

Top Tips to Keep Your Cat in Purrfect Health

To help owners keep their cats healthy, NutriCat and The Feline Advisory Bureau have developed the below Top Tips to Keep Your Cat in Purrfect Shape. These tips are also available on the NutriCat website at www.nutricat.com

- 1. Ensure your cat is vaccinated**

Always get your cat vaccinated against common cat diseases – cat flu, feline enteritis and feline leukaemia virus. Talk to your vet about regular booster vaccinations to keep your cat safe.
- 2. Take your cat for regular health checks**

An annual health check is recommended for all cats to discuss vaccination, flea or worm treatment and any health or behaviour queries you may have. Cats are masters of disguise when it comes to showing that they are ill or in pain – it can be very easy to miss. Always take your cat to the vet if you are worried about its health.
- 3. Treat your cat for fleas and worms regularly**

Fleas and worms are common in cats, especially those who go outside and hunt. There are many excellent preparations which make treatment easy. Always use a product made specifically for cats. There are some dog spot-on flea products which are extremely toxic to cats. If in doubt ask your vet.
- 4. Ensure you feed your cat a nutritionally balanced diet**

Cats are obligate carnivores with unique dietary requirements and should always be fed good quality diets. If you want to give your cat a treat make sure it is one designed specifically for cats. If you plan to change your cat's diet, do it gradually to avoid causing stomach upset. Changes in appetite can be a sign of illness – check with your vet if you are worried.
- 5. Make sure your cat has access to clean fresh water**

Although cats fed on tinned food are likely to get moisture from their diets, all cats, irrespective of whether they are fed wet or dry diets, should have access to clean fresh water. Some cats enjoy running water rather than still water in a bowl and a pet water fountain may encourage drinking. Changes in drinking behaviour can also be a sign of illness – check with your vet if you are worried.
- 6. Monitor your cat's weight regularly**

Loss of weight may be the first sign that something is wrong with your cat. Ideally cats should be weighed twice a year – this can also be done at a veterinary check-up. Make sure you note down your cat's weight and keep it safe – slow changes can be difficult to spot until you do the sums! Some cats may put on weight after being neutered. Also remember that cats weigh around 3 – 5 kg, so even a change of 300g is large compared to average body weight. The Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA) website has a Pet Size-O-Meter which can help you decide if your cat is over or under weight.
- 7. Look out for behaviour changes**

Cats are excellent at hiding when they are ill, so owners have to be detectives and pick up on small clues. If your cat has changes in temperament, behaviour (such as use of its litter tray) or activity, don't ignore these – always check with your vet. You may pick up problems early before they become serious.
- 8. Understand your cat's preferences**

All cats are different – some love cuddles, others will be stressed if owners try to pick them up; some cats enjoy meeting people, others do not. Some cats do not like other cats and if they are living in a multicat household they may need places to hide and escape to, such as high places to perch. They may need additional resources such as extra places to eat or extra litter trays to reduce the stress of competing with other cats.
- 9. Play with your cat**

Play is great exercise for cats and keeps them lively physically and mentally. This is especially important for cats kept indoors who can become bored and prone to weight gain. Find out what sort of play and toys your cat likes or even make some simple toys – you will both enjoy the game and the interaction.
- 10. Look at your cat afresh**

Cats can live with us for a long time – often 14 years or more. Sometimes they become part of the furniture and changes can be missed. Look at your cat anew; check it over when you groom or stroke it. Older cats can suffer from the pain of arthritis and can be helped with medication. Teeth problems can also be common in cats. Weight changes can be easy to miss because of a fluffy coat. An obese cat can suffer from health problems such as diabetes, osteoarthritis, urinary tract problems and constipation; a thin cat can be losing weight because of a health problem.