



catnip

The newsletter for caring cat owners

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3 Managing Pain in Cats and Dogs

Cats are masters at concealing illnesses and injuries. Fortunately, veterinarians are increasingly able to detect and manage pain. We spotlight state-of-the-art efforts under way at the Pain Clinic at Tufts.

6 Dr. Dodman's Casebook

Cummings' behavior expert thoroughly studies all evidence before identifying the true cause of a male cat's persistent urine marking.

9 Your Healthy Ally: Therapy Cats

Therapy cats offer many physical and mental benefits to patients. These calm-tempered cats are pre-screened and updated on vaccinations, making concerns about their transmitting diseases largely unwarranted.

11 Healthy Cat, Sick Cat?

Researchers at Ohio State indicate that healthy cats may develop signs of idiopathic cystitis as a reaction to changes in their environment. Our experts offer enrichment techniques to minimize stress.

13 Therapeutic Beds

We evaluate six beds and a heating pad designed for senior cats.

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Simple litter box strategies can reduce chances of inappropriate elimination.

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15 Dear Doctor

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Therapeutic Beds

We evaluate six beds and a heating pad designed for senior cats.

Cats' needs change as they age, even when it comes to their bedding. For this month's product review, we tested beds designed for senior cats and those with arthritis or mobility issues. Since a majority of my test cats fit into the senior demographic, I had no problem recruiting testers.

This proved to be a challenging category to rate. In most product evaluations, the cats show me clear preferences. This time, no cat preferred a specific bed. And the beds all possessed different qualities that might make them more or less desirable to different cats. Everybody liked the air beds. With the exception of the heated bed, all of the tested beds are easy to maintain.

We rated the beds on a five-paw scale, with five paws representing the highest score. Here are our results:

Best Value Gertie Gear

This inflatable orthopedic bed provides a comfortable hammock nest for your cat. A tightly-woven under-



The Gertie Gear orthopedic bed acts as a hammock for cats and earned five-paw approval rating.

cover made of commercial marine industry cotton-polyester canvas protects the eight-gauge vinyl inner tube from sharp claws. An extra-long zipper around the undercover and the elastic outer slipcover makes changing this cover an easy task.

Slipcovers are available in a wide selection of fabrics, most of which can be machine washed and dried. This air bed doesn't require a pump. It took under 5 minutes to inflate by mouth and put the covers on. It comes in a 30-, 36- and 46-inch models.

The Gertie Gear rated as one of the favorite beds among all the test cats and earned a five-paw approval rating.

These beds vary in size and price as well as choice of slipcover fabric. The base price for a 30-inch air bed with the solid flannel slipcover is \$70, plus shipping. The replacement slipcover is \$20. To buy a bed or to get more information, call the manufacturer at 734-329-2661 or check out the website: www.GertieGear.com.

SnooZy® OrthoAir™ 42-inch Round Inflatable Bed

This inflatable, round bed is made of durable 32-gauge PVC and covered with a polyester faux lambskin. Individual coil air chambers allow the bed to contour to your cat's body and keep the pressure constant even when another cat leaves. It comes with an electric pump that inflated the enormous bed in only a couple of minutes.

SnooZy was almost as popular as the Gertie Gear bed and earned a five-paw approval rating. At most times, it was occupied by at least one cat. This enormous 42-inch diameter

bed accommodated four cats at once. Clean the PVC surface with water and mild detergent. Simply toss the cover in the washer and the materials are dryer safe.

The retail price of the 42-inch SnooZy ranges from \$79.99 to \$129.99 and the product is available at Petco and Petco.com. For more information or to find a retailer in your area, call Precision Pet Products at 800-261-3523 or visit the website: www.precisionpet.com

WallyBed™ 18-inch round with sides

This cup-shape bed features a removable acrylic faux-fur pillow filled with down-quality polyester. The polyester batting fills the side walls.

It proved to be the favorite bed for an 18-year-old Turkish Van test cat and earned a five-paw approval rating. To clean, simply throw in the washer and machine dry. It continues to look great even after multiple washings.

The 18-inch bed retails for \$102.50. Order directly from WallyBeds, www.thecatconnection.com (866-386-6369) or find a store locator on the website. For more information, call WallyBeds at 512-672-5555 or visit the website: www.wallybeds.com.

K&H™ Leopard Deluxe Thermo Kitty Bed with Hood

This 16-inch, heated cup bed utilizes a removable polyester microsuede cover over a foam ring core. It also features a detachable hood.

The pet-safe heating unit has been buried within the poly-fiber

filled pillow. A 56-inch long cord powers the 4-watt pet-safe UL-listed heating pad. It warms to 10 to 15 degrees above ambient air temperature when not in use.

The test cats loved this bed, especially during our long bout of 20-degree temperatures. Not surprisingly, interest in this bed among the test cats tapered off once 70-degree temperatures returned.

While I'm not a fan of foam core cup beds, this one had a new foam ring design that made taking it apart to wash much less difficult. This bed earned a four-paw approval rating.

The 16-inch bed retails for \$79.99 and is available at CozyWinters.com, Petco.com, Dog.com and Amazon.com. For more information, call K&H Manufacturing at 719-591-6950 or visit the website: www.khmfg.com.

Bindaboo® 5 Star Pet Bed

This bed contains MicroCloud, a breathable, anti-microbial synthetic goose down as well as a stain-resistant inner cover and

Tips for buying beds for senior cats

- Heated beds soothe achy joints, especially in cold climates.
- Only use heated pads designed for use on animals, as human pads may become too hot.
- Cup-shaped beds keep in the body warmth of cats.
- Avoid beds with high sides that make access difficult for senior cats and those with limited mobility.
- Seniors may like cup beds because they are warmer, but don't get a bed with very high sides because your cat may have difficulty getting in and out.
- Longhaired cats tend to prefer open beds because they are cooler. Shorthaired cats often like heated, hooded or deeper cupped beds.

— By *Dusty Rainbolt*



Earning top ratings for being durable and catering to aging cats were the SnooZZy® OrthoAir™ Inflatable bed, left, and the WallyBed™, right.

an attractive, high-thread-count cotton outer cover. Measuring 26 inches by 28 inches, the Bindaboo® is machine washable and dryer safe. With no zippers, buttons or snaps, you don't have to worry about choking hazards. The fiber-filled cushion is secured using fold-over flaps.

It took a while for the test cats to warm up to this bed, but once they did, it was in constant use. This bed earned a four-paw approval rating.

This product retails for \$69.99 plus shipping and is available at www.bindaboo.com and www.amazon.com. Learn more by calling Bindaboo® at 336-454-5716 or visit the website: www.bindaboo.com.

K&H™ Fish Neo Sleeper™

This deep memory foam bed features a neoprene cover with a non-slip bottom. Since the cover can't be removed, the manufacturer says you should spot wash it with mild soap. It measures 24 inches by 16 inches by 2 inches.

This bed, while not on the test cats' A-List, still received a significant amount of use. However,



The Bindaboo® 5 Star Pet Bed features a fiber-filled cushion and drew constant use by the test cats.

after one of the test cats marked it with urine, I placed it in the washer in cool water on the hand wash cycle and air dried. It fared just fine. This bed earned a three-paw approval rating.

It retails for \$39.99 and is available at CozyWinters.com, Petco.com, Dog.com and Amazon.com. For more information, call K&H Manufacturing at 719-591-6950 or visit the website: www.khmfg.com.

Pet-ZZZ-pad™ Heating Pad for Pets

This flexible, pet-specific heating pad can be used with any pet bed. It comes in three sizes. While six feet of the nine-foot cord are thin-gauge wire, the 36 inches closest to the bed are encased in a steel, chew-resistant casing. It has a removable, machine-washable thin faux fleece cover. It warms to 102 degrees.

The unit activates when the pet rests on it and shuts off when he leaves. The pad is water resistant and easy to clean. Unzip the machine washable cover and wipe the pad clean. This earned a three-paw approval rating.

The 12-inch pad retails for \$19.99 plus shipping and is available at Petco, Petco.com and Amazon.com and from the company's website: www.petzzzpad.com. 🐾

Catnip's product comparisons reflect testing and evaluation by the writers of *Catnip* and are independent of Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University.