



# Paw Prints

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Columnist

## Minimize your cat's shedding

Are you finding cat fur on your clothes, furniture, and even floating in the air?

Finding Kitty's hair on almost everything in sight is a fact of life for a cat pet parent. Kitty is not intentionally trying to drive you crazy, it's just a side effect of her natural shedding process.

Shedding is a cat's natural process of losing dead hair. Indoor cats can shed all year-round.

The growth of a cat's coat follows a simple pattern. Her coat becomes thicker in winter when it's cold and thinner in the summer. This system lets cats adapt to the weather outside, especially for feral and stray cats that spend all their time outdoors.

Shedding is not dependent on the temperature. You won't stop your cat from shedding by turning the heat down. Shedding is initiated by the amount of daylight available. When the amount of light reduces in autumn, the need to grow thicker fur is signaled by your cat's body. Then the opposite happens in spring, when the amount of light increases.

But because shedding is affected by light availability, the year-round artificial light inside your home can essentially confuse your indoor cat's body, altering the way she sheds. This means that you may not see heavy

shedding twice a year, but a lighter, more constant shedding all year long.

There are a variety of medical, dietary, and stress-related issues that can cause Kitty to lose more hair than is normal. If you notice she's losing an excessive amount of hair or has bald patches, contact your veterinarian immediately. Your cat may be suffering from allergies, ringworm, a bacterial infection, fleas or a hormonal imbalance such as hyperthyroidism.

If Kitty sheds a lot and your vet has determined that there is no underlying medical cause, there are a few things you can do to minimize her hair loss.

The most effective way to reduce your cat's shedding is by giving her a regular brushing.

This helps to collect fur before it falls out of your cat, meaning there will be less fur on your furniture and in the air. And less for your cat to ingest.

Brushing your cat removes dirt, grease, and dead hair from her coat, and it also helps remove skin flakes, and stimulates blood circulation, improving the overall condition of her skin.

Even if you have a short-haired cat, regular grooming is an important part of maintaining health. She may not have a coat that mats like a longhaired cat, but frequent

brushing will cut down on shedding and the amount of hair getting ingested through her self-grooming.

Just one or two brushings per week will help kitty to keep her healthy glow – and you'll find that regular sessions are especially beneficial when Kitty ages and is no longer able to groom so meticulously on her own.

As well as helping your cat to look beautiful and cut down on shedding, regular grooming allows you to spend quality time bonding with your furry feline friend, and gives you the opportunity to check her body condition and spot any unusual signs of health problems, such as lumps or bumps.

Remember to examine your cat's skin and coat during your grooming sessions. Checking for hair loss, redness, bumps, cuts, fleas, or ticks can be a fast way to determine whether you need to go to your vet for a cat check.

Brushing distributes the natural oil which helps maintain skin and coat health, and with frequent grooming you can address tangles before they turn into mats on your longhaired cat.

Since a cat's skin is sensitive and very thin, use brushes and combs that are comfortable and appropriate for your cat's type of coat and pay attention to how much pressure you're

applying when you brush.

If you brush Kitty on a regular basis, the twice-weekly maintenance shouldn't take long. And with a long-haired cat, brushing just a few minutes every day will keep her coat in good condition.

You will not be able to stop Kitty from shedding altogether, because it is a natural process, like eating or sleeping.

However regular brushing may help reduce the amount of hair that falls out and may improve the quality of your cat's coat.

So, to minimize the inconvenience of shedding, groom your cat on a regular basis and use a vacuum to remove the excess cat hair

from your house.

Remove cat hair from your clothes, chairs, sofas and other belongings by rubbing the surface you want to clean with a damp towel. It will attract the cat hair. And a lint roller will pick up more cat hair and leave the surface cleaner.

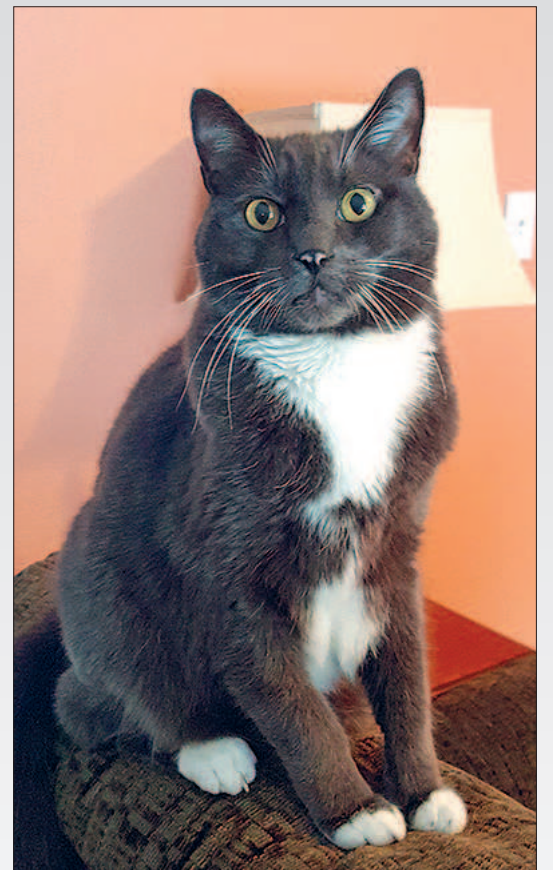


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Harley gets brushed to cut down on shedding.

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