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**Enriching Your Cat's Environment**

Though cats thoroughly enjoy a nice sun beam to lazily sprawl out in and sometimes it may seem like all cats want to do all day is snooze in a soft nook, it is important to remember that cats thrive with enrichment. This handout reviews TOYS, SCRATCHING, REFUGE & PERCHES, CHEWS and RESOURCES.

**TOYS**

**\*** Cats are hunters with a natural instinct to pounce insects, birds, mice and other small animals. When picking toys for your beloved feline, consider toys that squeak, chirp, jitter, swing or vibrate. These types of toys entice cats because they appeal to their inherent desire to hunt moving meals.

\* Use toys that enable you to engage in activities with your cat without you having to use your hands directly. This includes toys that are remotely controlled or attached to strings and ones with long devices with a toy at the end. Cats like dangling toys because they have the opportunity to use their natural quickness and agility to catch something.

\* Balls and little furry toy mice (OPTION: get them filled with catnip) are great because cats like to swat, pick up and toss objects, and chase and capture items. It appeals to their hunting and stalking personalities.

\* Some toys are designed so that your cat must play with them in order to get food rewards out which is means a little exercise is required prior to cat snacking.

\* Examples of Toys:

Panic Mouse

Undercover Mouse

Laser pointers

Cat tracks

Pavlov's Cat

Deli Dome

Havanip Treat Ball

\* It is important to rotate your cat's toys so that it is not exposed to the same ones daily and put the toys away when you are done playing so that they retain their value.

\* Water Fountains are dreamy for some cats and can be considered an added bonus in your feline’s environment.

\* Some cats like to nibble on plants. You may want to provide cat-friendly safe grasses and plants in your home for this purpose. Refer to our handout, “**Hazards in the Home**” to avoid plants that are toxic to cats.

\* You may want to increase your cat's hunting opportunities in your home by placing its food in several small bowls or scatter treats throughout the house so that it can hunt for them rather than eating out of one bowl.

\* Consider leash/harness training your cat to go on walks with you. Many cats enjoy the outdoors.

**SCRATCHING**

Cats scratch to stretch their muscles, shed old cuticle, sharpen their claws, and to leave scent marks. Which post do you buy? Consider the following:

Cats that scratch chair legs or the corners of your couch may prefer a vertical scratching post. Make sure that vertical scratching posts are tall enough so that your cat can stretch up to scratch. Cats that scratch rugs and carpets may prefer a horizontal scratching post or mat.

Most, but not all cats prefer scratching posts made out of rough material they can shred. Sisal (a coarse natural fiber) scratching posts are ideal because they are satisfying to scratch and tough enough to stand up to repeated use. Vertical or upright and horizontal or flat scratching posts are available in a variety of sizes and materials including sisal, carpet and cardboard.

Posts should be placed in areas where cats congregate and along their routes to common areas such as food, water bowls and litter boxes. Setting up multiple scratching posts provides the cat with acceptable options to leave its mark without being enticed towards your furniture and carpets.

**REFUGE & PERCHES**

A safe resting area is important to cats, as is a refuge, an area where your cat has access to all its necessities without challenge. Valuables to cat include: food, water, a litter box, a safe sleeping spot, a scratching post, a perch, and toys. Closet areas, upper shelves of book cases, tops of furniture, laundry baskets, paper grocery bags, and cat trees or condos make ideal resting spots for cats. A refuge should be in a less-traveled area in your home where your cat can retreat to easily find its valuables.

When the cat is in its refuge, other members of the household, including people and pets, should not be allowed to bother it. Using [Feliway](http://indoorpet.osu.edu/cats/basicneeds/feliway/index.cfm) spray or a **Feliway Diffuser** (Calming Phermone Agents) in your cat's refuge can make it seem safer and more inviting. Leaving a radio or TV on for your cat muffles sounds he hears but can't identify. The radio or TV will also provide human voices for your cat to associate with safety.

A perch is anything that allows your cat to lie, sit, sleep or look outside from above.

Perches are enjoyable to cats because they are curious. When they hear sounds coming from outside or smell unfamiliar odors, they like to check it out and moreover confirm their own safety. Some cats find window time very entertaining. A couch, chair, or sturdy table in front of a window is all it takes. To make the scenery more attractive for your inquisitive feline, you could hang a bird feeder in the yard or plant flowers close to a window, both of which can attracts birds, bees, butterflies, and other insects for your cat to admire.

**CHEWS**

You can provide chew treats for your cat such as beef jerky, small rawhides and dried fish. You can try soaking them for 10 minutes first in clam juice or chicken broth for added flavor.

**RESOURCES**

Books written about cat enrichment are, "The Cat's House", and "Cats into Everything", both by Bob Walker.

There are videos for cats to watch while you are away, i.e. *Video Catnip*.

For more information on training, you may want to check out, "Clicker Training for Cats", available on www.clickertraining.com, Doris Dingle's "Crafty Cat Activity Book" or "Show Biz Tricks for Cats" by Anne Gordon.