

Feline behavior experts release guidelines to improve the welfare of cats

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A team of internationally recognized feline experts including veterinarians and feline scientists co-chaired by Dr Sarah Ellis from the University of Lincoln, U.K. and Dr Ilona Rodan, Director of Cat Care Clinic, Wisconsin, U.S.A. were invited by the International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM) and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) to compile guidelines for veterinarians, owners and those working with cats on how to meet the environmental needs of the domestic cat. The new guidelines appear in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*.

A cat's level of comfort within its environment is intrinsically linked to its [physical health](#), emotional well-being and behavior. Thus, meeting the environmental needs of the cat is an absolutely essential part of our care-taking role of this companion animal. The guidelines provide readers with a basic understanding of the cat's species-specific environmental needs including how [cats](#) interact with their environment as well as providing practical based advice on how to meet these needs.

Co-chair, Dr Sarah Ellis said "Just as we do for [medical decisions](#) relating to cats, the decisions we make on the environment we provide for our cats must be based on information produced from a solid evidence base in order to ensure we are providing the highest possible welfare standards for our cats. Over the period of nearly a year, the panel compiled, reviewed and consolidated all available research in this area to provide a reader-friendly, evidence-based set of guidelines allowing veterinarians, owners and those working with cats to easily

access this information and advice all in one place."

The [authorship](#) panel has organized the guidelines around five primary concepts (named as 'pillars') that provide the framework for a healthy feline environment. Such [pillars](#) comprise providing:

- a safe place
- multiple and separated key [environmental resources](#)
- opportunity for play and predatory behavior
- positive, consistent and predictable human-cat social interaction
- an environment that respects the important of the cat's sense of smell

Co-chair Dr Ilona Rodan said "As a veterinary practitioner, I find these guidelines to be the support that we need to help prevent and even resolve many behavior problems. If we understand the cat and its needs, and educate our veterinary teams and clients about how to live with these beloved pets, we can keep cats healthier and happier."

More information: "AAFP and ISFM Feline Environmental Needs Guidelines" by Sarah L H Ellis, Ilona Rodan, Hazel C Carney, Sarah Heath, Irene Rochlitz, Lorinda D Shearburn, Eliza Sundahl and Jodi L Westropp, published in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*.

Provided by SAGE Publications

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