

FEED THE NEED. LOSE THE BOWL: NO-BOWL FEEDING SYSTEMS



For cats, hunting is part of what brain scientists call "The Seeking Circuit." In the seeking circuit, the brain releases dopamine, which heightens arousal and creates a feeling of anticipation. Each small meal, usually consisting of a single mouse, completes the cycle and leaves cats feeling satisfied and complete. Cats need to engage in the seeking circuit many times a day to be mentally and physically healthy.

Eating from a bowl denies cats this natural cycle, yet the need to hunt remains instinctual. Toys engage cats in the seeking circuit, putting them in a heightened state of arousal. However, the circuit is not completed without the food reward. This leaves them in a heightened state of arousal without the satisfaction of finishing the hunt.

In nature, cats hunt and engage this seeking circuit between 9-20 times a day, usually most actively around dawn and again at dusk. Now you know why your cat might wake you up to eat in the wee hours of the morning! His or her brain is set up to start seeking prey about this time. Cats spend an average of 6 hours a day seeking their food, which provides them with the majority of their daily exercise. When we remove the opportunity to hunt, we deny their natural instincts and disrupt their natural rhythms. This can lead to physical, behavioral and mental problems.

Veterinary behaviorists know that feeding has a dual purpose for cats. It is not only a way to satisfy their energy need, but it also represents the main opportunity to satisfy their primary behavioral need to act as predators. Not having the possibility to satisfy this need may be physically and psychologically detrimental to a cat – in other words, it's stressful for a cat to not have this outlet.

Taking away the food bowl and replacing it with feeding toys is an excellent way to satisfy your cat's natural hunting drive. Instead of filling a bowl, you would divide a day's worth of food into multiple toys, usually 5 or 6 of them, and distribute them for your cat to find. These toys are batted around and dribble food out a little at a time. Once transitioned onto the system, your cat will hunt, find their meal, and then play with it to get the food reward. Satisfied with this healthy



The top 5 reasons people purchase the NoBowl Feeding System:

1. They are looking for a way to engage their cat while they are not at home
2. Their cat "scarf and barfs" at least once a week
3. Their veterinarian recommended Environmental Enrichment for their cat
4. Their cat wakes them up early looking for food
5. They are looking for a way to feed in a portion-controlled way to maintain a healthy weight

portion, your cat will groom and rest until hunger motivates the next hunt, just like in nature.

We like the SlimCat ball by PetSafe, as well as the new NoBowl Feeding System that uses mouse-shaped toys with stretchy "skin" to more closely resemble the real thing. You can also make your own feeding toys out of toilet paper cardboard tubes with the ends crimped mostly closed or small plastic containers with some holes cut into the sides.



If your cat tends to wake you up at night, hide a few of these throughout your house, in different spots each evening, for her to find while you are sleeping.

Scientists agree, cats need to hunt, not be served from a bowl. Feeding toys replace the bowl with the hunt, letting your cat stalk, trap and play with its food - the way nature intended.

