

Out & About



Cali gets ready for an afternoon stroll.

Pet strollers let your cat safely see the outside world.

Recently, my calico, Cali, celebrated her 17th birthday. Naturally, she got extra hugs and kisses and a birthday cake. The phone rang non-stop, and dozens of e-mails streamed in from colleagues and friends.

There was a flawed silence when I announced to well-wishers that I had bought Cali a Jeep Wrangler for her birthday. I guess they pictured us in a four-wheel-drive vehicle going off-roading somewhere. So I explained that the Jeep in question was in fact a pet stroller made under license from the DaimlerChrysler Corporation that manufactures the car of the same name.

It is indeed a snazzy petonobile with front shock absorbers and rear safety brakes, and it offers pets a great view from a bug-proof interior. There's a tray for water bottles and pockets for cell phones and keys, and the ergonomic design offers comfort to both the passenger and the pusher.

I bought Cali this gift because she loves to go

outside with me onto our plant-filled patio. I couldn't wait to take her for a ride. Family members were skeptical, but Cali was happy to be picked up and plunked down in the stroller, and she looked on with curious interest when I zipped her in and headed out the front door and down the garden path.

She quickly got comfortable facing forward and gazing all around her, very aware of the birds sitting on bushes and the occasional rabbit that ran across our path. It seemed like she really enjoyed being outdoors even though she wasn't able to prowl around.

Recently, I had a discussion with feline veterinarian Drew Weigner of Atlanta, about the merits of giving cats a safe indoor environment. He believes that, although it's the right thing to do for health and safety reasons, living spaces for humans are getting smaller, and we could be forcing our cats to adapt to our changing environments far too quickly and that could result in separation anxiety, as well as medical problems.

Further, when we work long hours, our cats often are home alone. Weigner points out that it's imperative to compensate for this by giving our cats toys to play with to stave off boredom and increase their play drive and by providing them with kitty condos so they have the opportunity to climb, hide and look at things from heightened vantage points.

And now we can take them safely out and about in pet strollers. Fortunately, there are lots of fabulous designs to choose from, including ones that can be removed from their wheel bases and converted into standard hand-held carriers.

In our household, the stroller is definitely a great success. My other cat Fudge also is enjoying outings, but Cali knows the stroller is really hers. Every evening at around 3, she sits in our entrance hall waiting to go for a ride. I enjoy our quality time together, and the regular exercise is doing me a world of good. ☺

Sandy Robins is an award-winning pet-lifestyle expert who appears regularly on TV, radio and in international publications. She is an obsessed pet owner to her cat Cali and Fudge.