

Food enrichment and its purpose

- In the wild cats would eat little and often and would be hunting for their food. In the home environment however we provide cats with their food in a bowl usually twice daily which is a very unnatural way for a cat to find food and eat. Whilst most cats will be perfectly happy adapting to this way of life there are some that need to be able to exhibit their natural behaviours when it comes to meal times.
- Food enrichment can be really beneficial to cats who live indoors only, for certain breeds of cats such as Bengals and cats that have a high play or food drive. Even if you think your cat doesn't need to have any food enrichment this can be a really good way to stimulate their natural behaviours and provide them with something new and interesting to do (they are pretty fun too).
- There are lots of different puzzle feeders you can buy for your cats but there are also many you can make too. A cardboard pyramid can be made using the cardboard tubes from toilet rolls and stacking into a pyramid, you can make them as small or large as you like and then hide dry food inside the rolls for your cat to get out using their paw.



When you first introduce puzzle feeders always start off with just a small amount of food in the feeder and try to make it something simple, depending on how clever your cat is of course. You may even have to show some cats how to get the food out, depending on the difficulty of the feeder or the cats food drive. With indoor only cats you could try placing some different feeders around the home that you place small amounts of food in so that throughout the day they can “hunt” out their meals.

Another way to replicate the hunting behaviour in your cat would be to have a small play session with them, of 5-10 minutes, followed by some food (make sure that you always let your cat catch the toy at the end of a session, many hunting expeditions would end in failure so they don't have to catch the toy all the time).