

Basic Care – Cats

- Agile and seldom tolerate manipulation without response.
- Often exhibit territorial characteristics
- Unpredictable, demonstrating quicksilver changes in behavior, respond better when restraint is minimal.
- It is wise to back off from an enraged cat, let the animal relax until it is calm, then try again with a less stressful method of restraint.
- Domestic cats have distinctly retractable claws.
- A behavioral trait that is genetic (influenced by paternal heritage), is an attraction to catnip; approximately 50% of cats possess this trait.
- Cats can be group-housed in familiar groups.
- Communicate through scent marking
- Without proper early socialization, cats can be behaviorally undesirable.
- Enrichment should be provided unless specified in protocol and approved by the IACUC.
- Cats choose devices that supply motion and sound through which their predatory behaviors can be stimulated.
- Examples of enrichment:
 - Food treats
 - Cat nip
 - Climbing devices
 - Cardboard boxes
 - Paper sacks
 - Balls
 - Scratching post
- Male is called a Tom and the female is called a Queen.
- Females are seasonally polyestrous and induced ovulators.
- Cats are strict carnivores.
- Should be fed a high quality, commercially prepared diet that is nutritionally complete for each stage of life (eg., pregnancy, growth, and maintenance).
- Generally, both immature and adult cats should receive food and water ad libitum.
- Require a higher proportion of their calories as protein than most species.
- To restrain, place the palm of one hand on the cat's neck and firmly secure as much scruff as possible. Lift the cat and place the other hand beneath it's hindquarters toward the paws of the hind legs. Encircle the hind legs with the thumb and middle finger. Place the index finger between the two hind limbs to prevent them from squeezing together. The cat should be held upright, close to the handler's chest for support and facing away from the handler.
- Minimum cage/pen sizes are specific in the regulations and The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. Exceptions must be approved by the IACUC.
- For more specific information including physiologic data, husbandry and breeding requirements, or procedural information please contact the Office of Laboratory Animal Care (865-974-5634).