

IS YOUR KITTY OVERWEIGHT AND LETHARGIC?

Is he picky about new foods, especially canned goodies? If your cat has a big bowl of dry food available at all times, he may show some or all of these symptoms indicative of improper feeding. Many people free-feed dry food to their cats due to its convenience, or out of the worry that their kitty will be hungry while they're out and about. In fact, free-feeding can actually undermine your cat's health and impair his natural biological cycle.

FREE FEEDING DOES NOT MIMIC NATURAL EATING

Cats in the wild are biologically identical to our domesticated feline friends, so we must look to



Nephthys loves fresh food

Mother Nature to determine how to best feed our own house cats. A feral or wild cat operates on a twelve-hour hunting cycle, give or take a few hours, with periods of rest in between each hunt. This regular cycle allows the cat's

stomach to empty itself of food while resting, and divert energy to the other parts of the body that need healing. When cats have continual access to food, their body stays in the digesting stage, and does not direct therapeutic energy to the rest of the body. This can result in a cat that appears healthy on the outside, but may be suffering from a depressed immune system, low white blood cell count or reduced organ function.

FREE FEEDING CAN CREATE PICKY EATERS

So often we hear of cats that refuse to try new foods, usually canned options, and these cats are very often accustomed to having a big bowl of their favorite dry food available at all times. When their customary meal choice is right in front of them, cats have little incentive to try something unknown. Additionally, the grazing habit they have adopted has not allowed their stomachs to properly empty in the natural gorge and

fast cycle, and they are lacking the important sensation of hunger. Ending the free-feeding cycle is a major component in successfully transitioning cats to new foods, and owners usually have a much easier time getting their cat to eat a new food simply by switching to scheduled, metered feedings before rotating in new food options. Our "Variety and Rotation" handout illustrates why changing foods on a regular basis is so important for all pets.

FREE FEEDING CAN LEAD TO HEALTH PROBLEMS

Obesity and diabetes are two major health problems that have been linked with free-feeding. All too many cats graze throughout the day when food is left out, and eat more than their daily caloric requirement. This grazing habit only serves to push cats further towards health-



Pippi has slimmed down from this "before" photo since switching to two meals a day

compromising levels of obesity. Because of the known correlation between obesity and diabetes, overweight cats become at risk for developing this condition which is also brought on or aggravated by an abundance of dry foods. The carbohydrates in dry food turn to sugar in the body and cause spikes in the blood sugar levels which can increase the need for sugar-regulating insulin. The good news is that both of these serious and life-threatening conditions can quite often be easily prevented or regulated through diet change. Please see our "Why We Recommend Canned Food" handout for more information on why canned food is so vital to your pet's overall health and well-being.

WORRIED ABOUT A DAY OUT OF TOWN?

At times when you may be away overnight, a larger bowlful of food is fine, but don't let it dictate your day-to-day feedings. Keep your cat's best interests at heart and help her eat right, stay fit, and live a longer and healthier life with regular twice-a-day feedings.