

Cat walking — beneficial or not?

Written by By Sam Mazzota King Syndicate
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DEAR PAW'S COR-NER: I have a neighbor who puts both of her cats on leashes and walks them through the neighborhood each day. Shouldn't they be outside on their own, prowling and doing cat stuff? — Concerned Cat Mom in Providence, Rhode Island

DEAR CONCERNED: As long as the cats aren't distressed by the leash, I don't see a problem.

Some cats are completely uninterested in exploring the world outside, and some are downright fearful of it. And that's totally fine. Others, however, want to be outside every chance they get.

Letting cats wander outside puts them at risk of being struck by a car, attacked by wildlife or feral cats, or contracting an illness. Cats can be a menace to other creatures, so much so that there's evidence they are impacting the bird population. Songbirds are already under threat from climate change and bird flu (which spreads just as easily among wild birds as it does on chicken farms), so adding another predator to the list is not a good thing.

Putting a cat on a leash (and in a harness, rather than a collar) is a great way to help them explore while keeping them safe. It's also helpful when taking your cat on long car trips — they can stretch their legs safely at rest stops.

For those who'd like to try walking their cat, buy a harness that fits your cat. Cats won't like the harness at first; put it on and just let them get used to it while you hold the leash loosely. Make it a positive experience with lots of treats.

Once they start exploring comfortably with the harness on, walk around with them, guiding them. Don't tug on the leash or drag them. Pick them up if they won't move, but always keep it positive.

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Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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