



Barn Cat Exam

Barn cats need care, too! Perform this regular check on your barn cat, to keep it happy and healthy.

Your barn cat may enjoy independent farm life, but you can keep your cat healthy by spending time with it weekly and performing an easy exam. Barn cats are wonderful pets. They help keep the property free from vermin while adding to the homey ambience of the farm.

Because barn cats live outdoors, they sometimes take on the life of a feral cat. Even though you feed them and make sure they have water, they might not be handled very often. If you want to keep your barn cat healthy, perform a simple exam on it once a week. On a day when your chores are light, sit outside and call your barn cat to you. Have it stand beside you or in your lap as you give it the following once over:

Run your hands along the cat's sides, under its tummy and around its head. You're looking for lumps, bumps and abscesses, as well as ticks and embedded burrs and foxtails.

Gently lift the cat's paws and examine them for cuts or foreign objects between the pads.

Look inside the cat's ears. They should be clean and odorless. If you see dirt or waxy discharge, your barn cat may be suffering from ear mites.

Using your first and second fingers, part the hair near the base of the cat's tail to look for signs of fleas. If you see tiny black or brown specks on his skin, pick up a few and put them on a paper towel. Wet the spot and wait a few minutes. If the dark spots turn into small, diluted drops of blood, your barn cat has fleas. If you find anything suspicious on your cat during this exam, contact your vet. Even though your barn cat is a tough, outdoor kitty, he still needs help staying healthy now and then.

About the Author: Audrey Pavia shares her home in southern California with four cats, a Pembroke Welsh Corgi and a Rex rabbit. You can read more about farm pets and other animals in her "Animal Talk" column in Hobby Farm Home magazine.

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