything, the truth is that they have complex emotions, just like humans do.

## BODY SHAPE + POSTURE

Whenever a cat feels angry or fearful, they're most likely going to do things that make them appear to be bigger. You're going to notice that he'll arch his back, stand sideways, and put off aggressive vibes.

On the other hand, if he just might be in the mood to interact, he'll have normal posture, his body will face you, and he'll seem to radiate confidence.

The third most common positioning is what an anxious cat will display. He's going to crouch down and take on the shape of a ball, and he's also going to try to minimize his physical appearance.

It's vitally important to be aware that their anxious positioning could also be indicative that they're in pain. If you notice they go into this position a

lot, be sure to schedule an appointment with your veterinarian.

What about when your kitty stretches out? As long as he does so without trying to appear bigger, this means that he's comfortable with his surroundings and doesn't feel threatened.

How about when they crouch down to the floor? Sadly, this one indicates he's feeling worried or anxious. And, if he freezes when he spots you, this is a surefire way to know that he's uncomfortable.

Pay close attention to the ways they arch their back. A relaxed stretch is going to look quite different from a frightened or angry arch. Keep in mind that when a cat is angry or scared, it'll often use piloerection (hair standing up) to make itself appear larger.

Next, let's tackle body orientation. A cat that is standing sideways to you is probably feeling shy and may even be considering their escape route. If, however, they've got their body and head pointed in your direction, they are showing an interest in you. Recognizing these moments can make it so much easier to shower your feline friend with attention.

Please note that a cat that has turned her back to you isn't necessarily indicating that they don't want interaction. But she has let their guard down around you, and this can indicate that she's willing to be touched. Again, it's all about the context. To make it clearer, here's a simple guideline:

- Offset body orientation: Shy, uncertain
- Direct body orientation: Relaxed, confident

## DECODING A CAT ON ITS BACK

The so-called Venus Cat Trap can teach you a lot about your kitty. Once your cat exposes his belly, he's showing that he trusts you and feels comfortable with you. Once you go in to touch his belly, though, you might find yourself tussling with their teeth and claws. What in the world happened?

Well, to put it simply, you've fallen for the Venus Cat Trap. Keep in mind that just because your cat is showing trust in you does not mean that she is inviting you to touch her most vulnerable area. If

your cat does allow you to rub her belly when she's in this position, you should feel very special, indeed.

## THE TAIL IS YOUR CAT'S BAROMETER OF CONFIDENCE

There are three primary moods that a cat's tail gives off.

Is his tail broadcasting that he's happy and comfortable? If so, it should be held high, and it may also be vibrating or quivering with excitement.

If he's fearful or uneasy, his tail will be tucked down. Your cat adopts this 'small target' thought process when he's feeling anxious.

Finally, if he's feeling upset and wants you to back off, he'll show his agitation by flicking his tail. When you see this telltale indicator of irritation, do NOT engage. Unless you like to be cut into ribbons, that is.

To give you a bit more information about a cat that flicks her tail, this means that they have a lack of receptivity with you. As an example, my cat, Riley, can quickly go from being excited by getting attention to simply tolerating it when I pet him. As soon as he begins to flick his tail with a bit more force, he's indicating that he wants me to leave him alone. I've got about 5 more seconds to back off at this point, and it's on me if I choose not to and end up getting scratched.

## EARS ARE FOR HEARING, BUT ALSO FOR SHOWING YOU THINGS

Again, there are three major indicators that a cat's ears can clue you into.

- Forward ears - Confident and calm
- Flattened down ears - Fearful or angry
- High and erect ears - On alert

Learning how to read the three different moods can be trickier than you'd think, but not if you rely on context. When your cat's ears stand straight up, you could be misled into thinking she's at ease. However, this high, erect position may indicate that your cat is either on alert or wants to play.

## EYES ARE THE WINDOW TO YOUR CAT'S MOOD

There are three primary moods that are showcased by your kitty's eyes.

- Large and dilated - A stimulated cat that can be excited, fearful, or angry
- Slowly blinking (sweet eyes) - Whenever a cat blinks slowly at you, it indicates trust and that she's feeling comfortable
- Narrow and constricted pupils - Aggression, in the right context

You've already got your cat's ears, tail, and posture to go off of, but if you're still not 100% sure what intent they have, just look at their eyes.

**REMEMBER:** A cat with dilated pupils is stimulated, but this doesn't mean good or bad. In fact, your kitty probably wants to play. Of course, you must consider the context, because they could also be angry or fearful.

The slow blink conveys so much emotion without a single word. It shows relaxation and affection, and it indicates they do not feel threatened by you. If you want to make your cat feel extra affectionate toward you, it's a great idea to return (or to initiate) the slow blink. In fact, this is actually a form of communication between cats and their owners!

## THE WHISKERS PROVIDE EVEN MORE INFORMATION

Whiskers will not tell you nearly as much as their eyes, ears, tail, and posture, but it can still provide some helpful hints. There are two primary moods indicated by the whiskers.

- Close to their face - They're afraid
- Pushed forward - They're confident

## LEARNING HOW TO DECODE CAT VOCALIZATIONS

Vocalizations may not happen as often as all the other signals, but once they begin to use it, they have seven different ways to express themselves.

- Growl - Warning you to back off
- Hiss - Your cat feels threatened
- Yowl - If your cat yowls, it feels like all other options have been exhausted
- Trill - Friendly, familial greeting
- Chirp - Excitement or frustration
- Purr - Usually pleasure, but may indicate pain
- Meow - Excitement or frustration

These may not technically be body language, but they play a huge role in telling you what your cat is feeling. Cats don't tend to make a lot of noise (except for certain breeds), so when he or she does, pay attention. This is a cat's most overt way of expressing him or herself.

Purring is one of the most wonderful sounds on earth, as long as it indicates that your kitty is happy. But be aware that a cat in pain will also purr. So, once again, be sure to check your context clues to figure out what's happening.

Your feline friend has a series of vocalizations to let you know that they feel threatened. The most important part is to recognize if their feelings become worse. Usually, a cat will growl first before moving on to hissing. Once they hiss, they're trying to showcase their teeth and let you know that they're prepared for fight or flight.

If neither growling or hissing works, your cat will move onto yowling and shrieking. Once your cat reaches this point, she'll be making her stand or making a retreat immediately after.

Chirping and chattering both mean the same thing. Essentially, if your kitty chirps and begins to chatter, it indicates that they want to catch prey but are unable to reach it. Therefore, they're feeling excited but also a bit frustrated.

Trilling is often used by cats to greet their owners. This greeting is friendly and familial, as mother cats will trill to communicate with kittens. If your cat repeats this behavior with you later in life, it's a great sign of your bond.

## WHY DOES MY CAT KEEP MEOWING?

Meowing can be used in tons of different ways and can mean virtually anything. He could be trying to tell you he's hungry or could simply be chatting with you. Once again, this is something that you'll have to figure out based on context.

A cat that is truly meowing constantly, however, may be indicative of a problem. If you've got a cat that won't stop meowing—especially if he appears to be in pain—schedule a veterinarian appointment. Remember, though, that if there are certain times of day that they're always more chatty, then this is probably caused by their breed more than anything else.

## WHY DOES MY CAT TAP ME?

Not all cats will tap a human's leg when they need something, but those that do are giving you another big clue as to what they need. Riley does this when he feels like he's maybe being ignored. He'll also use a gentle tap to try and redirect me toward whatever it is he wants/needs. If I ignore the tapping, he'll become extremely agitated (which is why I don't tend to ignore it).

Another time that a cat will tap at your legs or feet is during playtime. You see, your feline friend is well-aware of it when you laugh at them or at something else. Depending on your cat's personality, they'll either hide out of embarrassment or they really love it when you laugh.

Some kitties even will go out of their way to make you laugh. This is something that Riley does, and it's amazing. He's always hiding, then jumping out and tapping my feet. As soon as he taps me, he runs away. If I give chase, he's absolutely thrilled! He also seems to truly enjoy my natural reaction to each sneak attack because I laugh.

## WHY DOES MY CAT RUB AGAINST MY LEGS?

We're finally to the section that was hinted at in the intro. While most people assume that their cat rubs against their legs to show affection, there is much more to it than that.

One reason they do this behavior is, of course, to say hello or that they've missed you. However, it also allows them to 'claim you' as 'their property' by leaving their pheromones behind. Whenever their scent wears off, they'll try to rub you again, and they may also headbutt you, lick you, or gently bite you. Be aware that your feline friend uses rubbing to form an affiliation with a person, animal, or item. Therefore, you should feel proud when they 'claim' you.

Occasionally, a kitty will headbutt someone who is new to their environment. This is a way of gathering information about them, and it should NOT be mistaken as a sign of friendliness. Do NOT attempt to pet them if they're gathering info.

Cats can also rub against you or against a specific object when they're trying to tell you something. Most of the time, it means they're hungry. But if they rub against you more aggressively, they're either sick or want you to remember to give them clean water or to clean out their litter box.

Like we promised in the intro to this article, there are a LOT of reasons that cats rub against your legs, so don't automatically assume that they're just saying 'hi.'

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The reason that so many people have misconceptions about cats is because they express themselves differently from humans. This doesn't mean that they don't have similar emotions, though. It also doesn't mean that they're 'hard to communicate with,' which is one prevailing myth about kitties.

Much as you would have to learn how to properly communicate with a person on the spectrum, you will also have to learn how to communicate with your cat. In both cases, if you put a bit of time and energy into learning the ways that they communicate, you can end up with a beautiful relationship. And, because you took the time to learn, your cat is going to have such a higher quality of life.



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