



Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge

Responsible cat ownership

An introductory guide
to a good life for cats



Responsible pet ownership

Before you bring an animal into your life, take time to consider it carefully. Regardless of the species, pet ownership comes with major responsibilities.

Do you have time to give your animal enough attention and stimulation? Have you considered the average lifespan of the animal you're thinking of getting? You need to have time not just now, but for many years to come.

Do you have knowledge about the animal's needs and what it takes to give it a good life?

Have you considered the cost of owning a pet? Food and equipment are ongoing expenses. In addition, you are obligated to take the animal to the veterinarian when needed. Veterinary treatment is expensive, and we therefore recommend health insurance for all animals.

Do you travel frequently for work or vacations? Do you have friends or family who can help with pet care, or are you dependent on boarding at a pet hotel? If so, this is a cost that must be included in your planning.

An animal is not a toy, so even if there are children in the family who want a pet, an adult must take full responsibility for its care. Children under 16 years of age are not legally allowed to be responsible for animals on their own.

You are also responsible if your pet becomes pregnant and has offspring. Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge therefore recommends that all cats and rabbits be neutered and microchipped. This prevents homelessness and can also protect animals from serious illnesses and cancer.





The cat

Cats are naturally social and often enjoy the company of humans and other cats. Just like with other animals, personalities vary between individuals and breeds. This also applies to activity levels and need for attention.

Cats are known for being independent and for hunting birds and small rodents. Many believe that cats can fend for themselves in Norwegian nature, which is incorrect. Cats are not suited for outdoor life in Norway during winter and are dependent on a responsible owner to live a good life.

Important to know when getting a cat

Cats can live up to 15–20 years. Female cats typically become sexually mature from 4–5 months of age and can have 2–6 litters per year throughout their lives. Female cats do not need to have kittens to live a good life. Pregnancy and giving birth put a great strain on their bodies, and since it can be difficult to find homes for kittens, The Norwegian Society for Protection of Animals (Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge) highly recommends that family cats be neutered.

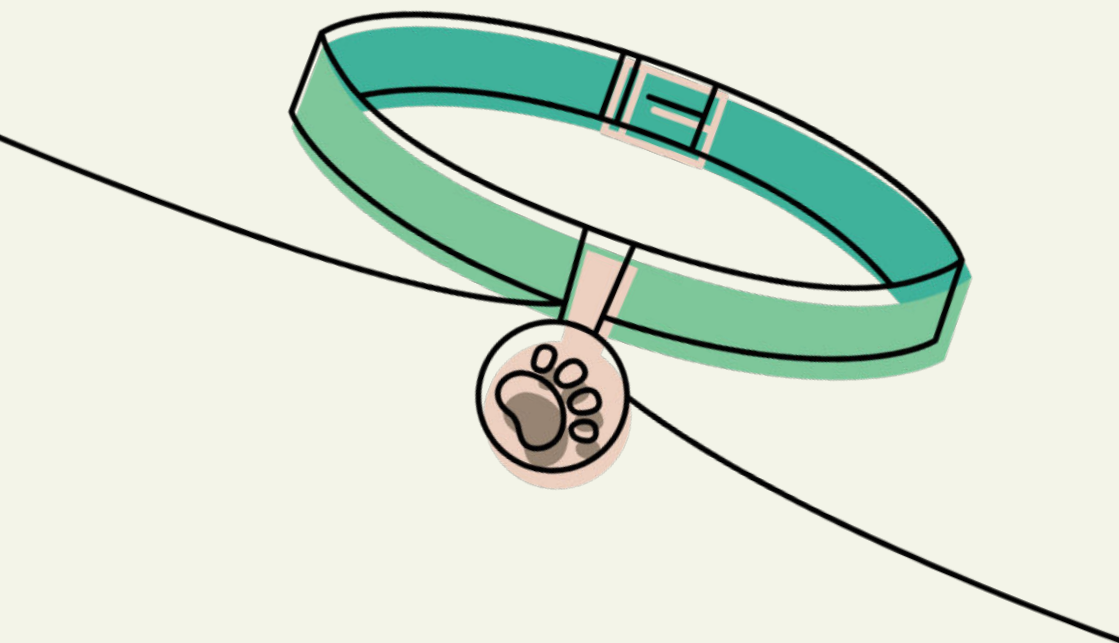
We also recommend that all cats be microchipped. In that case, if a cat goes missing or gets injured, it is

possible to find the owner. Animals with a microchip are registered in a national database called DyreID. It is important to keep your contact information up to date.

Some people choose to ID-mark their cats with a collar that includes the owner's name and phone number. This can be a good supplement to a microchip, but it does not replace it. Collars can fall off, and the cat then loses its identification. If using a collar, it must have a quick-release buckle to prevent the cat from getting caught and possibly injured. Reflective collars are also recommended to make the cat more visible to drivers at night.

Cats are most at risk of accidents between dusk and dawn - this is also when they hunt the most. Keeping your cat indoors during these hours protects both the cat and vulnerable wildlife.

Outside cats that are not neutered or microchipped are the main cause of homeless cats in Norway. These cats reproduce and create feral cat populations. They live harsh lives and are prone to disease and injury. These diseases often spread to family cats and can cause serious illnesses. Neutering and microchipping are important measures to prevent suffering and homelessness.





Kittens

Kittens should stay with their mother until they are at least 12 weeks old. During this time and shortly after moving to a new home, it's important to socialize them. Socialization is key to a good life and reduces the risk of behavioral problems.

Socialization involves environmental training - introducing the kitten to new things in a fun and playful way. This can include vacuum cleaners, crates, car rides, children, dogs, and handling. Training should be adapted to the individual cat, and reward-

based methods encourage learning. A cat's sense of direction is not fully developed until about one year of age. Therefore, kittens should be gradually introduced to the outdoors. A kitten should be well socialized with its family and familiar with its home before being let outside alone.

Kittens should not roam freely outside until they are closer to one year old. Kittens that are not neutered and microchipped should never be let outside.

Accidents can happen

Kittens are curious and less cautious than adult cats.

It's not uncommon for cats to burn themselves on hot stoves or irons or lick sharp knives with food residue. Some kittens have even fallen into toilets and drowned.

Cats can also ingest toxic chemicals from kitchens, bathrooms, and garages - such as drain cleaner or antifreeze - or eat poisonous plants from your home such as Lillies.



They can injure themselves or hide in dangerous places, such as:

- In fireplaces
- Inside sofas
- In washing machines or dryers
- Under the hood or on the wheels of cars
- In closets or drawers



Health

To protect your cat from diseases, we recommend regular vaccinations. Vaccinating outdoor cats not only protects them but helps prevent the spread of disease between cats.

Sudden illness requiring veterinary care can be expensive. By having insurance, you make costs more predictable and easier to manage.

Pet sitting

If you're going away, you must find someone to care for your cat. Cats need food, water, and daily supervision. They should be checked for injury or illness and receive some social interaction.

Many choose to let the cat stay at home and arrange for a pet sitter to visit daily. Alternatively, the cat can stay at a cat boarding facility. These require up-to-date, approved vaccinations.

If you bring your cat along on vacation or to a sitter's home, make sure it stays indoors and only goes outside on a leash. If you are traveling abroad, we recommend leaving your cat at home. If you still plan to bring it, check the travel rules carefully. You can find more information at the Norwegian Food Safety Authority's website (www.mattilsynet.no). These strict

regulations help prevent disease transmission to animals and humans.

What does a cat need?

Cats need space to move and like to climb and jump. They also need a resting area where they can be alone if they want to, often with a good view of the surroundings.

A transport crate is essential – for visits to veterinary clinics, general transport and in case of a fire and other emergencies. Train your cat gradually to accept the crate. Keep it open with a soft blanket inside and let your cat get used to it as a hiding or resting place. Offer treats inside the crate to create a positive experience.

Cats need a litter box indoors. They prefer to bury their waste, so high-sided boxes with enough litter are ideal. Cats are particular about cleanliness - if they stop using the box, check for issues like bad smells, overcrowding, or proximity to food bowls. Some cats also dislike sharing a litter box.

Cats need to sharpen their claws, so a scratching post is important to protect furniture. Add toys to the post to make it more attractive. Cats like to stretch upward, so make sure the post is tall enough.







Provide one bowl for water and one for food, placed in a quiet area. Clean them daily. Cats are obligate carnivores and need protein from meat and fish. Quality dry food designed for cats will meet their nutritional needs. Follow the portion instructions.

Kittens need special kitten food with different nutrients than adults. Many cats do well with free feeding - leaving out the daily portion to eat throughout the day. If your cat is overweight, consider portioning or using lower-calorie food. Your veterinarian can help you choose the right type and amount of food. Most cats get diarrhea from milk, so avoid dairy products.

Cats often eat grass and then vomit - it helps them get fiber and remove hairballs. Indoor cats should be offered cat grass or bamboo, available at pet or garden stores. Some houseplants are toxic and should be avoided.

Cats tolerate cold weather poorly. Cats that are allowed outside during the cold winter months must have the opportunity to come indoors whenever they wish. It is therefore not acceptable to leave a cat outside in the cold all day while you are at work, or all night while you are sleeping.

Social contact and stimulation

Kittens who experience positive human interaction early in life usually enjoy social contact later too. Learn to understand cat body language and respect their boundaries. A predictable and calm environment will help your cat feel safe and build trust.

Indoor cats benefit from having feline companions, giving them a chance to be social if they want to. Cats need activity. Play is a great way to engage their hunting instincts. You can buy toys or make them from items like toilet rolls. Be cautious with string toys—some cats swallow string, which can damage the digestive tract.

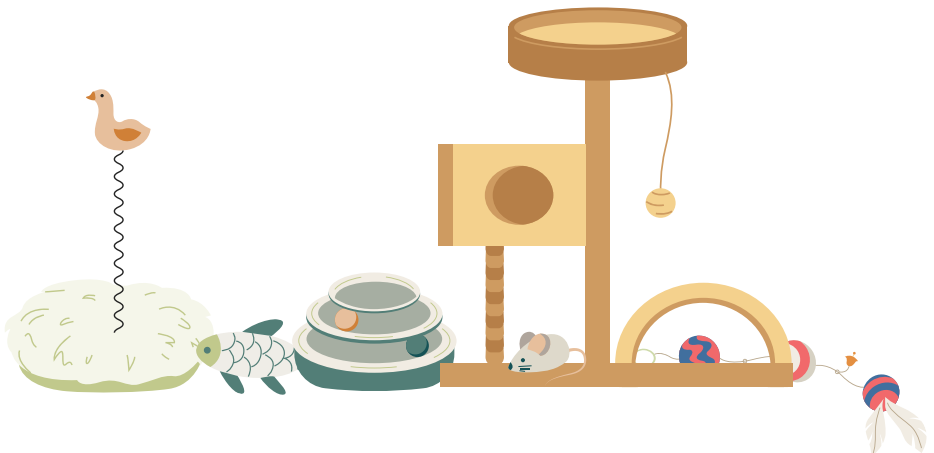
If your cat is bored, it may become frustrated, leading to unwanted

behavior such as fear, aggression, biting, inside urination, or scratching. If your cat shows any of these behaviors, consult a veterinarian to rule out illness.

Grooming

Cats groom themselves well but appreciate help — especially long-haired cats or those that shed heavily. Daily brushing removes excess hair and prevents hairballs. Cats rarely need bathing or nail trimming.

Regularly check your cat's eyes, ears, and mouth to ensure everything looks normal. Brushing their teeth helps prevent dental issues.





Signs of illness

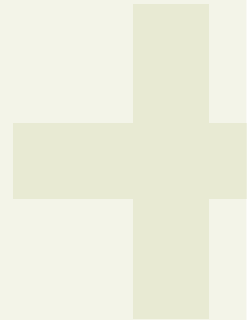
Unusual behavior may signal pain or discomfort. Cats show this in different ways—some may become aggressive, others more affectionate, and some may hide. If you think something is wrong, contact a veterinarian.

Breeding

Breeding for appearance often leads to health problems in cats. Flat-faced breeds like Persians suffer from breathing difficulties. Other traits—like folded ears, short tails, or lack of fur—also cause suffering and disease. Avoid supporting such breeding by not purchasing cats with extreme anatomy.

Signs of illness or injury include:

- Loss of appetite
- Drinking more than usual
- Weight loss
- Frequent vomiting
- Diarrhea, constipation, or hard stools
- Urinating often or difficulty urinating
- Runny eyes or nose
- Sneezing, coughing, or labored breathing
- Limping or wobbling
- Excessive scratching
- Bad breath
- Lumps on the body or in the mammary glands
- A white membrane partially covering the eye





For more information about animal care and cat welfare:



- The Norwegian Animal Welfare Act
- The Norwegian Food Safety Authority's guide on cat care
- The book "Katten. Atferd og velferd" by Bjarne O. Braastad



Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge

Would you like to support our work for animals in need?

The Norwegian Society for Protection of Animals (NSPA) is the only nationwide animal welfare organization in Norway that provides hands-on help to animals in need. Every day, all year round, our local branches work to rescue animals from homelessness and neglect.

We also run Lisaklinikken, Norway's only free veterinary clinic for people facing financial difficulties. Here, animals receive the veterinary care they need, and all treatment is completely free of charge.

In addition, Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge works to improve welfare for all animals. We engage in political advocacy and fight for laws that give animals more rights and better protection.

If you would like to contribute to a better future for animals,
scan this QR code:



Learn more about NSPA at www.dyrebeskyttelsen.no