



ENRICHMENT FOR YOUR CAT

The information in this booklet is intended as a general guide only

For the safety of your new cat and the native wildlife, AWL Qld recommends that you try to keep your cat mostly indoors. In order to keep your 'mostly indoor' cat happy in mind and health, it is therefore important to provide him with proper enrichment. Pet owners tend to be very good at providing enrichment for their companion dogs, but often fail to see the importance of providing enrichment for their cats as well!

There are four main types of enrichment that you can provide your cat; Touch or patting (which is discussed in the Happy Cats booklet 'Understanding your Cat'), food enrichment, play enrichment and environmental enrichment. Below we have outlined some great ideas for these types of enrichment.

Food Enrichment

Cats were designed to hunt and use their sensory abilities, including sight, hearing and their problem-solving minds. However, we bore them to bits by feeding them food which does not move and we give it to them at the same time everyday, in a bowl. How boring! Cats need to be challenged to keep their minds and their bodies healthy. An excellent way to do this is to use food enrichment tools. Keep in mind however, that not all cats will respond to food enrichment and it is best used with cats who are highly 'food driven'.

Scatter Feeds

This is a great way to get a cat to use its brain - it is a feeding method that is often used in zoos for the same



reason. To scatter feed simply take a portion of the cat's daily dry feed and scatter it on the floor in front of the cat. Before you scatter the food, get your cat to focus on you so they can see where you place the food. Cats are attracted to movement, so this will also encourage them to go for the food.

Kongs and Activity Balls

These are specially made food enrichment tools. They come in a variety of sizes, colours and patterns. They work by placing dry food inside, and as the cat rolls it around, the food falls out. You can purchase these from pet stores and even some supermarkets.



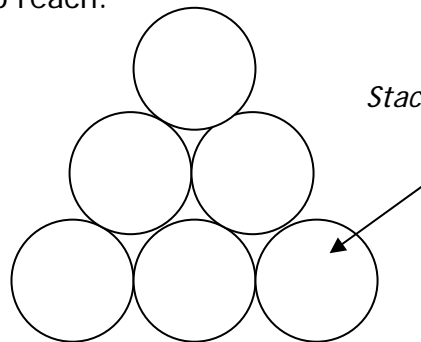
Bottles

This is like a home-made Kong. All you need to do is get a used water bottle that has been completely wash and dried out with all the labels taken off. Make a few holes around the outside, large enough so the dry food kibble can fall out (but not too large so it pours out!). You'll need about 10 holes for beginner cats. Fill the bottle half up with dry food, put the lid on and give it to the cat.



Feeding Pyramids

This feeding method provides excellent mental stimulation for a cat. You can make a feeding pyramid at home, all you need are 6 empty toilet rolls (or cut off some plastic piping for an even stronger version) and some masking or sticky tape. Stack the toilet rolls like a pyramid - three rolls to make a bottom row, two rolls for the next row on top and one roll on the top (see diagram below). Place a few dry cat food treats or a portion of the cat's dry feed in each roll. At first, place the food near the opening of each roll, then gradually as the cat gets used to this method of feeding, push the food further in so it is more challenging for the cat to reach.



Stack toilet (or pipe) rolls like this

Play Enrichment

Play is a fantastic way to bond with adult cats as well as kittens. It is important stimulation and exercise for your cat and is a great for releasing frustration, boredom communication and learning.

Play is a tool to help not only the cat, but also the relationship between cat and human companion. In play, a relationship develops between the cat and

the person, with the person entering the cat's world and following the cat's lead, helping to form a relationship of trust.

Homemade Cat Toys

You don't need to spend a lot of money to provide play toys for cats. You can easily make them at home from recycled materials. Below are some examples:

Paper Ball

Take an A4 piece of scrap paper and roll it tightly between your palms. The ball works best on a hard surface such as tiles or a wooden floor. Roll the paper ball along the floor near the cat until it attracts its attention. Once the cat notices the ball he will probably start chasing it and batting it between his front paws.



Above: Ping-pong balls work especially well on hard floor surfaces

Ping Pong Cat Ball

Ping pong balls make the perfect toy for your cat. He will just love chasing it along the floor (especially if it is a hard surface such as a polished wooden floor.) Because they are small however, they will easily get lost under furniture, so you may need to buy a few.

Paper Bag Toy

Find a paper shopping bag (NOT a plastic one!) and leave it open somewhere in the middle of the room. Cats are very curious and love to investigate anything new in the room. It won't take long for your cat to come over and begin to inspect the paper bag and then start to have a play around with it.



Above: Cats love to explore empty paper bags

String Cat Toy

All cats love to chase a bit of dangling string. You can use any piece of string such as wool or twine, but you must always be there to drag the string along - never leave your cat alone to play with the string, as he could get caught up and choked by it.



Right: Simple, yet effective - a piece of string, yarn or ribbon.

Environmental Enrichment

Climbing, Heights and Hiding

Cats love to climb and perch up high. You can allow your cat to climb onto furniture or shelving or get specially made cat climbing equipment such as a cat scratching post. Cats don't see their environment in two dimensional space as we do, they see it three dimensionally and are always looking for ways to use all the space in their environment.

Help them explore by providing access to heights. Heights can also help insecure cats feel more relaxed. Combine heights with hiding spots to provide a stimulating environment. If you have more than one cat, provide many perching areas around your home.

Cats love to hide, and if you have a number of cats in your home it is essential you provide adequate numbers of hiding places also. Take an empty box, turn it upside down and cut a 'doorway' into the box. Put the box on the ground. If your cat doesn't immediately go inside the box, get a piece of scrap paper, roll it into a ball and throw it into the box while your cat is watching. You can also make holes in the top of the box and thread string through the hole tying a knot at each end. Once your cat is in the box you can pull the string and watch your cat pull it back - tug-of-war!



Above: Cats love to explore empty cardboard boxes!

Scratching Posts

Scratching posts are another good way of providing your cat with high perches and landings to climb up onto. They also have the benefit of providing your cat with a good spot to scratch and stretch.

Scratching posts vary in quality and price and as a general rule - you get what you pay for. The best ones are handmade and built from solid timber covered in a durable carpet. Picutred below is an



example of the 'cheap and nasty' scratching posts readily available from the 'two-dollar' shops and pet stores. These generally don't last long and cats don't like to use them much anyway because they are not sturdy and therefore make the cat feel insecure.

In the long run you are better off investing in something that is of better quality, even if it is a bit more of an expense.



Above: Cut a hole in the side so the cat can squeeze inside and then some holes in the side or top of the box so you can poke toys through or dangle string for a fun play session!

If you require further advice or help with your new companion cat, please contact the AWL Education Division on (07) 5509 9032 or education@awlqld.com.au