

Simple Shelter Enrichment for Cats

An enriched environment is one in which an animal has variety, choice and control over its daily activities. Environmental enrichment should be conducted as part of a comprehensive behavioral wellness plan that ensures all animals receive proper housing, consistent daily routines, adequate physical exercise, mental stimulation, social companionship and positive reinforcement-based training. These exercises will be most effective when utilized as a preventive measure, rather than when trying to address problems that are already in existence. Enrichment should address all the senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell.

- Provide a variety of toys in the cage or hanging from the cage and rotate them on a regular basis (cheap items work just as well: e.g. wads of paper, pipe cleaners, ping pong or golf practice balls, golf tees, bottle caps, etc.)
- Provide carpet remnants or corrugated cardboard for scratching
- Place a small pinch of catnip on a towel in the cages a couple times per week
- Provide boxes or paper bags for hiding
- Provide cat beds or hammocks for resting
- Provide a perch of some kind so they can get up high
- Play soothing music to reduce stress
- Play bird song CD's
- Place perpetual motion devices in the area outside the cages - set in motion a few times a day
- Turn on a small "disco ball" in the cat room for a few minutes each day
- Hang a mobile and set it in motion a couple times a day
- If there is a window in the cat room, hang a bird feeder outside to attract birds to visit
- Give a food treat at a regular time each day – cat treats, tuna fish, chicken flakes
- Stuff a mini-Kong® or other small plastic container with treats
- Allow long term residents (>14 days in shelter) time out of the cage several times a week and give them access to toys to play with, bags to hide in, scratching posts to scratch on, and cat grass to nibble on
- Social contact with people – grooming, petting, playing
- Clicker training – teach the cats to come to the front of the cage and touch their nose to a target
- Feliway® – Plug a diffuser in cat rooms or spray a piece of fabric and place it in the cage with the stressed cats once a day

