Feline Safety Tips
from Friends for Life Animal Rescue, Gilbert AZ

Keep Your Cat Indoors

Friends for Life believes all cats should live indoors.

* An indoor cat lives a longer, healthier life than a cat who lives outdoors.
* Indoor cats reach the age of 20; outdoor-only cats survive an average of only 2 years.
* Cats raised indoors are perfectly content with their world. They feel loved and cared for. They don't know they are can go out so they do not feel they are missing anything.

"I like being indoors. It's safe, cozy, and I have my own private view of my kingdom!"

"I agree. Except it's MY kingdom."

"Huh? I thought it was mine!"

"Whatever. Just give me a lap."

Hershey, Skippy, Smurf, and Mr. O, available for adoption from Friends for Life

If you feel your cat must go outside:

* Consider a screened-in enclosure or cat-proof netting added to the top of traditional yard fencing.
* The most successful structures feature climbing and resting furniture inside, as long as they cannot be used for your cat to escape the enclosure.
* Provide a shaded area and plenty of water.
* Regardless of the type of enclosure you provide, remember your kitty is safest only when you are at home and outdoors too or able to check on her often.
* Do some research before you build a cat enclosure.

In the summer heat…

* NEVER leave your cat in a parked car, even in the shade or with the windows open. A car becomes a furnace in seconds. A cat's normal body temperature is 101F and overheating can be fatal.
* Remember the pavement can get too hot for a cat outside. If it is too hot for you to hold your hand on for more than a few seconds, it's much too hot for your cat's paws.
* Be sensitive to older or overweight kitties. They have a difficult time regulating their body temperatures.
* If you see a cat in heat stress….**contact a vet immediately!**

Signs of heat stress in cats may include:

* Excessive panting
* Salivation
* Collapse
* Diarrhea
* Vomiting

* Increased, thumping heart rate
* Depression
* Stupor or appearing in a daze
* Seizures
* Coma

In 7 years, one female cat and her offspring can produce 420,000 cats.

* Spay or neuter your cat. It keeps cats healthy and prevents the urge to roam.
* Leave a collar and id tag on your cat at all times. You never know when she may accidentally get out.
* Also consider getting a microchip for your cat. If she does get out, her collar may get caught on something and break loose.
* Keep up to date on vaccinations.

Free-Roaming and Feral Cats

Free-roaming and feral cats are a problem in our community. Free-roaming cats are previously owned cats who have been abandoned or gone missing. A feral cat is a cat who has had little or no human contact during its natural life.

Friends for Life joins animal control agencies and rescue groups across the country in a humane and effective program that includes:
* Community education about spay/neuter and keeping tame cats indoors
* Adoption of tame strays into new homes
* Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) to managed colonies for feral cats

Through TNR, cats are humanely trapped and sterilized. Feral cats are unadoptable and, therefore, placed back into the environment in which they were living. Volunteer caregivers provide food, water, and clean, unobtrusive shelter for the cats. Eventually, through natural attrition, the colony dies out.

In the summer heat…

It is especially important to have fresh water available and shelter from the sun for feral cats. Cats travel so much and can get tired before they realize it. Then it may be too late, and they can't get back to their shade and water. If you maintain a feral feeding station, keep this in mind. If you observe feral cats that you think are at risk, notify a facility that has 24 hour emergency service, such your local animal care and control agency or emergency hospitals located throughout Valley.

Some content adapted from http://www.maricopa.gov/Pets/Education.aspx (5/19/08)