



My cat has everything (s)he needs. Why does (s)he still hunt?

Even indoor cats have an instinct to hunt. Providing them with plenty of opportunity for predatory play, can help fulfill this instinct, keeping them mentally and physically healthy.

This motivation to hunt is not influenced by hunger, so keeping your cat well fed will not make a difference in their hunting instinct, however, they may not kill or eat the prey if they aren't hungry.

Cats hunt using two methods:

- **Stalk, run, and pounce** – a very active method that uses a lot of energy in a short time
- **Stationary, sit and wait** – the cat waits, motionless for long periods of time, pouncing only when the prey emerges from its hiding spot.

Both methods can be simulated with indoor toys and games.

- Toys that move rapidly and randomly, like a wand toy, encourage your cat to use the more active hunting method. It is natural for cats to play in short bursts, sometimes only for seconds at a time.
- Simulate stationary sit and wait games by placing small toys inside a box with holes in (so they can see them and use their paws to try to grab them). This can keep their interest and stimulate their brain, though it won't burn many calories. You could also use a wand toy under a blanket or rug. Poke it out every now and then so your cat sees it and then bring it quickly back under the blanket or rug.

Encourage your cat to play by rotating its toys on a regular basis. Store all toys not currently being played with out of sight.

Remember, hunting is a natural instinct in your cat. Stopping your cat from hunting can be detrimental to their welfare and potentially cause them to become frustrated, especially those cats who are highly motivated to hunt.

You can channel this instinct indoors in a variety of ways:

- Hide portions of dry food or treats around the house to encourage 'foraging'.
- Use timed feeders, slow feeders, or puzzle feeders with small portions of food to replicate the small, regular meals cats are adapted to.
- Feed your cat food brands with high nutritional value with a primary ingredient being meat (if okay medically for your cat – please check with your vet first).
- Introduce variety into your cat's food where possible (again, if okay medically).
- Encourage your cat to play in the way they would hunt but make the "kill" a treat or some food.
- Make sure your house and outside space is set up to keep your cat interested and stimulated.

