



Be Purrfectly Prepared

Keep Your Feline Patrol Happy and Healthy Through Seasonal Changes

By Mara Watts

Although small compared to their furry and feathered farmyard friends, cats play an important role as patrol and rodent control. But as the seasons change, barnyard cats require extra attention to stay healthy and comfortable throughout the year.

“Spring is an exciting, active period for farmyard cats. However, it’s also one of change, where health and comfort could require a bit more attentiveness,” Josh Wiesenfeld, pet expert, CEO, and founder at BoxieCat, a pet health and hygiene company, said.

“With just a bit of foresight, the owner is able to prevent particular issues arising, can pay greater attention to the health of their cat and make him as comfortable as possible. But with any cat, one should see and react to particular needs and demands,” he added.

To that point, with the arrival of spring, adjusting care routines and monitoring for new health issues will help keep farmyard cats healthy and thriving.

Safeguarding Against Springtime Ailments

As winter transitions into spring, outdoor cats face new challenges, including increased activity from fleas, ticks and intestinal worms.

“It’s best to practice prevention,” Wiesenfeld advised. “Farmers are encouraged to utilize vet-approved topical treatments or oral preventatives made particularly for cats. And deworm them regularly.”

He also emphasized the importance of checking cats for ticks and providing clean, pest-free bedding and sleeping areas.

In addition, farmyard cats can also suffer from seasonal allergies and temperature fluctuations. With increased pollen and mold in the air, respiratory problems can also arise.

To support outdoor cats, Wiesenfeld recommended keeping vaccinations up to date, monitoring for symptoms like sneezing, coughing or watery eyes, and providing access to clean, dry shelter.

Monitor for Overexertion

“Closely follow the activity of your cats to avoid exhaustion, particularly on hotter days,” Wiesenfeld explained. “The first signs of tiredness or heat stress include panting, general lethargy or hiding for a long period of time.”



Proper Shelter

To keep cats comfortable, Wiesenfeld recommends transitioning winter shelters to more suitable spring housing.

A proper spring shelter should be:

- Well-ventilated and raised to comfort.
- Protected against moisture and rain.
- Lined with bedding materials, like straw or blankets.
- Kept in the shade.
- Without drafts while providing a flow of fresh air.

To avoid such conditions, shaded resting areas and fresh water should always be available. Wiesenfeld also noted that farmers should plan playing and hunting activities during the cooler parts of the day.

Dietary & Hydration Needs

With warmer weather comes increased activity levels. And, according to Wiesenfeld, the calorie needs of farmyard cats must increase to support that energy.

“A high protein content will help maintain muscles and meet the demands for increased hunting and exploration. Because of seasonal allergies, their requirement for food can be better met with the inclusion of essential fatty acids, such as omega-3s, which reduce inflammation and enhance well-being.”

Keeping cats properly hydrated is also important. As they become more active, and temperatures start to rise, ensuring access to unlimited fresh water is necessary.

“Farmers can encourage hydration by making sure there are several clean water sources available on the property, even in shaded areas,” he explained.

Interestingly, even wet cat food can supplement water intake.

“Monitoring their intake and making sure they [cats] have access to fresh water in all of their roaming areas is very key to preventing dehydration.”

Grooming Needs

During spring, cats shed their winter coats, making grooming a necessary task. Regular brushing helps reduce shedding, prevents matting and minimizes hairballs.

“Grooming also provides a good opportunity to look for parasites or skin irritations. More independent cats appreciate grooming stations, like scratching posts fitted with brushes.”

Hunting & Patrolling Duties

A cat’s natural instinct is to hunt for food while patrolling and protecting its territory. As winter turns to spring, encouraging this behavior can help control the farm’s rodent population while promoting the cats’ well-being.

“Encourage such natural tendencies further by creating an enriching environment for cats to hunt in safety and also patrol their territory,” Wiesenfeld said. “Allowing them controlled access, for example, to barns and fields where small prey may be found would satisfy their hunting instinct.”

To enhance physical and mental stimulation, Wiesenfeld suggests rotating play sessions with toys that mimic natural prey movements. The idea is to simulate the complexity of a natural hunting ground with the use of engaging cat toys, including:

- Climbing structures and hiding spots
- Toys that mimic prey, like small plush stuffed rodents
- Feather teasers

Striking a Balance

According to Wiesenfeld, the key to raising healthy, happy cats is finding a balance between support and fostering independence while understanding and nurturing each cat’s unique personality and needs.

“Providing the necessities – food, water, shelter and medical care – will keep them healthy. Giving them their space to be able to roam and hunt will keep their instincts nurtured,” he explained.

In conclusion, Wiesenfeld stated “The key to all of this is respecting their independence while keeping up regular health checkups to catch any issues in their early stages.”