ANIMAL WELL-BEING

Cats

Quick cat facts

• There are more pet cats than dogs in the U.S.

• A cat’s purr can be a sign of contentment, pain or anxiety

• Cats use their whiskers to “feel” their environment and figure out if they can fit through spaces

• Cats have scent glands in their paw pads, cheeks, and tail and will rub to distribute scent

• Adult cats “meow” to communicate to humans

What is animal well-being?
Animal well-being, or animal welfare, is the ability of an animal to cope with its environment and living conditions. It's more than simply being healthy. Animal well-being includes:

1. An animal’s feelings or emotions, such as contentment;

2. An animal’s ability to perform natural behavior, such as grooming, stretching and turning around fully;

3. An animal’s health and biological functioning, such as not having injuries or disease.

Do you have an animal well-being concern?
Call your police department or veterinarian.

For livestock and poultry concerns, contact the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) [http://www.in.gov/boah/](http://www.in.gov/boah/)
**Caring for cats**

- Provide fresh, clean water.

- Do not offer milk to cats. Cats are lactose intolerant.

- Provide good-quality nutrition and daily meals. Consult your veterinarian for advice on nutritional needs for your cat’s life stage.

- Provide opportunities for exercise and play. Playing with toys can be fun!

- Provide litter boxes, even if the cat goes outdoors occasionally.

- If you have multiple cats, more than one litter box is needed, each in a different area.

- Offer a quiet, secluded space the cat can use to hide. Multiple hiding places are good.

- Don’t disturb a resting cat.

- Provide climbing opportunities and shelves at different heights, particularly if you have multiple cats.

- Provide a scratch post.

- Place the scratch post in a well-used room because cats want to scratch in high-activity areas.

- Provide positive interaction, such as petting.

- Cats are intelligent and can be trained using positive reinforcement (such as treats or praise).

- If your cat goes outdoors, microchip and use a break-away collar with a bell.

- Observe your cat’s normal behavior and watch for changes (which suggest they are hurt or ill).

- Take your cat to the veterinarian for regular check-ups. Prevention is better than treatment.

- Contact a veterinarian if you think your cat may be hurt or sick.

**Signs of poor cat well-being**

Changes in a cat’s behavior can alert you to a possible problem. Sick or injured cats may show the following behavior or signs:

- Refusing food or eating less than normal
- Drinking more or less water than normal
- Hiding or sleeping more than normal
- Not wanting to play
- Sudden aggression when unprovoked
- Vomiting (except for “hair balls”)
- A change in bathroom behavior: specifically,
  - Diarrhea, or lack of bowel movements
  - Eliminating outside the litter box
- Fever (body is too hot)
- Being more vocal than usual
- Difficulty walking or limping
- Woozy or strange body movements
• Licking one area for a long time
• Coughing or sneezing, nasal discharge
• Dull or missing fur
• Open-mouth breathing or panting

Causes of poor cat well-being
Situations that can cause suffering include:

Neglect: failing to care for a cat, such as,
• Not providing necessities (food, water, shelter).
• Endangering a cat’s life or health.
• Prolonged injury, sickness or disease without contacting a veterinarian.

Abandonment: deserting the cat without providing means for long-term care.

Cruelty or abuse: causing physical or mental harm, pain or suffering.
Avoid causing:
• Negative feelings such as pain or fear
• Thirst or hunger
• Illness, injury or disease

Undesirable behavior
Fear: A fearful cat will:
• Try to make themselves appear larger by arching their back and raising their fur.

Aggression: Biting, swiping and clawing.
• Provide space for cats to hide.
• Provide separate food, water, and litter boxes in different areas of the house if you have more than one cat.
• When introducing new cats, separate them at first and then gradually introduce them to each other by first letting them smell and then see each other.

Scratching: A behavior that can cause injury to you (or your furniture).
• Provide scratch posts and teach cats how to use them. (YouTube has fun instructional videos!)
• Declawing is not recommended. Declawing is painful, reduces well-being, and should never be done on outdoor cats.