

The great indoors

Longer evenings and the sun warming our faces: summer has arrived. As we go to print, we are in the middle of a pandemic, but we can at least get some exercise by going for a wander outside. Outdoor time is essential – and it's the same for our feline companions, right? Well, actually, that's not always the case.

A cat that's recovering from an operation may need to stay indoors temporarily, and those with health issues such as poor hearing or vision may need to stay indoors indefinitely for their own safety. Likewise, cats infected with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) should be kept inside the home and only allowed outside in a safe, enclosed garden so they can't come into contact with other cats. So what can you do to keep an indoor puss happy and safe?





The importance of play

All cats need a stimulating environment, and playtime will keep your cat fit and healthy, as well as encouraging a bond between you. Cats can get tired of seeing the same old toy, so it's best to have a variety that can be rotated to prevent boredom.

"We recommend games where the cats have to run about, such as fishing rod toys or little balls that they can bat around," says Tanya Madden, Mayhew's Deputy Head of Animal Welfare.

Cats are hunters by nature and are not designed to have their food handed to them on a plate, so you can also add interest at mealtimes with the use of food enrichment toys. Puzzle feeders, which need manipulating to release dry food, can help to keep your cat stimulated and less likely to show behaviours associated with boredom and frustration. If you fancy making your own feeding toy, you can find step-by-step instructions on our website: [themayhew.org/how-to-make-a-puzzle-feeder-for-your-cat](https://www.themayhew.org/how-to-make-a-puzzle-feeder-for-your-cat).

Bring the outside in

A useful tip to keep indoor cats happy is to grow cat grass for them to munch on. You could also get a window bed so your cat can safely watch the world go by.

The needs and welfare of our cats are assessed by Mayhew staff on an individual basis, and sometimes those cats that are considered indoor cats may actually be able to use outdoor spaces like gardens, patios or balconies if they're fully enclosed. To give your indoor cat safe access to the outdoors, you can secure your garden with specialised enclosures or cat-proof fencing from a reputable company such as ProtectaPet.



What is FIV?

FIV is a viral infection that causes cats to have a weakened immune system, leaving them more vulnerable to other diseases. It's usually transmitted through bite wounds from an infected cat, so unneutered cats, ferals and strays are most at risk due to their territorial fighting. According to International Cat Care, FIV is about twice as common in male cats as female. Although there is no vaccine in the UK to protect cats against FIV, you can greatly reduce your cat's risk of contracting and spreading FIV by neutering them, as it means they are less likely to roam and fight.

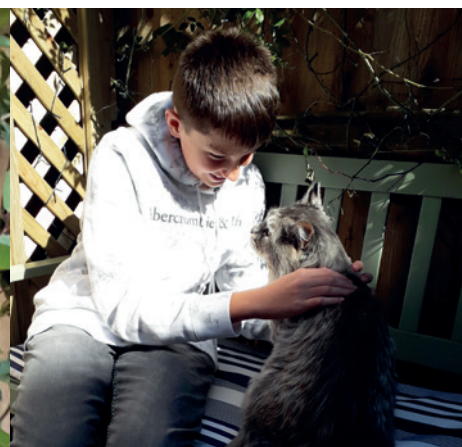
As FIV-positive cats are more vulnerable to other ailments, treatment is focused on the management of these if they occur – for example, vaccinating against cat flu and conducting routine dental care to avoid mouth infections. Like all cats, FIV-positive felines need a good diet and should have a veterinary consultation at least once yearly to identify any early signs of disease.

Although the infection is permanent, the prognosis is not all bad as long as it is carefully managed, says Mayhew's Senior Veterinary Surgeon Justin Ainsworth.

"FIV is a manageable infection, with many cats living healthy lives."

Justin Ainsworth, Senior Veterinary Surgeon





Under the spotlight: **Aslan**

Aslan, a stunning Norwegian forest cat with FIV, was snapped up by Chloe earlier this year, after just three weeks in our care.

"My heart pounded when I read Aslan's [story]," she says. "I don't know what it was that gripped me, but I knew Aslan was the one!"

Chloe knew very little about FIV, so Cat Adoption Officer Matthew talked her through the condition. "It didn't worry me or change my opinion about adopting a cat with FIV," Chloe adds.

As part of Mayhew's adoption process, adopters are interviewed and home-checked to ensure they are the right match. Mayhew Home Visitor Bev suggested to Chloe that Aslan could have access to the

garden if they could make it safe for him, so they installed cat-proof fencing and Chloe always supervises him when he's outside.

Chloe thinks the joy Aslan has brought her family has made the coronavirus lockdown much easier to cope with: "Aslan brings a smile to our faces every single day. We have said so many times recently, thank goodness we have Aslan!" The beloved puss can even tear Chloe's teenage sons away from their computer games – apparently he's the only family member who can do so!



Thinking of adopting an indoor mog?

Here's what you need to know:

- An indoor cat will rely on you for all stimulation, exercise and companionship.
- Keep them occupied with climbing towers or activity centres.
- Regularly rotate toys and offer puzzle feeders.
- Fully secure your garden or balcony and keep windows and doors shut to prevent escape.
- We recommend all cats – indoors or outdoors – are neutered, microchipped, vaccinated and given flea and worming treatment.

If you'd like to rehome a cat, please visit [themayhew.org/rehome](https://www.themayhew.org/rehome) or phone **020 8962 8000**.