

# Mews & News

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RIVERSIDE CAT HOSPITAL



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## Holiday Do's and Don'ts for your Cats

With the holiday season fast approaching, take a few minutes to review these safety guidelines for your pets *before* you put up those decorations or wrap your presents!

**Holiday decorations:** Decorative items such as tinsel, small ornaments, and ornament hooks should be put away, or hung well out

of reach of your cat. These items can cause serious problems if swallowed, and the glitter and shine can make them very attractive toys for cats!

**Holiday plants:** Most people know that poinsettia is not good for cats to eat, but a more serious toxic plant is mistletoe. Since cats can be very good at reaching things



they want to nibble, the safest option is to not keep live plants in the house at all.

*cont. on pg.2*

## Litter Box Tips—Why won't my cat use the box?

In our last newsletter, we talked about inappropriate urination, and reasons why a cat may not be using the litter box. This time, we are going to focus on litter box aversion.

A common reason why cats urinate or defecate outside the box is simply that the box is not acceptable to them. The box may be dirty, may not be adequately private, may smell funny or be uncomfortable. The following are clues that an inappropriate urination

problem reflects litter box aversion.

1. Urination does not involve spraying vertical surfaces.
2. Both urination and defecation occur outside the litter box.
3. Two or more cats share a litter box (the current litter box recommendation is one box per cat plus one extra).
4. A new brand of litter is suddenly being used.
5. The box is covered. (A covered bathroom area is highly unnatural for cats as they prefer better lighting for elimination

and odors are concentrated in an enclosed area such as a covered box.)

6. The box is not changed frequently.
7. The cat has had a negative experience in the box (the cat was captured from the box to receive medication or be disciplined).
8. The litter box is in a heavy household traffic area.
9. Another pet is bothering the cat in the box.

*(continued on page2)*





Visit [www.indoorcats.org](http://www.indoorcats.org) for more tips on enhancing the life of your indoor cat, and preventing litter box problems.

## Litter Box Tips *(cont. from pg. 1)*

Cats with this problem frequently require re-training to the box. As a first step, an additional box should be provided in a location separate from the original box. Many cats feel the box has been claimed by another household cat and are reluctant to use it or violate the other cat's territory. In a single cat home, the cat may have experienced something unpleasant in association with the current litter box and needs a new "bathroom area." It is important not to keep the cat's food in a location near the box as the cat will not want to use the feeding area as a toilet.

Obviously, any litter boxes should be scooped daily or even twice daily and kept as clean as possible. Clumping litter should be changed at least monthly and non-clumping litter should be changed twice weekly. The

box should be washed with soapy water or water alone with no strong-smelling disinfectants that might be objectionable to the cat.

A litter box length should be at least one and a half times the length of the cat (not including the tail) so that the cat will have adequate space to maneuver and cover his or her excrement. Most commercially available litter boxes are too small. Under-bed storage boxes are a good size to use.

As the next step, some other type of litter can be provided to see if the cat prefers a different brand or type. (Signs that the cat does not like the litter include: sitting on the plastic lip of the litter box to eliminate, failure to dig a hole in the litter, and/or shaking the litter off the paws after exiting the box.) If nothing

seems to work, the cat should be confined in a small area, such as a large plastic carrier, with a litter box. The cat is gradually allowed more area after he/she has proven that he will use the box. (First, the carrier is the housing area, then a small room such as a bathroom or playpen is allowed, next a large room is added etc. until the cat again has his usual access.)

If these tips are not effective in restoring the cat's proper toilet behaviors, a behavior specialist should be called in. Please contact your veterinarian for the best consultant in your area.

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## Holiday Tips *continued from page 1*

**The Christmas Tree:** Even the sturdiest of tree stands may not prevent an accident if your cat climbs the tree. Be sure your tree is anchored firmly, and do not allow your cat to drink the water from the stand.

**Gift Wrapping:** Many cats find shiny and curly ribbons

irresistible! But, if swallowed, these can be dangerous play things. Keep all wrapping supplies out of reach of your cat.

**Food and Sweets:** With all the baking and cooking that goes on around the Holidays, take extra care to be sure your cat does not get

into anything other than his or her own food! Items to be particularly careful with are foods containing onions, chocolate, or artificial sweeteners.

Taking a little extra care in your holiday preparations will help ensure that everyone has a joyous time!

## Ask Izzy

Izzy, our Resident Cat, likes to help out around the clinic by answering questions from our patients and their families. If you have a question for Izzy, you can send it to her via mail, or e-mail from our website, [www.RiversideCatHospital.com](http://www.RiversideCatHospital.com), and click on the *contact us* link.

Dear Izzy,

My cat, an orange tabby named Butterscotch, is developing dark spots on his nose and mouth. They don't seem to bother him, but I am worried. Are these spots cancerous?

Dear *Worried*,

Don't be worried. The spots you are describing are probably what's called *lentigines*. They are like freckles, and are a harmless, unique characteristic of orange cats. They are typically flat, dark brown to black spots that develop on the nose, lips and even eyelids. They usually start to show up around 3-4 years of age, and start out as tiny spots, like freckles. As your cat ages, the spots will

grow larger and more numerous. These spots should not bother your cat in any way. If you have any concern about the appearance of the spots or how they are changing or growing, you should have them checked out by your veterinarian.

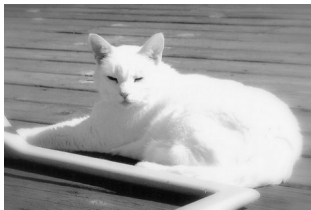
Signed, *Izzy*



*Izzy, our resident cat, is 9 years old. She loves visitors, so be sure to say Hi! next time you are in.*

## In Memoriam

In memory of those kitties who have left us recently— They give so much and demand so little in return.



*Dusty Stroh  
Isis Norman  
Lucy Semerly  
Madlyn Lau  
Oliver Richardson  
Peaches Stolz  
Pearl Kahl  
Skillet Bruun  
Tulley Cowan*

*Hear our humble prayer,  
O God,  
for our friends, the animals,  
especially for those who are suffering;  
for any that are lost or deserted  
or frightened or hungry.*

*We entreat for them all  
Thy mercy and pity,  
and for those who deal with them,  
we ask a heart of compassion  
and gentle hands and kindly words.*

*Make us, ourselves,  
to be true friends to animals  
and so to share  
the blessings  
of the merciful.*

*Albert Schweitzer*

## Employee Spotlight

Mary Murphy has been with Riverside Cat Hospital since



our opening in September 2006. She is a dental hygienist with over 18 years of experience, the past five years spent specializing in feline dentistry. She is a 1982 graduate of MSU, where she met Jim, her husband of 20 years. She loves MSU, Red Wings hockey, gardening, knitting, and sewing.

## News Alert

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of Rabies cases seen in mid-Michigan this past year. Unvaccinated pets, even indoor cats, put your family at risk. An unexpected exposure can mean a long series of uncomfortable, expensive shots for everyone in your house! Please make an appointment today to get all your cats updated on their vaccine.

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*CARING FOR YOUR CATS  
AS MUCH AS YOU DO.*

**Visit us online!**

**[www.RiversideCatHospital.com](http://www.RiversideCatHospital.com)**

## Traveling over the Holidays?

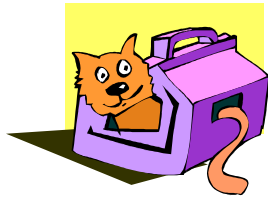
*Make your boarding reservations now!*

Don't wait until the last minute! We have openings for your cat for the holiday season.

Whether your cat is a seasoned pro at boarding, or one who has

never left home before, we can help him or her to feel right at home! Our caring, attentive staff and spacious, comfortable boarding facilities will ensure that your cat's boarding experience is a pleasant one. We can

provide everything your cat needs for a relaxing stay: food, water, dishes, bedding, toys, and treats.



Our boarding cats have daily access to the play room, full of climbing perches, scratching poles, window seats, ramps, toys, and hiding spots.

If you haven't yet, stop by and ask to see our boarding facilities. We'd be happy to show you anytime!

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We'd like to let you know about a fun new class offering—Kitten Kindergarten! This free class is designed to help socialize your new kitten with other kittens and with new people. In addition, it is a great way to learn about normal and abnormal cat behaviors.

Topics covered in the 2-session classes include play behavior, appropriate litter box maintenance, scratching and nail trimming, and cat-to-cat interactions.

The classes are open to all kittens between 8 and 14 weeks of age. Interested persons with older cats may attend without their cat. Participating kittens must have a negative leukemia test, a dewormer, and be up to date on their distemper vaccine.

Call to register your kitten, or let your friends and family members with new kittens know about this fun opportunity!