

# INDOOR VS OUTDOOR KITTIES!

For the most part when Sammie's Friends adopts out cats we would prefer that they be indoor cats. There are many reasons for this. Indoor cats usually encounter fewer physical risks than those exposed to the outside world and for this reason many live longer and physically safer lives. Indoor cats are usually healthier and will cost you less in veterinary care for contagious diseases, parasites, abscesses from cat fights. If your cat is inside you are more apt to notice health issues and get veterinary care as early as possible for your cat. Cats do enjoy sunshine, fresh air and exercise; but they do not need to go outside to enjoy these things. People often build catios, which is an outside enclosure similar to a sun porch where the cat can lay in the sunshine and look out at the birds and other activities going on outside. A large window sill can work too.

Generally speaking indoor cats live much longer than outdoor cats. Indoor cats live an average of 10 to 20 years. Outdoor cats live from 2 to 5 years. In addition to diseases and parasites, outdoor cats run the the risk of being attacked or killed by predators or run over by cars. They may ingest poisons from plants, gasoline, antifreeze, pesticides and pest control poisons. Outdoor cats will often find a warm space under the hood of a car next to the engine. I have received more than one call from an owner wanting help for their cat that was eviscerated by a fan belt when the car was started on a cold morning. At the very least honk your horn if there is any chance a kitty could be sleeping under your hood.

As we have more fires and destruction of our forests and mountain areas the bears, mountain lions, bobcats, foxes and coyotes come down into the more urban areas. Fall is coyote "dispersal season" when sightings and encounters tend to be on the rise. This is the time when last years pups start leaving the pack to strike out on their own. It's also the time when you're likely to see them moving around in groups. These pups are inexperienced and need the support of a pack. In general coyotes are loners. This is a dangerous time for your kitties, especially as dusk arrives. Although I have been told that coyotes have also grabbed cats in broad daylight. It is not entirely true that if you bring your cat in at night you will have nothing to worry about. In general bears will not attack your cat. Bobcats have rarely been found to eat cats, but I do know of at least one case where this happened. Foxes will usually leave adult cats alone, but young kittens and smallish cats can and will be eaten by a fox. In a study of 117 legally killed mountain lions, 52% of them were found to have cat remains in

their stomach. When animals are hungry they diversify as to what they will kill and eat. The most dangerous predators to your cat are coyotes and loose dogs. There has been at least once mountain lion in the city of Grass Valley.

The main reason cats like to be outside is to meet their primal needs of hunting and stalking prey, like birds and rodents. However, these needs can be met by a variety of toys and play provided indoors, where your kitty will be safer. Cats love to sun bath but a catio or a big window sill can meet that need. I would always advise that when you get a kitten you make it a house cat. if you get an older cat, but not too old (old cats are vulnerable outside and tend to want to come indoors as they age), that has always been outside it may be difficult to reorient it to the inside. However, everything I have read , along with my own experience, advises that your cat can be very happy without setting a foot outside; it will certainly be safer allowing for more years of fun and cuddles for you and your kitty.

A few tips you might want to know about your kitty in order to enjoy your feline friend. If you get your kitty from a shelter or rescue, your kitty may hide under the bed or something else. Cats are often afraid. They are small. If you are patient and wait it may take your kitty several weeks to come out, but if you are patient you may end with the most loving little buddy you could ever imagine. Cats are not small dogs. They are cats and have their own nature. Cats do not like their litter boxes to be filled with poop and pee. I advise cleaning them every day. If you keep the litter boxes fresh your kitty will be less likely to poop and pee in places where (s)he should not do that. Always have one more litter box available than the number of cats in your household. Think about it, do you like to use a toilet that was not flushed by the last user? Ick! Your cat feels the same way. Keep litter boxes sanitary. It is so much easier to not let a bad habit get started than to try to fix it after the offender has the bad habit.

Love and provide for your kitty and you will have a joyous and fun time with your little feline buddy for many years!