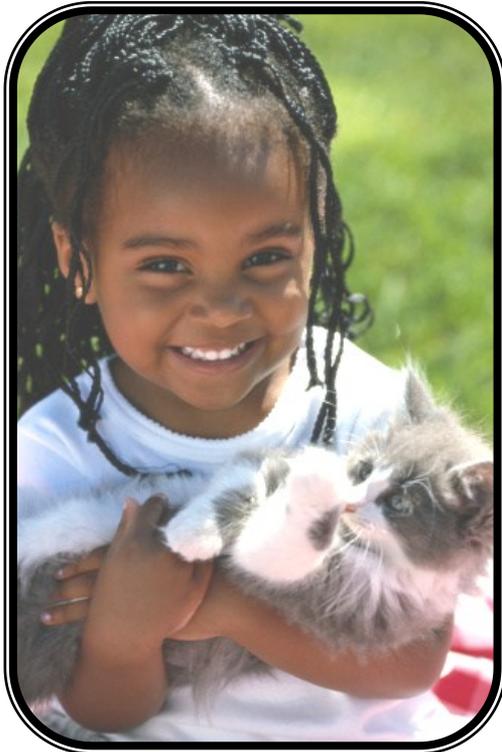


# Cats Are Adorable Pets!



## Tips for owning a cat in unincorporated Harris County



Harris County  
**Public Health**  
Building a Healthy Community

Veterinary Public Health

## ***Cats make wonderful pets!***

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Congratulations on being one of the millions of cat owners. Cats and kittens are wonderful, affectionate pets. They're fun, playful, and beautiful but like all pets they need care. Here are some helpful tips to keep your cat healthy and happy for a lifetime of companionship.

## ***Identification—Collars, Tags & Microchips!***

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All pets, including cats, need to wear current identification. Because cats are so curious and get into very small spaces, identification tags should only be attached to special cat collars. These collars are made to stretch and allow your cat to escape if they get hung on something. Your cat should always wear a cat collar and current identification tags.

Consider micro-chipping your cat. A very small chip (about the size of a grain of rice) is implanted under the skin. This chip can be read with a special scanner. Contact HCPHES Veterinary Public Health at 281-999-3191 for details.



***Microchip***

## ***Inside Cats are Safest!***

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Harris County Regulations require all cats and dogs to be restrained at all times. This means they are not allowed to run loose in the neighborhood. The safest place for your cat is inside your home.

To keep your cat happy:

- Have plenty of toys available. Paper bags, empty egg cartons & ping pong balls will keep your pet interested and active.
- Consider getting two cats who will keep each other company and provide hours of chase and play for each other.

## ***Spay/Neuter***

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Spaying females and neutering males is the best way to prevent the birth of unwanted kittens. Spaying and neutering are surgical operations performed by a licensed veterinarian.

Spay/neuter also offers many health benefits including less cancers and infections.

Unaltered females will attract local tom cats and males will cry loudly during the night, get into fights, and urinate to mark territory.



Having your pet spayed or neutered is a very important step in being a responsible cat owner.

## ***Medical Care***

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All cats need regular veterinary care.

- Kittens, like puppies, should have several sets of kitten shots, deworming and spay/neuter. State law requires all cats to have a rabies shot by 4 months of age.
- Yearly checkups, and wellness exams are needed for healthy adult cats.
- Older cats may need to see their veterinarian more frequently.
- Flea prevention is critical in our climate and there are many great products at your veterinarians office.

Cats can become very quiet when they are ill so it's easy to miss unless you are paying close attention. Signs can include not eating or drinking, or drinking more than is normal. If your cat's behavior changes you should talk to your veterinarian.

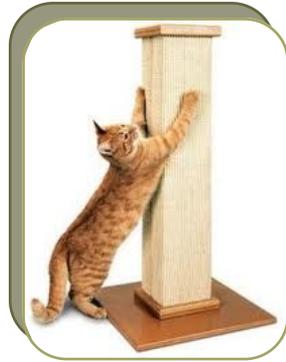
## ***Training***

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Most cats are trained to use the litter box when you take them home. You should be careful to put the kitten's litter box in a safe, quiet place, away from the hustle and bustle of the house.

You can also train your pet to do tricks, come when called and respond to a clicker. There are many books in your local library or online sites that can show you how.

Teach your cat to scratch on a cat scratch post. These posts are available in stores or online, or you can make one with some carpet remnants. To encourage your cat to use a scratching post, rub some catnip into the carpeting or sisal of the post or drag a favorite toy up the side to get your cat started.



## ***Introducing a New Cat***

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If you already have a cat in the home, introduce a new cat slowly.

- Put the new cat in a separate room and keep the door closed for a few days.
- Switch bedding between one cat and the other to give them time to smell the other cat and get used to it.
- Only allow supervised meetings at first. Provide plenty of attention and distraction so the cats experiences with each other are happy and pleasant.
- If a fight does break out, separate the cats with a squirt of water from a plant mister or squirt gun. Do not try to pick up an angry cat.



## ***Cat Supplies***

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You will need some basic supplies to keep your pet healthy, happy, and safe.

- A litter box—big enough for the entire cat to fit in. Not too high for a kitten to get in and out of easily. Cat litter should be about an inch deep and cleaned daily.
- Stretchy cat collar and identification tag
- Separate food and water bowls. Cats should have water available at all times. Food bowls should be put in a quiet place away from other pets, children, or high traffic areas.
- Hard-sided cat carrier—one carrier for each cat in the house. The carrier should be big enough for the cat to stand up, turn around, and lay down naturally.
- Cat bed. Most cats will sleep where they want—usually a very warm spot. You can encourage your cat to sleep where you want by providing a warm cat bed in a quiet part of the house.

## ***Nutrition***

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Cats need a balanced cat food diet. Dogs and cats have different food needs and dog food should not be fed to cats.

Cats should be fed commercially prepared cat food. Discuss the benefits of canned or dry food with your veterinarian. There are many cat food choices available at your local pet supply store or grocery mart.

Cats should not drink cows milk. Fresh, clean water is best for your pet to drink.

Don't feed your pet table scraps or 'people food'. Treats should be specific for cats.

## ***Cats & Dogs***

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Cats and dogs can be good friends.

Dogs should not be allowed to chase or put their mouths on cats. Do not let large dogs paw or lay on cats.



Remember, if your cat is used to dogs he will not be afraid of them. If your cat accidentally gets out of your house he may meet dogs that are not cat-friendly. Your pet will not know to avoid strange dogs and may end up seriously injured or killed.

Be very careful not to let your cat outside if he is used to dogs being around.

## ***Cats & Kids***

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Cats and children can be wonderful friends with just a few safety tips:

- Supervise young children and cats closely.
- Don't let small children hold cats. Toddlers like to grab and tightly hug. This leaves a cat with no way to get loose and they will scratch to protect themselves.
- Older children should be taught to sit quietly and let the cat come to them.
- Teach children to gently pet the cat under the chin or down the back of the neck.
- Show children how to use a cat toy with a handle to play with the cat. This will keep fingers away from the cat's claws.

Children should not pick up cats or try to play with them while the cat is eating or sleeping. The library is a good place to find books you can read with your children about cat care and safety.