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# Nighttime Safety Tips for Outdoor Cats

by Caitlin Ultimo

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If your cat fancies taking a solo stroll outside, you may wonder—and worry—what she is getting herself into. The good news: While she may not be on a leash, there are ways to keep your feline friend safe and out of trouble. Here are a few nighttime safety tips for your outdoor cat.



## Know the Risks

Outdoor cats face a myriad of potential dangers and being realistic about possible threats will help you make the best choices for her safety.

Predators creep out when the sun goes down and include wild animals such as raccoons, foxes, skunks and coyotes that may carry rabies. There is also a heightened possibility of your cat coming into contact with fleas, ticks and other diseases spread by stray or unvaccinated

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cats. While out, your kitty may meet cats that may not have been spayed or neutered. Of course, careless or unsuspecting drivers also pose another threat to felines who appear less visible while on the street at night. Last but not least, the temperature changes with the season, and your kitty may encounter some chilly evenings.

## Keeping Your Cat Safe

First things first: If you have an outdoor cat, be sure that they have been spayed or neutered and are up-to-date with vaccinations. You may not be able to control who your cat meets on the street, but you can control any accidental pregnancies or altercations brought on by hormones. Letting your vet know that your pet is an outdoor cat will also help them administer the proper vaccines to protect against diseases passed on by wild and unvaccinated animals. You can also ward off flea and tick issues by administering monthly medications before your cat ventures out.

Outfitting your cat in reflective gear is another smart precaution. Reflective collars and tags will not only make your cat more visible to drivers, but will also alert people to the fact that your kitty is not a stray.

Dressing her in a knit sweater may actually do more harm than good, considering some fabrics may catch on branches and fences. To keep her warm and safe in the colder months, provide an outdoor cat shelter or structure in your yard. It will give her the space she wants, but will keep her protected from the elements. It's also a good idea to give your cat ample places to hide and relax without her having to go too far. Keeping a light on outside can also prevent wild animals from wandering in—and help your cat easily locate her home. Making your own outdoor property as safe and inviting as possible, will encourage your cat not to stray and keep her farther away from nighttime hazards.

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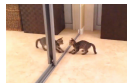
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