

# Boroughbred Behavior Resources



## Issue: Blind Cat Safety Tips

Generally speaking, cats that are blind from birth are fairly well adjusted. Blind cats who develop this condition may need more adjustment time, especially if they lost their sight recently. Here are some tips that can help guide you in giving your blind cat confidence, comfort, and enrichment.

**Spatial mapping:** Blind cats employ strategies to learn their environments and will commit areas to memory, using spatial mapping and cues from the environment. Allow them to explore and learn each room over time. Texture changes, like carpet to hard floor, can help signal changes to different areas in your home. Consider giving them auditory and scent cues, like fountains or potpourri, to teach them where they are.

**Furniture:** Blind cats are frequently good at climbing up on furniture, but may need help learning how to get down. Try not to be overly protective, and instead teach them how to get off higher surfaces by tapping on the floor so they can hear where they're trying to go to, or assisting them while still allowing them to feel for the ground. Some people suggest not moving furniture to prevent your cat from bumping into objects, but that isn't necessary. You may not want to make changes too often, but making an adjustment to where a piece of furniture lives is just a new learning opportunity for your cat. Help them work through the change by guiding them.



**Using your voice:** Talking to your cat will help give them confidence and tell them where you are. If you're sitting in a room quietly and they walk in, they may not notice that you're there. Announcing your arrival into a room and sweet talking every once in a while will help them locate you.

**Avoid startling your cat:** Some blind cats are easily startled. Talk to your cat or let them smell your hand before petting if your blind cat startles easily.

**All the Essentials:** Show them where their feeding station, litter box, and scratching posts are by coaxing them there. Carrying them and setting them down doesn't teach your cat how access them. Use different textured mats leading up to each item to give your cat clues they're close to what they're searching for.

**Toilet seat lid:** Decide if the toilet seat lid will be kept up or down after each use. Either can work but you need to be consistent so the cat doesn't get wet (or at least, not more than once). If you have a young kitten keep the lid down for safety.

**Toys:** Blind cats still have hunter instincts, so help your blind cat play! Toys that make sounds or have scent will make it easier for your cat to locate them and play. Cats typically enjoy crinkle toys, toys with bells and toys with catnip.

**Clicker Training:** This is a great way to teach simple commands, like "come here" and "slow down". See <https://www.cathealth.com/cat-care/training/2203-clicker-training-for-cats> and <http://www.thejacksongalaxyproject.org/2018-Cat-Pawsitive-Clicker-Training-Basics-Handout-FINAL.pdf>

## Some Blind Cat Philosophy



Many websites that talk about blind cats emphasize the dangers and importance of protecting your blind cat from risks. We read things like “Don’t ever let them outside” or “never re-arrange the furniture”, however every blind cat should to be treated as an individual. It’s important to provide enrichment, some excitement, and comfort geared towards your blind cat’s needs. Some blind cats can go outside, just be sure to monitor them. If you have a fenced yard, free of apparent dangers, you can try introducing your blind cat to your yard. Many will explore slowly and won’t dart or run (blind cats are typically reluctant to run unless they are very confident about their environment). Others, like the one pictured, can have bigger adventures if they’re particularly curious and confident. Once you understand

your blind cat’s behaviors and confidence level, you can tailor experiences that are best for them. If your cat can’t safely go outdoors, you can still open screened windows so they can smell and hear the world outside. Some cats enjoy playing the “chase me” game. Your cat may initiate chase by darting away and hunkering down by one of their favorite spots, and then meow for you to find them. It can be fun and rewarding to think of new games to play with your blind cat.

**Note:** You may want to check out a book about a fearless blind cat called “Homer’s Odyssey” by Gwen Cooper.

Your blind cat will teach you a great deal about what it means to have sight without vision! May you have many happy years together!

### Resources:

<https://www.cathealth.com/cat-health/vision/2533-how-to-care-for-a-blind-cat>

<https://www.thesprucepets.com/how-to-help-a-blind-cat-553892>

<https://pethelpful.com/cats/Blind-cat-Inside-or-Outside>

Two solutions for cat proofing fences:

<https://catfencein.com/>

<https://oscillotamerica.com/>

### For more information:

International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants: <https://m.iaabc.org/>

Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists: <http://corecaab.org/>