

Tips for Adopters of Three-Legged Cats

Cats are quite ingenious and nimble, so the loss of a leg often doesn't stop them from enjoying life to the fullest. A helping hand and some lifestyle adjustments can enable your three-legged cat to have a healthy, happy and safe life.

To keep your three-legged cat safe and happy:

- Use identification: Microchip your cat and have her wear an ID tag.
 - Never let the cat outside unsupervised. If you want your cat to spend time outdoors, teach her to walk with a harness and leash, or construct a cattery to enable your cat to enjoy the outdoors safely.
 - If your adopted cat has recently lost a limb, be patient and supportive during the adjustment period. Most three-legged cats adapt well and, in time, become as active and energetic as they were before losing the leg.
 - Although you should keep a close eye on your three-legged cat, encourage independence and avoid being over-protective. Your cat must learn how to compensate for the missing leg. For example, the cat needs to build up additional strength in other limbs, so don't carry her everywhere.
 - At first, your cat may need assistance with grooming areas that would normally be groomed by the now-missing leg. Cats are resourceful, though, so your three-legged cat may devise new ways of grooming.
 - Be cautious when touching your cat near the stump of the missing leg, because this area may be very sensitive.
 - Make sure that food and water are within easy reach.
- Cats with a missing foreleg may have trouble landing properly when jumping down from a high place. So, place plenty of soft cushions around for safe landings.
 - A cat with a missing hind leg may not be able to jump up very high. For such a cat, a multi-level cat perch with a staggered-level design may work better than one with a vertical post design.
 - To make your cat's favorite spots more accessible, install ramps. If the windowsill is a special place for your cat, put a chair close by to make it easier to access.
 - Using the litter box may be challenging at first. You can encourage your cat by helping to cover and dig, and by ensuring that the litter is kept clean.
 - You may need to adjust the size of the litter box, based on your cat's abilities.
 - Depending on what limb is missing, the cat may not be able to stoop down and may stand to urinate, so you may need to get a litter box with high sides.
 - If the cat is missing a back limb, consider getting an arched grooming tool to scratch those hard-to-reach spots on the cat's head.
 - Maintain a healthy diet for your cat. Three-legged cats should not be allowed to become obese because they have fewer limbs on which to distribute their weight.
 - Make sure that your cat gets plenty of gentle exercise in the beginning and then, as she adapts to using three legs, allow her to become more active. Exercise will help her to strengthen the remaining limbs.

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