



## Cats as pets

Life expectancy: up to 20 years

### Costs

Animal	300-2000 CHF	Depends on breed and provenience
Initial costs	500-1000 CHF	Food and water dish, litter box, scratching post, various other installations (cat flap, ladder etc.) Veterinary costs for castration, vaccinations, worming
Yearly costs	ca. 1000 CHF	Food, cat litter, regular veterinary costs for vaccinations and worming, stays in animal pensions and shelters during holidays.
Varia	Unforeseen veterinary costs can greatly exceed the purchase-price of the animals.	

### Pedigree cat or house cat?

Even before deciding for cats as pets, future cat owners need to inform themselves thoroughly by asking experienced cat owners or cat specialists as well as by reading relevant literature. Pedigree cats and house cats do not differ greatly. Some breeds are a bit more active (Siamese), others a bit more sedate (Persians), but there are also many different character types of house cats, such as playful, affectionate or independent ones. Due to intensive breeding, pedigree cats can be affected by hereditary diseases. Some long-haired cat breeds cannot groom their own fur themselves sufficiently any more. To prevent felting, they have to be brushed daily, which they may not tolerate.

### Kitten or adult cat?

Kittens are very playful (and sometimes destructive), but in adult cats, the character is already well known.

### Where to buy, what to pay attention to?

Many adorable cats and kittens await a new owner and home in the animal shelters run by local animal protection organisations. Animal keepers and shelter employees are a competent source of advice. Most shelters place only animals that are vaccinated, castrated and treated against parasites such as worms. Most shelters also charge a fee and place a contract with the future owners of the animals. If an owner is eager to have a pedigree animal, it is advisable to visit several breeders and compare the conditions under which the kittens have grown up. Be careful when cats are cheap or if they are given away almost for free: these animals might originate from uncontrolled "mass production" without any health care or examination and without species-adequate housing and handling. This can lead to health problems and behavioural disorders later in life.

### What do cats need?

Cats need food twice a day, kittens much more often, and all cats need fresh water all the time. Since cats are pure carnivores, they can neither be fed on vegetarian food nor on leftovers of human food. Many types of ideally composed food are available commercially. Cows milk is no adequate cat food, since it leads to diarrhoea. However, cats always need access to cat grass to get rid of swallowed hair balls. The food bowl should neither be placed next to the toilet nor next to the water bowl. The toilet needs to be cleaned once or twice daily.

## Conspecifics

Socialised cats should enjoy contact with other cats. Socialised indoor cats should therefore not be kept alone. Kittens must stay with their mother and litter mates at least for 12 weeks. Thus they learn being social. Socialised cats will usually also display less behavioural disorders later in life.

## Space requirements

Indoor cats need to have permanent access to at least one room per cat, therefore there shouldn't be more than 3 cats in a three-room-flat. Outdoor cats should always be allowed into the house and not be shut out.

## Indoor cat or free-roaming cat?

Both types of housing cats have their disadvantages. Free roaming cats live in a variable and very interesting habitat, but are subjected to a wide range of risks, such as traffic accidents. Indoor cats should be kept indoors from birth. They live longer (only when comparing mean life expectancy) and less risky, but they are much more prone to behavioural disorders than free-roaming cats. The flat needs to be structured adequately and should offer at least some access to fresh air and sunshine on a secured balcony. The owner should interact frequently with the cats. The rooms can be structured by scratching posts, elevated look-outs, soft, dark and sheltered resting places and empty cardboard boxes as hideouts and opportunities to play. Whoever does not tolerate the cat on the new sofa should consider not keeping cats at all. Cats should be able to use all three dimensions of a room. Socialised indoor cats should not be housed singly. Beware unsecured balconies and bottom hung windows! Every year some cats are killed by such windows.

## Veterinary care

Annual veterinary consists of regular vaccinations and wormings, but also a general health check-up by the vet.

## Castration

Every responsible cat owner should have his/her cat castrated. Otherwise, cats bear litters twice a year, and over 10'000 unwanted kittens are cruelly killed every year in Switzerland, because they cannot be placed. Besides, many of these long-lived animals wait to be placed in animal shelters. Castrated cats do not become more obese or lethargic than uncastrated ones, and they stay proficient predators. They are also generally healthier. It is not necessary for a she-cat to have had kittens before castration. Castration at the age of 6 months is ideal, in adult cats winter (November through February) is optimal since the cats then are neither pregnant nor lactating.

## Cats and Holidays

Cats are preferably be left at home in their familiar surroundings and be cared for by a competent, reliable "cat-sitter". As an alternative, cats can also be brought to an animal shelter or pension, which costs 15-30 CHF per day. Abandoning animals is forbidden and can be punished with fines up to 20'000 CHF.

## Cats and Kids

Cats can become lovable partners for children. However, children cannot take care for a cat on their own. An adult needs to guide and supervise them. The cats need to be able to retreat from the children at any time, and they should not be held tight by the children. Small children and cats should never left alone at any time.

## Information and contacts

- Brochure: „cats“ (german, french, italian), guide booklet by Swiss Animal Protection SAP, can be ordered for free by sending a C5 post-paid envelope with your own address  
Swiss Animal Protection SAP / Schweizer Tierschutz STS, Dornacherstrasse 101, Postfach, 4008 Basel, helpdesk, advice (german, french, english), brochures and orders 061 365 99 99, Fax 061 365 99 90, [www.tierschutz.com](http://www.tierschutz.com), [sts@tierschutz.com](mailto:sts@tierschutz.com)
- „Alles für die Katz“ (german, french), booklet suitable for children by iemt, can be ordered for free at: IEMT, Institute for interdisciplinary research of human-animal interactions, Tel 01 388 91 44, Fax: 01 388 91 45, [kontakt@iemt.ch](mailto:kontakt@iemt.ch)
- [www.tierschutz.com/heimtiere.html](http://www.tierschutz.com/heimtiere.html) (german)
- [www.katzen.org](http://www.katzen.org) (Forum for cat-lovers, Switzerland, german, french)
- [www.iemt.ch](http://www.iemt.ch) (german, french)

SPONSOR: ANIMAL TRUST