

THE BEHAVIOR CLINIC

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Enriching Your Cat's Environment

By Elizabeth S.M. Feltes, DVM

- Cats that are kept indoors all the time are in need of environmental enrichment. This means that their household needs to be modified to be able to engage their minds and bodies to be healthy pets.
- Multiple types of toys (hairbands, fishing pole-style toys, the cat dancer, balls, feather toys, etc.) increase the chance that your pet will be engaged in play.
- The best enrichment comes from you! These toys will be played with more consistently by your involvement. Spending 5-10 minutes playing *everyday* will help increase your cat's emotional health.
- Increasing vertical space for your cat to explore is easy. Cat perches, kitty condos and window seats all help increase the amount of square footage that your pet can use.
- Scratching posts help your pet exert this ingrained behavior (even declawed cats!) in a good way. Try vertical and horizontal varieties to increase the likelihood that your cat will find one that's right!
- Food-dispensing toys are a great way to lure cats into play! Treat balls (balls with holes that allow treats to roll out during play) & kongs are some common brands. A shirt box with 1.5" holes cut into it and baited with treats or kibble is an inexpensive option to try.
- Some pets enjoy the thrill of hunting by watching cat-designed videotapes, internet videos of bugs or having bird feeders placed near windows.
- Enjoy playing with your cat!