

Boroughbred Behavior Resources



Feline Grooming Tips

Cats are pretty self-sufficient when it comes to taking care of themselves, however that is not to say they don't need our help. There are many benefits associated with grooming; frequent brushing helps reduce hairballs, prevent matting, can desensitize your cat to being handled, allows you to check for parasites like fleas and ticks or abnormalities on their body, and distributes natural oils on their body that help maintain a healthy skin and coat. As an added bonus, time spent during grooming sessions can also help the bond between you and your cat grow. Please keep reading to see tips on how to keep your kitty nicely groomed and manicured.

Brushing

Cats are meticulous groomers and their brush-like tongues help trap loose hairs. Long-haired cat owners are probably familiar with the need to brush since longer hair can get tangled and matted easily. Cats with longer hair are also more susceptible to hairballs. Short-haired cats can develop hairballs too, depending on how often they groom themselves and/or if they help groom other cats in the home. Anyone who have seen their first hairball might think it's feces at first because of its shape and color, but upon closer inspection you'll realize that this icky thing actually came from the other end of your cat. Small amounts of loose hair can pass through their digestive systems, but it's harder to pass larger amounts through the stomach – and will get regurgitated



back up. Too much hair may also cause blockages in their intestinal tract, which can be life-threatening. Regular brushing helps catch hair on the brush, which means there will be less hair your cat ends up ingesting.

If your cat doesn't enjoy being brushed, start with a grooming glove. To ensure success, always approach your cat when they're calm. Pet them gently with the grooming gloves and work your way up by giving them just a couple of strokes, and then offering them their favorite treat. Gently pet them all over their body, including ears, tail, belly, back and feet. If your cat becomes uncomfortable, stop and try again another time. Try to make each attempt as positive as possible, so they'll be more likely to allow grooming again next time. Grooming shouldn't be long, torturous sessions; try grooming them a little every day so it's finished before your cat has time to complain.

Once you've established this routine and your cat is comfortable with the grooming glove, you can introduce a brush. Short haired cat only need to be brushed once a week, long haired cats should be brushed more frequently. When grooming, remember to brush gently and avoid pulling through any tangles they may have. Lightly untangle any stubborn knotted sections by placing your hand on the base of their fur, pressing onto their skin, and then gently brush upward. This will reduce the pain and tension they feel. Remember to always reward with treats and pets!

Bathing

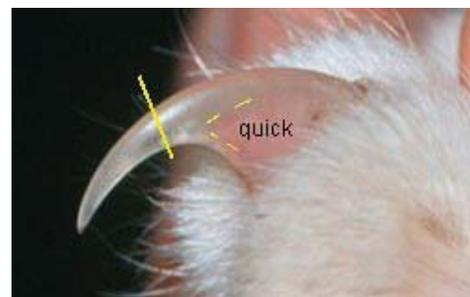
Giving a cat a bath is usually unnecessary since it's typically very stressful for them and they do a pretty good job grooming themselves, however there may be times where a bath is necessary (for example, if they have a flea infestation or got something sticky or toxic on their fur). Anything that gets on a cat's fur will eventually get ingested through grooming so it's important to get anything dangerous removed immediately. Call your veterinarian immediately if it's an irritant or something toxic.

When preparing a bath for your cat, remember to always use cat safe shampoo. Most cats dislike being bathed, so to make this process as comfortable as possible we recommend placing a rubber anti-slip mat on the bottom of the sink or tub before filling it up with water. This will prevent your cat from slipping and sliding, making the process less stressful. You can begin to fill the tub or sink up with about 3–4 inches of luke-warm water, and then carefully place your cat inside. You do not need to fill the water up all the way – unless your cat is special and enjoys swimming. Wet their entire body using a large pitcher to scoop and gently pour the water over your cat's body, but be careful to avoid pouring water over their head to avoid their eyes, ears, and nose. If you need to wash your cat's face, use a washcloth to wipe their face gently. Once your cat is completely wet, gently massage and lather the shampoo over any sticky or dirty areas on their fur. Rinse the shampoo off using the pitcher to pour water over your cat's body again. Once they've been sufficiently cleaned, use a large towel to dry them off. They're most likely going to want to hunker down somewhere to groom themselves dry, but remember to reward them with love and treats!

Nail Clipping

Before you attempt to clip a cat's nails, it's important to get them used to having their feet touched. Getting a cat used to being touched on certain areas of their body before attempting to perform any type of grooming is key to having a stress free and positive experience. Similar with grooming, start with a calm cat and pet them on their favorite areas. Gradually run your hand down their leg and massage their paws. Gently press each toe pad so the nail extends out from the nail bed, and then give your cat a treat right away so they develop a positive association with the action. You may want to do this every other day on a different toe until your cat feels comfortable with you manipulating their feet.

When it's time to clip, place your cat on your lap facing away from you. Take a paw in your hand and gently massage and press their toe pad until their nail is extended. Use a cat nail clipper to clip off the white tip of each nail – right before the pink part. The pink part is called the quick, where the vein runs through the nail. Cutting the quick can be painful and may cause bleeding. If you accidentally clip a little too far, you can apply some styptic powder to prevent further bleeding. Immediately reward with treats each time you're able to successfully clip your cat's nail. If your cat begins to hiss, growl, or struggle, stop and try again when your cat is calm.



The concept of grooming a cat can be a bit intimidating initially, but with these tips you can make each grooming session pain free and as stress-less as possible!

Resources:

<https://pets.webmd.com/cats/bathing-your-cat#1>

<https://pets.webmd.com/cats/cats-fur-problems-grooming#1>

<https://pets.webmd.com/cats/guide/cat-nail-clipping-care#1>

Video:

How to Trim Your Cat's Nails - <https://youtu.be/99PtaOQbBIY>

For more information:

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

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