

## Environmental Enrichment for Feline Idiopathic Cystitis

The mnemonic MEMO (multimodal environmental modification), has been coined, and implies that a multi-pronged approach should be taken to make an indoor environment more stimulating for cats. There are a myriad of ways to make indoor life interesting for cats, some of which are listed below. Remember, it is not necessary to spend a lot of money, since simple things, such as a large empty cardboard box or paper bag (with its handles removed), will be used with the same enthusiasm as a \$500 cat tree!

- Even if living quarters are small, space can be expanded vertically by purchasing or building cat trees or mounting a high shelf and providing access via a wooden ladder. Cats enjoy surveying their environment from high places, so resting areas that allow cats to have a bird's eye view of the home will certainly reduce stress.
- Provide appropriate scratching surfaces so that cats can stretch their muscles and engage in natural cat activity. Some cats prefer to scratch horizontal surfaces, while other prefer vertical surfaces. Therefore, provide both, and experiment with textures (i.e sisal and carpet-covered vertical scratching posts, cardboard horizontal scratchers, etc.).
- Engage in interactive play at least 2 times daily. Wand or "fishing-pole" style toys make great interactive toys. Interactive toys must always be used under supervision, since ingestion of string or small objects can lead to intestinal obstruction.
- When cats are home alone, be sure there are plenty of toys that encourage solo play. Toys should mimic prey, and engage all of a cat's natural hunting skills, such as stalking, pouncing, and capturing. Rotate toys often, so cats do not get bored.
- Cat videos are available commercially, and some cats are captivated by them. Most videos feature bugs, birds, small



mammals, and natural sounds that will capture the attention of cats.

- Hanging a bird feeder outside of a cat's favorite window, or purchasing a fish aquarium (with a secure lid, of course), can keep cats occupied for hours.
- Increase access to the out-of-doors in a safe way. A screened-in porch or enclosure built especially for cats will allow them to experience the great outdoors without its inherent dangers. Some cats can be taught to tolerate wearing a harness and walking on a lead. This is a very simple and inexpensive way to allow cats enjoy time outdoors. However, some indoor cats are frightened when outdoors so forcing them to go outside the confines of their home will lead to more stress. Cats should always be supervised while outdoors, even if in a secure enclosure. Outdoor access means that the cat will be exposed to parasites, so appropriate treatment for fleas, ticks, and heartworms must be provided.



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