



## **Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**

### **ENRICHING YOUR CAT'S ENVIRONMENT**

#### *WHY IS ENRICHMENT IMPORTANT?*

Animals that are confined in relatively restricted environments are more likely to develop health problems as well as behavior problems. Cats are very unique animals! They differ from dogs and other domestic animals because they are not a pack or herd species. Cats are solitary animals that are programmed to hunt small prey. These differences explain a lot about feline behavior, which will help us to enrich their lives. Many indoor cats do not have the opportunity to display normal cat behaviors such as ambushing, pawing, pouncing, scooping, scratching, shaking, and tossing. If they do display these behaviors indoors, many times they are directed towards inappropriate items.

#### *SCRATCHING*

Scratching is a normal, natural behavior in felines. Cats scratch to shed old cuticles, sharpen their claws, stretch their muscles, and leave sent marks. Even declawed cats possess the urge to scratch! In order to keep your furniture and carpets in good condition you need to provide plenty of items that your cat is allowed to scratch on. There are many different types of scratching posts available to you. In order to make the correct decision about which type of post to buy, you need to consider what your cat likes to scratch. Scratching posts come in all shapes and sizes, and can be made of sisal (a coarse, natural plant fiber), carpet, or cardboard. If your cat likes to scratch the legs of your furniture or the corners of your couch you should get a vertical scratching post. If your cat has a preference to scratch on your carpet; purchase a horizontal scratching post or mat.

#### *RESTING AREAS*

Cats prefer to sleep in areas where they feel safe because they are most vulnerable while sleeping. Preferred resting areas are usually quiet, comfortable, and away from other members of the household. Many cats prefer to sleep somewhere elevated and warm. A variety of window perches and elevated beds are available at most pet stores.

#### *ENRICHING YOUR HOUSE*

It is important to provide many things for your cat to do so she doesn't get bored. Cats enjoy food puzzles, balls and many other types of toys. Here are a few of my favorites:

- Scratching posts
- Trees
- Wobble toys
- Hide-n-seek sacks
- Springing (teaser toys)
- Balls
- Motorized mice
- Interactive (thinking) toys
- Catnip toys

*FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ENRICHING YOUR CAT'S LIFE PLEASE CONTACT OUR ANIMAL BEHAVIOR SPECIALISTS BY PHONE AT 713-869-7752 X 187, OR EMAIL [animals@hspca.org](mailto:animals@hspca.org).*