

Clinic

The feline magazine from Cats Protection for veterinary professionals

Behaviour

Cat-friendly interior design

Welfare

The changing face
of cat breeding

Medicine

An approach to
feline idiopathic
cystitis in the
shelter setting



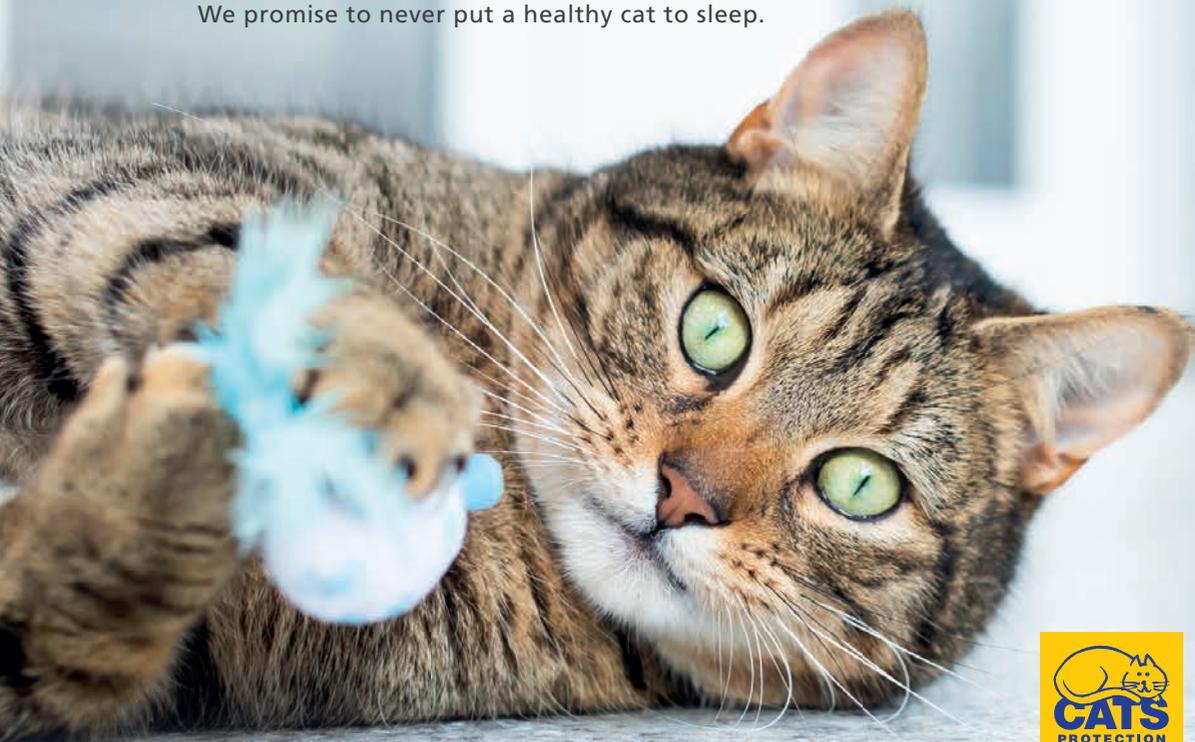
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For all editorial enquiries

Editor: Sarah Elliott, Central Veterinary Officer

Cats Protection, National Cat Centre,
Lewes Road, Chelwood Gate,
Haywards Heath RH17 7TT

01825 741 991 (Veterinary and *Clinic by Cats Protection*
calls only)

cpclinic@cats.org.uk

General public enquiries: 03000 12 12 12

Sub Editor: Francesca Watson

Designer: Becky Hamilton

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Reg Charity 203644 (England and Wales) and SC037711 (Scotland)

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All the latest news from Cats Protection

Meet the team



Naomi Williams
BVetMed MRCVS

How long have you worked for Cats Protection?
I joined Cats Protection in April this year.

What did you do before working for Cats Protection?
Before joining Cats Protection I spent 10 years working for PDSA and then a year back in private practice which made me realise my heart was in charity work and I was lucky enough to get this role.

What is your role within Cats Protection? I am a Field Veterinary Officer for the Midlands.

What do you like most about your job? I love that every day is varied with an interesting mix of unusual cases, queries and training. I get a huge amount of satisfaction knowing that we are supporting so many cats and helping to educate on ways to improve the lives of cats all over the UK.

What is your most memorable Cats Protection moment? I have been involved with lots of interesting cases since starting my role. One special one is Roman, a tiny kitten that came all the way from Romania as a stowaway in a furniture lorry. He is currently in quarantine and will be found a new loving home soon.

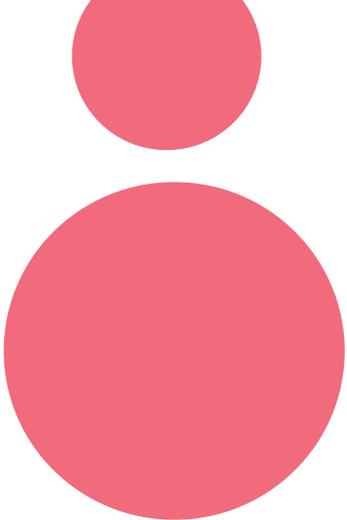
Do you/did you have a pet/pets? I have a 15-year-old cat called Holly, who I inherited at the start of lockdown last year, she is the new boss of the house! I also have a lurcher called Mimmee, who is a typical vet's pet and came to me as a rescue with a broken leg.

What are your hobbies/other interests?

I try and find time to train for triathlons – I have a half Ironman planned in October (swimming, cycling and running). I love baking and macramé and have spent the last 16 years trying to learn Welsh as it's my husband (and now my children's) first language!

Where is your favourite place to visit?
As a family we love to go to Brittany camping although that has been on hold for the last few years!

If I wasn't doing this, I'd probably...
Running a glamping site somewhere close to where we live in South Wales or on a beach somewhere hot and sunny!



Feline idiopathic cystitis

in the shelter setting

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) is a term used to encompass the many different diseases affecting the lower urinary tract in cats. Examples of conditions causing lower urinary tract disease include feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC); urolithiasis; urethral obstruction; bacterial cystitis; anatomical defects (urethral strictures) and neoplasia. FIC, however, is consistently found to be the most common cause of FLUTD.

The exact pathogenesis of FIC is complicated and multifactorial, with a complex interaction of the urinary and neuroendocrine systems. Several areas of pathogenesis have been highlighted and include:

- a neurogenic inflammatory process of the bladder lining. Here changes occur between the bladder neurons, the protective glycosaminoglycan (GAG) layer of the bladder lining and compounds within the urine itself
- there is marked uncoupling of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA) resulting in an inappropriate response to stress. FIC cats have a decreased cortisol response and an associated decreased adrenal volume, highlighting a dissociation of the sympathetic nervous system from the HPA. Cats with FIC have been found to display no significant difference in their urinary cortisol:creatinine ratio¹
- tyrosine hydroxylase is the rate-limiting enzyme in the production of adrenaline. In cases of FIC, increased levels of this enzyme are found in the pontine nucleus known as the locus coeruleus
- chronic stress can raise tyrosine hydroxylase activity and increase autonomic outflow. As a result, elevated levels of catecholamines are found in cats with FIC
- obstructive FIC may be the result of inflammation or muscular spasm of the urethra, neurological dysfunction or an intraluminal plug formation². However, this article will focus on the non-obstructive form of FIC

There is some consensus on the likely risk factors for the development of FIC. These include:

- decreased levels of activity
- indoor-only housing
- decreased water intake
- increased body condition score
- use of a litter tray with restricted outdoor access
- recent stressful events such as a house move

Research has shown that certain behavioural traits are associated with the development of FIC in cats. These traits include nervousness and fearfulness, with associated hiding from strangers in the home². It was also perceived that cats with FIC had less environmental control; however, it is suggested that FIC occurs in cats which are susceptible, in combination with a deficient environment². A deficient environment on its own is unlikely to cause an episode of FIC without the underlying susceptibility.

The clinical symptoms of FIC are classical for FLUTD with the most common being:

- dysuria
- haematuria
- pollakiuria
- periuria
- stranguria
- overgrooming >

The diagnosis of FIC can be challenging in the shelter environment or the first opinion setting, as it is a diagnosis of exclusion. In the shelter environment it is important to select diagnostic tests appropriately and in a pragmatic order.

The first step is to obtain a detailed history from the primary caregiver, including an overall assessment of the cat's behaviour while in care, and how well the cat has adjusted to the new environment. Ideally, each cat (where appropriate) would have a detailed profile questionnaire filled in prior to admission into the shelter setting.

This questionnaire would provide information with regard to the cat's preferences of litter substrate, previous litter tray experience, previous outdoor access and a general overview of the cat's behaviour outside of the shelter environment. This will enable the clinician to have an appreciation of the cat's susceptibility of FIC in the shelter setting.

Next, a urinary sample should be collected and analysed fully (including an in-house sediment examination). If this analysis is suggestive of a sterile inflammatory process without significant other co-morbidities, then treatment can be initiated for this.

If, after one to two weeks of treatment and environmental enrichment there isn't resolution of the urinary clinical signs, then it is important to follow such cases up with further investigation. In the shelter setting, this could include:

- repeated urinalysis and sediment examination
- FeLV/FIV testing if not already performed
- abdominal radiographs
- bladder ultrasonography

It is important not to delay further investigations when required, as we need to limit the time in care of any shelter cat. An awareness of sunk cost fallacy is essential, and to take all measures to avoid this situation.

If after these further investigations, FIC appears to be the most likely differential diagnosis, then careful consideration needs to be given to the welfare of the cat in care. Repeated or non-resolving episodes of FIC are painful and distressing for the cat, resulting in great concern in the shelter setting.

It is well accepted now that most cases of non-obstructive FIC are self-limiting and have the potential to resolve spontaneously within five to 10 days³. However, therapeutic treatment is advised due to the negative welfare risk and the associated pain for the cat. We always need to be mindful of the risk of obstructive FIC developing as well. Options for therapeutic FIC treatment in the shelter setting consist primarily of non-steroidal anti-inflammatories. The benefit of using glycosaminoglycans needs to be weighed against their cost in this environment, and as a consequence, they may not feature as a core therapeutic option.

It is important, alongside the therapeutic treatment, to be actively creating dilution of the urine. This can be simply achieved by providing a wet food diet (often not a specific prescription diet in the shelter setting). Or if the cat won't tolerate a wet food diet, adding water to their dry diet can help. Providing water in multiple different locations (away from the food and litter trays) and trying different bowl types, while avoiding metal and plastic wherever possible, can also be helpful. Creating flavoured broths can also assist in increasing water intake. Water fountains work well for some cats, however in the shelter environment, they can pose a biosecurity risk as they are difficult to clean adequately.



Multimodal environmental enrichment is probably of one of the most important tools we have in the shelter setting, and this should be utilised in all cases of FIC whether in the shelter setting or the domestic setting. The purpose of environmental modification is to reduce the likelihood of activating the stress response system⁴ and subsequently decrease the risk of FIC. The shelter setting has environmental limitations in place; however, the following are achievable in most shelter settings:

- keep cats housed singly unless they are a truly bonded pair
- limit the exposure of cats to other cats – through reducing the sight, smell and sounds of other cats
- provision of places to hide (including raised hiding areas) such as the Hide & Sleep[®] from Cats Protection
- appropriate resource placement (food and water resources separated, and away from the litter trays)
- appropriate litter tray placement, appropriate substrate (unscented) and depth of substrate, appropriate litter tray number (1 per cat +1), regular complete cleans of the litter tray
- use of pheromones
- consistency in shelter routines – feeding, cleaning etc
- consistency in the caregiver
- regular daily play sessions with the cat (if appropriate)

- provision of both vertical and horizontal scratching facilities
- grooming sessions (if appropriate)
- double-bedding system for scent continuity
- the use of unscented disinfectants.
- food enrichment – scatter feeding, feeding puzzles etc
- limiting the time spent in the shelter environment

FIC management can be a challenge in the shelter setting, due to the inherent and unavoidable stress associated with the shelter environment. By providing multimodal environmental enrichment alongside appropriate therapeutic intervention, it is hoped that these FIC cases will resolve uneventfully. However, if this is not the case, it is important to investigate the urinary symptoms fully, in order to rule out other underlying issues. **C**

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Lucinda Alderton-Sell

Lucinda graduated from the Royal Veterinary College in 2010 and headed to the PDSA. In 2013 Lucinda completed her GP Cert in Small Animal Medicine. In 2016, Lucinda moved to Cats Protection as the National Cat Centre Veterinary Officer. The following year, she was appointed as a Field Veterinary Officer. In this role, she is involved in resolving complicated cases with the veterinary providers for Cats Protection's centres and branches. Lucinda completed the ISFM Feline Medicine course in 2020 and in 2021 passed the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists membership exams in feline medicine.

The changing face of pedigree cats

Nine Mile Challenge

Nine miles. One month. Roam free!

This September help us give cats and kittens a second chance by walking nine miles to raise funds for Cats Protection.

Whether it's one big trip or a daily jaunt, your steps will help cats in need get back on their paws.

Make like a cat and roam free!

Register now at: www.cats.org.uk/9miles

For further information please contact:

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Until the last 200 years, cats were not purposefully bred to fulfil a function considered 'useful' to their human owners. Cats were first domesticated around 9,000 years ago when they settled into farming communities around areas of Western Asia and the Nile Valley in a mutually beneficial relationship as the local rodent control. Cats were so well adapted to this task that selective breeding to improve their function as hunters was not necessary.

A comprehensive 2017 survey of cat genes¹ concluded that even after cats first entered our lives, they remained largely unchanged for thousands of years. This is in stark contrast to their canine counterparts. Around the same time that cats were first venturing near human settlements, people were already selectively breeding their domesticated dogs to perform specific tasks such as guarding, herding or hunting. This selection for particular traits is what has led to the many different variations in the canine form we see today.

It wasn't until the 19th century that cat fanciers began selecting cats with particular traits in order to create specific breeds of domestic cat. This move towards the selective breeding of cats was driven not necessarily by a desire for cats to be fit for any particular purpose other than for their physical appearance and their willingness to act as a human companion.

Cat breeders strive to produce specimens that represent the 'ideal' of the breed – the cats that come closest to fitting the breed standard. Cats have subsequently been deliberately bred with characteristics of the breed standard that are more obvious and pronounced. Over a relatively short period of time the breed standard for certain breeds of cat has changed quite dramatically because of this. This shift in appearance has been at its most pronounced in the Siamese and Persian breeds. 'Old style' Siamese cats have a much more rounded facial structure and have a stockier build compared to the more recent grand champions of the breed. The Persian breed has likewise changed dramatically in recent years, with a trend towards an increasingly flat facial profile.



A modern lilac point Siamese kitten



An example of a modern Persian - the very short nose is often aligned directly between the eyes



The desire to breed cats with flatter faces has led to a rise in breathing problems associated with this characteristic. Image credit: icatcare

The effect of bred-related health problems has received widespread publicity in the dog world – and led to the BBC pulling out of Cruft's dog show in 2009 – but many cat lovers remain largely unaware of similar problems in feline breeds. Flat-faced or brachycephalic dog breeds are known to suffer from breathing difficulties and their bulging eyes are prone to weeping and irritation. Recently, research from the University of Edinburgh² concluded that flat-faced cats also suffer the same persistent health problems.

Worryingly in recent years there has also been a rise in the popularity of certain 'designer' cat breeds. These cats have been bred to exhibit even more extreme conformational changes, often by exploiting the genetic mutations that lead to dwarfism, hairlessness or spina bifida in order to produce a particular 'look'. Often these cats are unable to exhibit normal cat behaviours such as proper grooming, climbing or jumping because of their inherited physical characteristics. The popularity of these breeds has increased as celebrity owners have been keen to promote their designer cats on various social media platforms. The Munchkin cat is one of the latest of these breeds to have hit the headlines. The genetic defect that produces shortened legs is potentially lethal and many kittens die at birth. Abnormalities of the legs, spine and ribs mean that Munchkin cats are more likely to suffer from chronic pain due to arthritis and musculoskeletal discomfort. Manx cats can also suffer from many orthopaedic issues, this time resulting from a malformed spine. Another breed of cat that has seen a recent increase in popularity is the Scottish Fold. Celebrity owners include Ed Sheeran and Taylor Swift.

¹ Ottoni, C, Van Neer, W, De Cupere, B, Daligault, J, Guimaraes, T, Peters, J, Spassov, N, Prendergast, ME, Boivin, N, Morales-Muniz, A, Balasescu, A, Becker, C, Benecke, N, Borner, A, Buitenhuis, H, Chahoud, J, Crowther, A, Llorente, L, Manaseryan, N, ... Geigl, E-M (2017). The paleogenetics of cat dispersal in the ancient world. *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, 1(7), [0139]. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-017-0139>

² O'Neill, DG, Romans, C, Brodbelt, DC, Church, DB, Cerná, P & Gunn-Moore, DA 2019. Persian cats under first opinion veterinary care in the UK: demography, mortality and disorders. *Scientific Reports - Nature*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-49317-4>

The breed was created to have ears that fold over to give a unique expression to the face. Unfortunately, the genetic abnormality affects not only the ear cartilage but also cartilage in the joints as well, leading to crippling arthritis.

Recent research³ from Dr Lauren Finka of Nottingham Trent University has provided evidence to suggest that alterations to the face shape of cats like the Scottish fold may cause us to miss crucial body language that could indicate that they are in discomfort. The research found that when the facial features of cats have been altered due to intense selective breeding, this may not only affect the cats' physical health, but also their ability to express themselves and communicate via their face.

There has also been an increase in the ownership of wild cat hybrids. Dubbed 'supercats' by some media outlets, these cats are produced by crossing domestic cats (*Felis catus*) with exotic wild cats of a different species. Despite price tags of up to £6,000 for new kittens, breeders report waiting lists of up to six months.

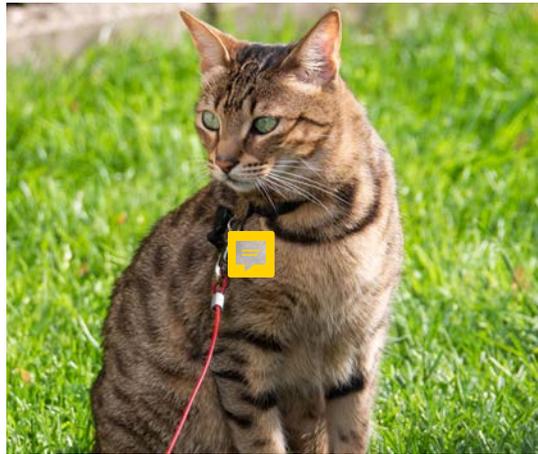
While this crossing may produce a cat which is large or attractive, they may behave differently to the average domestic cat, retaining many wild characteristics such as territorial behaviour and aggression. This can render them unsuited to the domestic environment that they often find themselves in, and they may be fearful or stressed in such settings.

Wild cat hybrids include the Bengal as well as newer breeds such as the Savannah, a hybrid of the wild Serval cat and the Caracal, produced by mating a domestic cat with a Caracal. According to the Dangerous Wild Animals Act, first generation or 'F1' Bengals, Savannahs, Chausies and Caracats can only be kept under licence and in outdoor cages.

³ Finka, LR, Luna, SPL, Mills, DS, & Farnworth, MJ (2020). The application of geometric morphometrics to explore potential impacts of anthropocentric selection on animals' ability to communicate via the face: the domestic cat as a case study. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 7, 1070.



A Scottish Fold cat



This is a Savannah cat, a hybrid of the wild Serval cat and domestic cat. The breed was first developed in the US in the 1980s and has gained popularity in recent years in the UK

Subsequent generations are exempt from this restriction, although it can be difficult for such cats to settle into a domestic lifestyle and the risk of injury to owners cannot be overlooked. Hybrid breeds are not recognised by the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF), the feline equivalent of the Kennel Club in the UK. However, this has not diminished their popularity, despite the many welfare considerations associated with their ownership and their very specialist care requirements.

In 2010 the GCCF developed its General Breeding Policy to encourage the incorporation of health principles such as testing for inherited diseases into breed standards. As a result, many breeders began actively screening their breeding stock to remove carriers of hereditary illnesses from the gene pool.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has created the ideal conditions for unscrupulous pet sellers to thrive. Pet sales have increased during the pandemic which has led to more people breeding and selling cats for big profits. Figures prepared for Cats Protection showed that the average price of a cat increased by 40% last year to nearly £330. Online adverts show prices ranging from £450-£800 for moggies, to as much as £2,500 for a pedigree cat. Sellers appeared to have a credible reason for not allowing buyers to view the kitten with their mother first due to restrictions on visiting other households.

One potential route to improving the welfare of pedigree cats may lie in the introduction of licensing laws for breeders. Regulations in Scotland are currently being drafted for this to come into effect in September 2021. Under the new laws, anyone breeding three or more litters of puppies or kittens or six litters of infant rabbits, in any 12-month period, will require a licence to do so. People sourcing five or more animals in any 12-month period for the purposes of rehoming them as pets will also require a licence. The regulations will introduce 'Lucy's Law', to prevent the third-party sale of cats and dogs under six months old as pets in Scotland.

Prospective owners are still highly motivated to seek out rare and unusual physical characteristics, and this has been fueled by the positive social media attention these cats often enjoy. As cat breeds become more varied and exotic there is a risk that welfare problems will continue to rise. Breeders have a duty to sell kittens which are healthy and well-suited to life in a domestic setting, but perhaps ultimately it is the kitten buyers themselves who have the most power to effect a change in encouraging positive cat-breeding welfare.

C



**Sarah Elliott BVetMed
MANZCVS (Feline Medicine)
MRCVS**

Sarah qualified from the Royal Veterinary College in 2007. She gained her membership of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists in the subject of feline medicine in 2018.

Sarah has worked in both private and charity small animal practice in the UK and New Zealand. Before joining Cats Protection, Sarah worked as a veterinary surgeon at the PDSA. She is now Cats Protection's Central Veterinary Officer and is based in Sussex. Her role at Cats Protection sees her producing veterinary guidance for the charity's network of around 210 branches and 30 centres, editing Cats Protection's Clinic magazine and supporting other central teams such as Advocacy, Partnerships and Learning & Development.

GRAND CAT DESIGNS

Nicky Trevorrow looks into cat-friendly interior design

Many of us are interested in interior design given the number of television programmes there are dedicated to the topic, but what do you think your cat would do, given the chance? There's a growing trend towards open-plan houses, certainly in new builds. Despite this, we still maintain our need for privacy and of course, hygiene, which is why you will never see an open-plan bathroom/diner.

Cats are very similar to us in this respect which explains why they prefer to have their litter trays placed not only away from food and water bowls, but also somewhere private yet accessible. Many people place their cat's litter tray next to a cat flap, glass back door or in a conservatory; however, these are high-traffic areas which can be easily overlooked by other

cats in the neighbourhood, leading to anxiety and potential behavioural problems. When faced with a cat no longer using the litter tray, the first port of call is to carry out a physical examination to rule out any medical problem before reviewing the cat's toileting preferences.
>





Happy cats are those which have all their key resources laid out in the right place, such as:

- food bowls and feeding enrichment
- water bowls
- litter trays
- scratch posts
- places to hide
- elevated perches
- toys
- beds

So what are the golden rules for kitty interior design and resource placement?

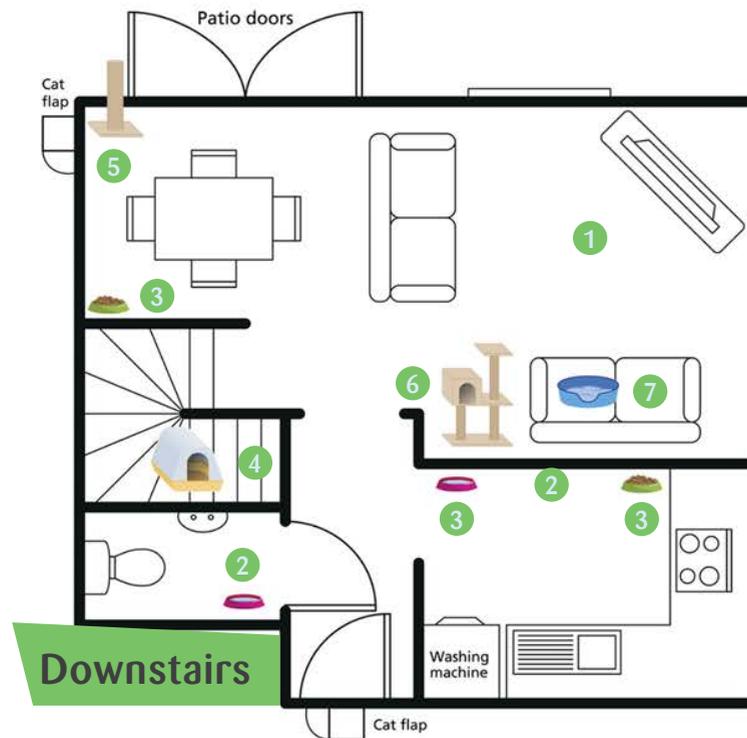
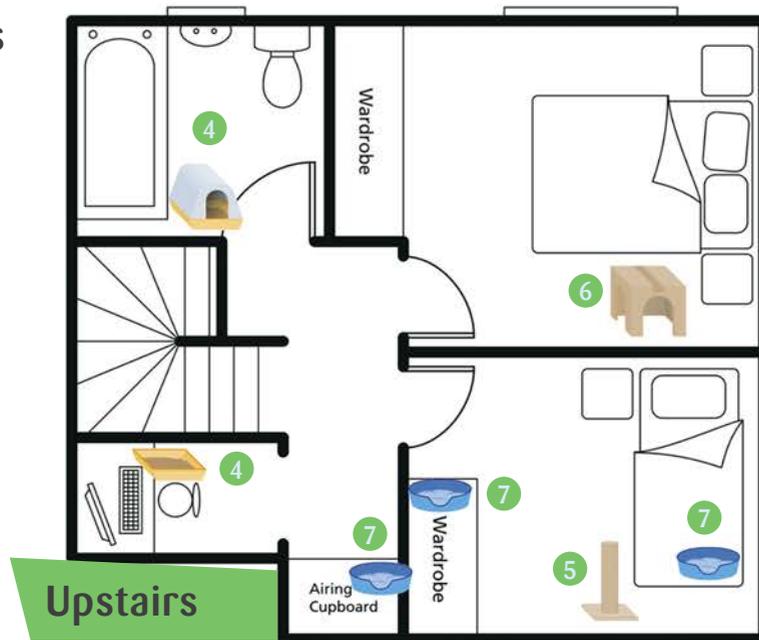
Firstly, it is important to start with how many! The most important rule is 'one resource per cat plus one extra for choice'. Cats are not known for having a gregarious nature and therefore need to have the ability to get to a resource easily without having to share. What can appear to owners as 'queuing' or 'waiting their turn', is actually a subtle stress response in the cat who is not able to immediately access resources due to a more confident or territorial cat in the household. Not having enough essential resources can cause significant stress in cats. The PDSA'S PAW Report 2020 found that while just under half of cats live with at least one other cat, evidence shows that cats are not provided with as many resources as they need. Cats are the masters of disguise when it comes to hiding how they really feel so it is very easy to miss inconspicuous signs such as cat flap or litter tray blocking. This does not mean that a cat will block the resource by sitting next to it; they are much more subtle than that and may appear to be innocently washing their paws the other side of the room, while sending emotional warfare messages to the other cat! >

• Owner homework

Draw a plan of your house and work out your cat's territory where they spend most of their time. Mark these territories in different colours on your house plan to show different cats if you have more than one cat. Then aim to provide a set of resources per cat in their respective territories.



Desirable places floor plans



Hints and tips for resource placement

- 1 Space resources out all around the house.
- 2 Cats prefer their water bowl to be away from their food bowl and are much more likely to drink more if they are separate. The same applies to feeding enrichment items, such as puzzle feeders which encourage cats to use their brains to 'hunt' for their food.
- 3 Place food and water bowls away from the wall so that cats have the choice to view the room and not worry about anything sneaking up behind them.
- 4 Litter trays should be away from all other resources for hygiene reasons, such as a covered litter tray placed under the stairs or an open tray under the desk in a quiet study.
- 5 For maximum impact, place scratch posts near to where they are scratching (eg your beds or sofas), near to where they sleep so they can scratch for claw maintenance when they first wake up, and near to entry and exit points for scratching whereby they leave vertical lines as a visual marker as well as a scent marker from the scent glands between their toes.
- 6 Cats like clutter! If your house is open plan, create plenty of hidey holes and elevated perches for your cat to survey their territory safely. A sturdy cat tree is a popular option with cats, as is 'cat shelving' with shelves placed strategically on the wall to provide access to other resources and cat walkways to rooms in the house which cannot be blocked by other cats.
- 7 As cats rotate their sleeping place regularly, cats need multiple sleeping place options. You may find the brand new cat bed is not flavour of the month. Try placing it somewhere warm, in a sunny spot and/ or up high to renew its appeal.

These simple design tips can not only lead to a happier cat, but they also mean a cat is less likely to experience chronic stress which can cause both medical and behavioural problems, meaning a happier owner too.

c



Nicky Trevorror
BSc (Hons), PG Dip (CABC), RVN

Nicky works in Cats Protection's Veterinary Department as Behaviour Manager, implementing the charity's strategy to promote feline behaviour and welfare. Nicky is a registered veterinary nurse. She holds a BSc (Hons) degree in Animal Behaviour. She undertook an Advanced Diploma in Companion Animal Behaviour Therapy from the Centre of Applied Pet Ethology and a Postgraduate Diploma in Companion Animal Behaviour Counselling from the University of Southampton. Nicky is a full member of the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors and Animal Behaviour & Training Council (ABTC) Registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist. She represents Cats Protection on the Animal Behaviour and Training Council.

news

Keep up-to-date with Cats Protection

Pre-clinical EMS placements

Are you studying to become a vet or vet nurse? If so, why not complete a pre-clinical Extra Mural Studies (EMS) placement with Cats Protection, the UK's leading feline welfare charity.

At our adoption centres, students have the opportunity to gain a whole host of skills and experiences as part of their placement while making a huge difference to cats and kittens.

Throughout the placement, students will develop animal handling, husbandry and communication skills. They are introduced to Cats Protection's minimum veterinary standards (MVS) and the principles of shelter medicine and learn about the importance of kitten neutering and population control. Students also get the chance to meet and learn from our amazing team and will also have access to Cats Protection's online learning platform and resources on topics such as cat behaviour, infectious diseases and their control, cat care and welfare and our *Veterinary Guide*.



If you are a vet or vet nursing student interested in completing your pre-clinical EMS placement with Cats Protection or would like further information, please do get in touch with us! You can find further information on our leaflet xxxx.

Please click to have a print-friendly url

Obituary – Melvyn Driver

The cat rescue community sadly lost a pillar on Monday 24 May when Melvyn Driver of MDC Exports Ltd passed away.

Melvyn designed and built humane animal handling equipment for over 50 years.

His work in this field began in the early '80s when large colonies of feral cats were commonplace in the UK. Considered pests at the time, they roamed cities, suburban industrial sites, old hospitals, and farms all over the UK. A plain-speaking Melvyn features in a 1984 documentary (BBC1 *QED Walk on the Wildside*) explaining his role traveling up and down the country. Chloroform gassing was the accepted means of feral cat population management at the time but Melvyn was keen to work with others to develop alternative methods.

As a result, Melvyn engineered his first trap – the Eziset. Early pioneers in TNR Cat Action Trust were delighted to use Melvyn traps and restrainers and following this success, and at the request of the RSPCA, Melvyn developed a humane dog grasper. The traps, graspers, and other humane animal handling products soon became essential pieces of kit for vets, rescue workers, dog wardens, and others in the sector.

Keen to build on the range, Melvyn attended a Pet Expo in the USA for inspiration. Disillusioned by the vast array of products made from the 'new' moulded plastic, Melvyn shared his thoughts with an equally dispirited young Taiwanese man. As chance would have it, Steve Won had a plastic factory – but little knowledge of pet products. This was the start of a great friendship and the basis of 'Mikki Pet Products'.



Melvyn's gregarious nature soon made him a much liked 'player' in pet trade accessories, and hugely admired for his unique applied innovations, and his friendly supportive business attitude and skills. Numerous grooming products were designed and developed including the top-selling and award-winning Mikki Muzzle.

In 1998, Melvyn sold Mikki to focus on his real passion – developing high welfare animal handling equipment and products. MDC Exports sells products to over 60 countries worldwide and always supportive of those in the sector, annually donates thousands of pounds worth of equipment to deserving animal rescue recipients via the International Companion Animal Welfare Conference. In 2018, Melvyn enjoyed one of his proudest moments when International Cat Care gave him a special award for the Innovation in Humane Cat Population Management. Always in good humour, humble yet somewhat mischievous, Melvyn will be sorely missed but the family-run company, amazing products, and compassionate ethos will remain.

Melvyn had much respect from Cats Protection's volunteers and employees, and condolences have since flooded in with many expressing just how much Melvyn's work improved the handling and welfare of feral cats. It has been suggested that every rescue in the country will have at least one of his products in use! >



Action at Westminster

It has been a busy few months at Westminster with new bills on animal welfare issues being introduced and new commitments by the government to improve animal welfare.

In April the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill became law, allowing tougher penalties for animal cruelty. This meant that the maximum prison sentence for animal cruelty was raised from six months to five years from 29 June 2021. As well as a prison sentence, offenders can also receive an unlimited fine. The Act will help ensure courts are able to enforce extended penalties for those who cruelly mistreat any animal, sending a clear message that animal cruelty will not be tolerated. Cats Protection's Head of Advocacy & Government Relations Jacqui Cuff said: "Cats Protection is delighted that the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill has now become law in England, which is an important step in ensuring we are one of the world leaders on animal welfare issues".



Then in May the government launched its Action Plan for Animal Welfare, which sets out the government's plans to improve standards and eradicate cruel practices for animals both domestically and internationally.

Specifically for pet cats there was a commitment to introduce compulsory microchipping which Cats Protection has campaigned on for many years. There was also a commitment to carry out a review of snares, and Cats Protection will be stepping up its campaign for an outright ban on their use. Snares cause immense pain and suffering to any animal caught in them, including domestic and feral cats.

There was also the promise to address low-welfare pet imports, for example when kittens are smuggled, the licensing of animal sanctuaries, and measures to tackle pet theft, as cat theft has recently been on the rise. Cats Protection also welcomed the potential use of new penalty notices for crimes against animals.

While prosecution would always be the most appropriate action in serious cases of cruelty, the use of penalty notices may be a quicker and more effective deterrent in some cases where a cat is harmed.

As part of the Action Plan the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill was introduced. Vertebrate animals will be recognised as sentient beings for the first time in UK law. The legislation will also ensure that animal sentience is taken into account when developing policy across government through the creation of an Animal Sentience Committee which will be made up of animal experts from within the field. By enshrining sentience in domestic law in this way, any new legislation will have to take into account the fact that animals can experience feelings such as pain or joy. Cats Protection welcomed the introduction of the bill.

Cat Behaviour Conference: In the Company of Cats

Friday 24 September 2021

Get ready for a day of cat behaviour CPD, featuring expert speakers from around the world!

Cats Protection's 2nd annual Cat Behaviour Conference is being held online through The Webinar Vet on Friday 24 September.

The conference is dedicated to cat behaviour and is ideal for veterinary professionals, those working in the animal welfare sector and for those caring for cats.

This year's theme is 'In the company of cats'. The day will be focused on feline behaviour, looking at the interactions that cats have with each other and with other species. There will be live sessions, engaging Q&As and a segment focussing on the latest research in this area.



Session topics include:

- how to train cats and practical application for cooperative care
- using technology to assess pairs of cats

Speakers include a range of cat behaviour experts, including Dr Sarah Ellis BSc (Hons), PG Dip, PhD (above left) and Dr Kersti Seksel BVSc (Hons) MRCVS MA (Hons) FANZCVS DACVB DECAWBM FAVA (above right).

Registration is open now and tickets are priced at £50 plus VAT, with a special student discount rate of 50% off. Please contact veterinary@cats.org.uk to obtain your discount code. A recording of the talks will be available for six months after the event.

For more information and to register your place, please visit www.cats.org.uk/cat-behaviour-conference

Look out for the
next edition of

Clinic

by Cats Protection

coming
winter 2021



cpclinic@cats.org.uk

The feline magazine from Cats Protection
for veterinary professionals