

Feeding Multi-Cat Households

Feeding multiple cat households can present challenges. With the possibility of an age range of kitten to geriatric, conflicting medical conditions (including obesity) along with the natural tendency to eat multiple small meals a day, cat owners of multiple cats have their work cut out for them! Variables include feeding each individual the correct food, the right amount, and the correct number of times per day. With some thought and creativity this can usually be accomplished.



It is important to realize is that the cat is not a social animal but a solitary hunter that prefers to eat alone. This may not be outwardly evident but forced social eating may cause chronic stress. The other important thing to realize is that each cats' resources (food, water, bed, perches and litter box) need to be at least 2 feet apart to minimize stress. This can include using vertical space.

Most cats are fed in or near the kitchen for our convenience. Many cats prefer to sleep and eat on an elevated platform which can lead to cats gravitating towards countertops especially if food is left out. These two problems can be solved simultaneously by giving each cat their own feeding shelf in or near the kitchen.

Leaving food out 24 hours a day is not an option with multiple cats as there is no way to determine if the correct cat is eating the right food. Free feeding often leads to overeating and is strongly discouraged.

Food puzzles are a great way to simulate hunting and satisfy a cat's natural instincts and help burn calories. As with free feeding, the challenge becomes which cat gets how much, of which food, and how many times per day. Supervised feeding may be the only solution without the use of emerging technology. Microchip feeders and separating cats by rooms or areas of house (using microchip activated cat flaps) may be useful if available. Alternatively, separate feeding areas by placing each cat in a room and shut the door for a specified time.

The various medical problems that can be successfully treated through diet emphasizes how important it is to ensure the correct the food to the right cat occurs.

- With 58% of cats being overweight or obese, portion control is vital.¹
- Kidney disease, diabetes, and urinary issues all require therapeutic diets that may not be the right diet for an otherwise healthy cat.
- Partner with your veterinarian to find the best feeding option for your household

1. Association of Pet Obesity Prevention; <https://petobesityprevention.org>