



Main Reasons for Abandoning/Surrendering a Cat

1. We're Moving.

Alternate Solution: Look for pet friendly properties that will house your cat. Landlords may be more likely to accept a cat on the property if you can convince him you are a responsible pet owner. Having confirmation that your cat is spayed or neutered will go a long way. If you are leaving the province, as many have to do, you could consider taking your cat along with you. The stress undergone by your cat may be more intense during the flight but less stressful than being indefinitely housed in a shelter - an unfamiliar and often frightening environment for cats used to home life. Once she's settled in her new home with her family the stress will quickly be forgotten. Most airlines charge a very minimal and affordable fee for taking your cat onboard with you, tucked safely under your seat in a soft kennel. Restrictions apply so you will need to call ahead. Pets can also be flown as 'cargo' and is a great option if you need to find suitable housing before having your pet sent to you. Health certificates are only required for international travel.

2. Allergies.

Many people suffer from cat allergies. Some are moderate while others are severe. The most common allergen is secreted by the cat's salivary glands and is transmitted to fur and dander by grooming. Most people with moderate allergies can learn to live comfortably with their cat. Those with severe allergies usually must re-home their cat.

Options for coping with moderate allergies.

- (a) Reduce Contact: Remove items from your home that can hold allergens such as carpet. Vacuum more frequently and buy proper covers for mattresses and pillows. Install an air purifier or purifier system. Confine the cat to specific areas of the home and wash hands after contact.
- (b) Medications/Inoculations: Many over the counter drugs are available for helping people cope with allergy symptoms. People may also want to discuss prescription medication or immunotherapy (periodic injection therapy that stimulates the bodies natural immune response to allergens) with your doctor.
- (c) Grooming: Bathing and brushing your cat or taking him to a groomer regularly will help remove allergens from fur and control shedding.

3. Inappropriate Elimination

Inappropriate Elimination occurs when your cat starts using the bathroom outside the litter box.

Possible Reasons for inappropriate elimination.

1. Medical: Cats will often begin inappropriate elimination if there is an underlying medical problem. This is the first thing that needs to be checked if your cat is messing outside the litter

box or is exhibiting signs of irregular litter box habits. **Consult your veterinarian to find out if there is a medical problem.**

One of the most common medical problems to explain inappropriate elimination is Feline Lower Urinary Track Disease (FLUTD). FLUTD, its causes and diagnosis should be left to your veterinarian.

One common result of the disease is a blockage of the urethra, the tube from the bladder that carries urine from the body. Male cats have a much longer and narrower urethra than females and blockages in males are more common. If left untreated a blocked urethra can result in death.

Some signs of FLUTD

- Excessive digging or urinating outside of the litter box
- Frequent or restricted urination
- Excessive grooming of genitals, crying while urinating and blood in the urine.

2. Sexual Maturity: Most cats reach sexual maturity between 5-7 months (although maturity can occur as early as 4 months or as late as 12 months). Both sexes may begin to spray as they reach sexual maturity but it is more common in males. Once a male matures his urine takes on a very distinctive and pungent odor. A male cat will spray vertical surfaces in an attempt to mark his territory. Neutering has been shown to eliminate this behavior in 90% of male cats.

3. Litter Box Avoidance: A cat will generally avoid their litter box for several reasons:

- Cats are very picky about cleanliness and if they feel that their litter is too soiled they may avoid it. Keep litter and trays clean.
- Your cat may not like a type of litter or litter pan. If you've changed litter recently and suddenly your cat is messing outside the litter box he may be telling you that he doesn't like the texture or scent of the new litter. A litter tray may not be large enough. You may need to experiment with different types of litter trays and litter to make your cat happy.
- Your cat may have had a bad experience while using the litter. It could have been from pain associated with declawing or a FLUTD. It may have been startled by a sudden loud noise for example the buzzing of the dryer. Try moving the litter to a new location that your cat doesn't associate with the unpleasant experience. You may also need to substitute the litter tray and litter.
- In multi cat household there may be territory disputes over the litter box. Provide separate litter boxes in different locations for each cat.
- Stress is another common factor. Your cat may be introduced to new situations (a move, new people in the home, pets etc). Don't get angry with your cat as it will only increase the stress level instead move litter tray to an area where it's quiet and where the cat feels comfortable. Try to recognize the source of the stress and research ways to help your kitty cope.
- A cat may return to the same site where it has eliminated before. The site must be cleaned thoroughly and once cleaned the area should be covered with a material that the cat finds unpleasant (such as foil) or sprayed with a cat repellent like citrus or a commercial product. There are a number of great sites on the internet that offer tips on how to clean cat urine.

4. Destructive Scratching

Cats don't understand the value we put on our home and household items, they are just looking for a place to scratch.

Scratching is a natural and necessary activity for cats for several reasons:

- Cat mark surfaces with scent glands located in their paws.
- Cats care for their claws by removing the outer sheath from their nails.
- A cat must stretch and flex their toes.

How to Prevent Destructive Scratching

You are not going to stop your cat from scratching but you can redirect her to appropriate surfaces. A scratching post needs to be tall or long enough for the cat to stretch the full length of her body with paws extended. It must be secure enough that it doesn't fall over or your cat may not return to it. If your cat is already destroying a surface choose a similar material for a scratching post cover. If she's scratching your couch she may prefer a post covered in fabric or carpet, if she's scratching your moldings she may prefer a post that is not covered and is made of wood for example. Place the scratch post in the area that she currently enjoys scratching. Make the area she had previously been scratching unattractive to her by covering it with a material she dislikes or spraying it with a cat repellent scent. The new post may be sprinkled with catnip or you can dangle her favorite string toy over it to induce play.

5. Aggressive Behavior

Scratching and biting: Many scratches on children are a result of improper handling. Children need to be taught that their cat is not a toy but a living creature that needs to be treated with respect. Just as they don't like to be forced to cuddle or be restricted either does their cat. Show them the proper way to hold a cat with her backside supported in the crook of their arm and her chest supported with front paws hanging over their other arm. When their cat begins to squirm in their arms it's time to let her down. Cats will push off with their hind legs to jump. Their hind toes stretch and their claws extend to get a better grip on the surface they're jumping off. Most cat scratches are not intentional but occur as a cat struggles to jump down.

There are several reasons your cat may be intentionally scratching or biting.

- She may have had an unpleasant experiences and it's a warning to stay away.
- You may pick her up at a time when she's just encountered a stressful situation and she's still in fear or fight mode and may display aggression.

Feline behavior is complex. Researching cat behavior and problem solving may provide solutions. If you decide to re-home your cat be honest with inquirers or shelters. You would not want to be responsible for an injury to another person and there is a possibility that she could be harshly disciplined by a new owner for her behavior.

Children should never be left unsupervised with any pet.

Play Aggression: Some cats have strong prey instincts that may be acted out in play. The most common form of aggression is play aggression. It includes stalking, pouncing and mock fighting and is completely normal. Kittens usually play with each other but will substitute you for another playmate. Divert your cat with toys and a spray bottle may make you less desirable. Playful cats do not usually break the skin or growl when they attack.

6. We're Pregnant!

Pregnancy/Newborn Child

Many pregnant women learn that they should not scoop or clean their cats litter because of Toxoplasmosis.

Toxoplasma are single celled organisms that live in the organs of animals and can be transmitted to humans via undercooked meat, contact with infected animals or in soil. Cats become infected by eating birds and small animals then pass the parasite on in their feces. Toxoplasmosis is a disease that can be transferred from mother to fetus. The infection can cause premature birth or death of the fetus as well blindness, heart and brain defects. Toxoplasmosis can be avoided by having someone else change the litter, washing hands and vegetables well and avoiding undercooked meat.

Pregnancy, the Newborn and your Cat

It's important to prepare your cat for the changes necessary for living with baby. By adjusting routines everyone can live happily together.

Preparing your cat for the Newborn

If you need to change your cat's routine it's important to make changes *months before* the baby arrives so she doesn't associate changes with your newborn's arrival. Set nursery room rules, if you plan to move her food or litter or contain her in an area while baby is sleeping start changes before your baby arrives. Once baby is born bring home some clothing to get kitty used to her scent.

Once Baby comes Home

Baby's arrival usually brings a bustle of activity. You may find your cat has gone in hiding. When things quiet down she may creep over to investigate. Let her check things out. You will most likely find that once the crying starts she will avoid the baby. Babies nap time causes most concern from new parents. Many still see a cat as an evil creature that sucks the breath from sleeping babies. This myth dates back to the 1600's and may have been used to explain sudden infant death syndrome when no other explanations were available. Cats may seek out the baby's crib but it's the comforting heat from the baby they are attracted to. Cats pose a danger as they may snuggle too close to baby's face and obstruct breathing. Keep your cat from the sleeping baby.

7. My Cat is Pregnant!

Options for the Pregnant Cat Owner

Some people will have ethical objections to the information provided. This information is based on facts and each cat owner will make choices based on their own beliefs and circumstances. Shelters are very aware that in this province many pregnant cats and kittens are abandoned each year and unwanted litters are still being drowned as a means of animal control. This practice is recognized as being inhumane and is illegal.

Why drowning is not euthanasia

The word euthanasia is derived from the Greek terms eu (good) and thanatos (death). A good death is described as one that causes minimal pain and distress. Euthanasia techniques should render an animal rapidly unconscious with minimal stress and pain before death. The most widely considered humane method for euthanizing animals is with the intravenous injection of a concentrated barbiturate delivered by a veterinarian.

Researchers believed that while an animal drowned, the rising carbon dioxide pressure levels in its body caused a state of narcosis, a deep drug induced stupor. In a state of narcosis it was believed that an animal would not feel the pain of drowning. Further research showed that once carbon dioxide levels in the drowned animals were actually measured, the levels were not high enough to cause narcosis and were twice as low as needed to cause true anesthesia or

unconsciousness. The conclusion of the research was that the drowned animals suffered the pain of hypoxia (low oxygen) and anoxia (no oxygen) long before the effects of the Carbon dioxide caused narcosis, if it caused narcosis at all. Tests results also showed high blood levels of epinephrine (adrenalin) which results from stress. Some of the stress resulted from the body's response to cold water but the greatest cause was from the lack of oxygen.

If you consider the anxiety that most cats display from being given a simple bath you can consider the panic they exhibit as they are forced under water. Drowning survivors describe intense pain in the trunk part of their body and in their lungs as they try to restrain from breathing, the stabbing pain the water pressure causes in their eyes and ears, and finally the feeling that they are going to die as they can no longer fight the impulse to breath and water enters their lungs and stomach. Unconsciousness does not come rapidly or with minimal distress.

The American Veterinary Medical Association's statement on drowning is that drowning is not a means of euthanasia and is inhumane. The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association supports the recommendations of the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia.

Get her spayed while she is pregnant.

It is safe in most circumstances to go ahead and get her spayed. Most experienced veterinarians will spay a cat in early to middle stages of pregnancy. Some will spay at any stage. The unborn kittens are removed along with her uterus. Unborn kittens die as a result of detachment from blood supply. A pregnant spay will be more costly than a regular spay as it is more time consuming and complicated.

Remember: Female cats can become pregnant while they are still nursing a litter. They also need to wait until their teats are free of milk once their kittens are gone before they can be spayed. She will need to be kept separate from intact males while she is nursing and while she is waiting to be spayed to prevent another pregnancy. She will need to be kept separate from males 10-14 days after her surgery.

Taking new born kittens from mother

Kittens can be euthanized, by a veterinarian, as early as one day old. Euthanasia is much cheaper at that age and the cost is minimal. There are risks involved. The mother cat will exhibit signs of stress as her mind and body have been preparing for motherhood. The mother cat will still produce milk for her kittens and her teats may become engorged. This is painful for the cat and there is a risk that mastitis will develop. Mastitis is a bacterial infection in the mammary gland that needs to be treated immediately by a veterinarian. Signs of mastitis are: Redness, discharge, fever, bloody or thick yellowed milk, and lethargic behavior, loss of appetite, weight loss and dehydration.

Reducing the litter

Reducing litter size instead of euthanizing the whole litter will reduce stress on the mother. There will be fewer kittens to care and find homes for.

Placing the Kittens

Kittens should stay with mom until they are at least eight to twelve weeks old. Many people believe that kittens can be placed once they are eating solid food or when mom seems irritated by her kittens. This is a crucial time for social and behavioral development for kittens. Her displays of aggression are her way of teaching her kittens that they are playing too rough.

Mother's milk provides kittens with the nutrition they need for development. Her milk also contains antibodies that protect kittens against disease. Kittens need that protection until we can protect them with vaccinations at 8 weeks of age. Many health and behavioral problems in cats can be associated with being taken from their mom too early.

Before you give a kitten away there are some questions you need to ask the potential adopter. Find out some history of pets they've owned in the past. Having many pets for short period shows lack of lifetime commitment to pets. Check veterinary records to confirm if other pets received veterinary care. Check with landlords to see if they allow pets. Do home visits. Free to a good home offers put your kittens at risk of being acquired on impulsive by irresponsible people. Consider charging a fee for the kittens. This will help to weed out impulsive adopters who have not considered the commitment they are making.