



## Top Reasons to Keep Cats Indoors

By Franny Syufy, About.com Guide

Many cat lovers are now savvy that indoor cats are safer cats, while others still think that cats deserve freedom to run in the great outdoors. When humans domesticated cats, we took on the responsibility for their health and welfare. Part of that responsibility is to keep cats safe and in good health. For those holdouts for letting cats roam free, consider these top reasons to keep cats indoors. **Just like our children, it is no longer safe to send cats outdoors "to play".**

### To Monitor Your Cat's Urinary Tract/Bowel Health

Several years ago, we almost lost our Bubba, who was an indoor-outdoor cat at the time. Why? Because we had no litter boxes in the house, and therefore, could not monitor his painful attempts to urinate. Today, that would be a red flag warning of a potential UTI or urinary tract blockage. By the same token, observing a cat's painful attempts to poop, or finding blood and/or mucous in the feces in the fact is a red flag for constipation, bowel blockage, or mega-colon.

### Keep Cat Safe from Many Diseases

Cats allowed free access to the outdoors invariably come into contact with other cats. Even casual contact can transmit parasites and more serious diseases including FeLV (Feline Leukemia), FIP (Feline Infectious Peritonitis), Panleukopenia (Feline Distemper), FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) and Zoonotic Diseases such as rabies or ringworm. Mice your cat may eat or bring home can also cause a host of other dangerous diseases. Rarely mentioned, but equally serious, is the possibility of skin cancer from over-exposure to the sun. White and other light-colored cats can develop squamous cell carcinoma, a serious, painful disease.

### Indoor Cats Do Not Get Hit by Cars

According to one source more cats are killed by cars annually than are euthanized in U.S. animal shelters. Even the most careful driver cannot avoid hitting a cat that runs across the street in front of a car. Even so-called "safe" country areas are no guarantee for cats. Country cats are not as car-savvy as their city brethren, and all it takes is one misjudgment of distance or speed.

### Indoor Cats Are Safe From Predators such as hawks and coyotes and Dog Packs

Outdoor cats are below predators in the food chain, and they are sitting ducks for owls, raptors, coyotes, and native big cats. Dogs running in packs will consider a cat fair game; even one large dog can easily overpower and kill a cat. Remember that some dogs are also bred to attack; they are not really to blame when their instinct takes over. Even with a full set of fangs and claws, the cat rarely has a chance when caught outside, and declawed cats are even more at risk. **Every neighborhood in Contra Costa County is reporting coyote sightings. They come right over tall fences – grab the pet and are back out of the yard. Both dogs and cats are being killed. The main diet of a coyote is our pets. Cats cannot outrun the coyote and will likely suffer a very brutal death. Sparing you the details of reports we have heard, you do NOT want your cat caught by a coyote.**

### Indoor Cats Don't Create Neighbor Problems

Even "well-bred" cats will venture into neighbors' yards when allowed to roam free, and the resultant neighborhood discord has in some cases caused cat owners to move. People who don't like cats will not tolerate cats using their gardens as litter boxes, and will sometimes resort to extreme measures to keep the cats out. At the very least, a neighbor may call the local animal control to pick up the "stray" cat. **Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for a cranky next door neighbor might resent cat poop in the garden and set out poison.**

### Indoor Cats Rarely Get Abscesses From Fighting

Cats are very territorial and will defend their territory to the death, if challenged by another cat. At the very least, these territorial battles often result in abscessed wounds, which can be deadly if not treated in time. There's also the chance, of course, of cats contracting FIV from deep bite wounds, as was the occasion with my Shannon. Shannon's illness and subsequent death was the primary reason I changed my stance on the indoor-outdoor debate several years ago.

## **Indoor Cats Are Safe From Human Abuse**

Freely-roaming cats are easy targets for gangs of youths with time on their hands, for cat-haters, who seek cats out for target practice, and for neighbors who would think nothing of killing a cat for trespassing on their property. Although animal protection laws are beefing up, prosecution will never bring a loved cat back to life. It's a well known fact that serial killers often practice first with animals. **We are getting reports of abuse in Concord's Monument area and Pittsburg's neighborhood off Leland and 10<sup>th</sup> Street. However, abuse can happen in any neighborhood.**

## **Indoor Cats Can Get Plenty of Exercise**

Cats do get exercise, but they can get it safely with interactive toys, climbing towers, scratchings posts, and other indoor toys; all much safer than running from dogs or fighting with other cats. Remember also that there are safe compromises for the outdoor experience.

## **Indoor Cats Are not a Danger to Wildlife**

Let's face it; cats are predators, and left to their own devices outdoors, will eventually chase and kill birds, rabbits, and other small wildlife. Most of us would rather not see our cats cast in a killer role, and keeping them indoors will help protect wildlife to some degree.

## **Indoor Cats Don't Get Lost**

As outdoor cats widen their outdoor territories, they may become lost long enough to be "rescued" by other cat lovers, legitimate rescue groups, or picked up by animal control as strays. Statistics show that of "owned" cats turned in to shelters, only three percent are eventually relocated with their owners. Collars can break, and even microchips do not guarantee a cat will not be adopted and kept as an indoor cat by someone else. Why take the chance?

## **Indoor Cats Are Not Stolen**

*Bunchers* are people who sell cats to laboratories for animal experimentation or research. Their prime source of cats is on the street. Even a cat sitting on his front lawn is fair game for a buncher. Other people pick up cats for use as "bait" for training fighting dogs. Both categories of cat-knappers are the lowest of the low, but they are out there.

**So beware. Remember that an indoor cat is always safer.**