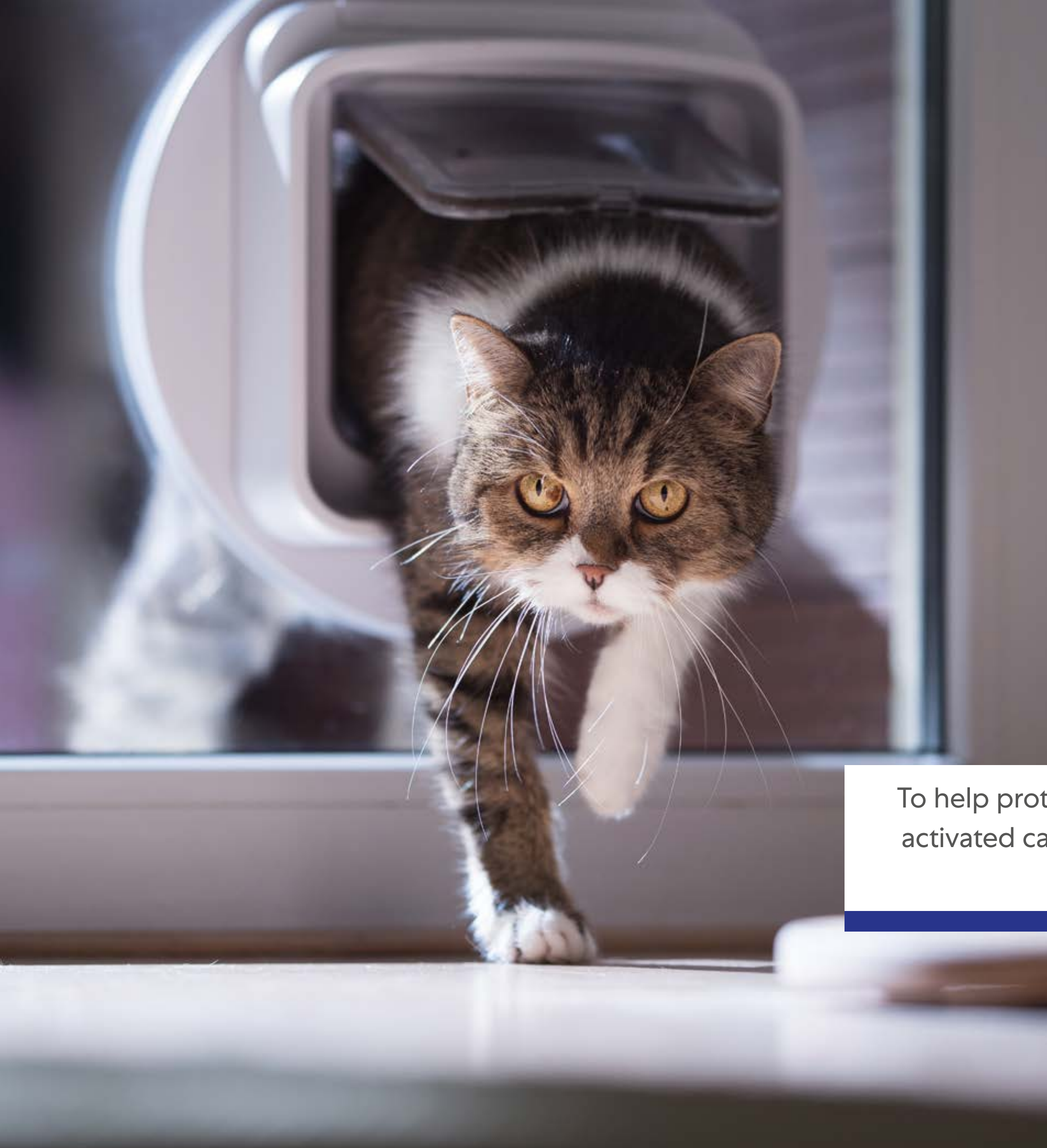


# Cat Environment

Cats that spend time outdoors should always have access to the same basic resources as indoor cats, for example, providing access to the home via a cat flap as both a safe space and protection from the weather.





## Cats and the weather

Exposure to temperature extremes, including heavy rain, dust storms, wind, or snow, means cats are at risk of developing medical problems including hypothermia (dangerously low body temperature) or heat-stroke (illness associated with elevated body temperatures).

The weather also impacts other existing physical health conditions such as arthritis or respiratory problems, which significantly affects quality of life and emotional wellbeing.

To help protect your cat's territory and keep out unwanted visitors, microchip-activated cat flaps are now available, meaning they will only open for your cat when their microchip number is scanned.

## Outdoor environments

Advantages for cats that spend time outdoors include increased opportunity for exercise, exploration and engaging in natural hunting behaviours, which are both mentally and physically stimulating. The option to access an outdoor area also provides your cat with increased space and agency to choose how they would like to interact with their surroundings. This can help reduce behaviour problems associated with stress or frustration, such as urine spraying, due to incompatibility with their current living situation<sup>2</sup>.

**Outdoor cats are also less likely to be overweight than cats that spend the majority of their time indoors<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup>Wall, M, Cave, NJ, & Vallee, E, 2019, Owner and Cat-Related Risk Factors for Feline Overweight or Obesity, Front. Vet. Sci., doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2019.00266, Accessed 12 January 2022

<sup>2</sup>International Cat Care, Indoor-only or outdoor access? Available at: <https://icatcare.org/indoor-only-or-outdoor-access/>, Accessed 13 January 2022

## Potential risks

There are also some significant risks to both the mental and physical health of outdoor cats, including automobiles, predators, becoming lost or stolen, territorial conflict with neighbouring cats, increased exposure to parasites and increased risk of injury or illness by ingestion of toxic substances. Many owners are also concerned about their cat hunting native wildlife from an ethical perspective<sup>3</sup>.

Cat-proof fencing is one option for allowing your cat the freedom to explore your garden or yard, without allowing them to escape. Some owners also create enclosed outdoor extensions or 'catios' to allow their cats safer access to the outdoor environment.



Learn more about environment and emotional wellbeing for your pets at [shine.waltham.com](https://shine.waltham.com)

<sup>3</sup>Crowley, SL, Cecchetti, M, & McDonald, R, 2019, Hunting behaviour in domestic cats: An exploratory study of risk and responsibility among cat owners, People And Nature, DOI: 10.1002/pan3.6, Accessed 07 February 2022