

Love Is **Wobbly**



Tips for Adopters of
Three-Legged Dogs and Cats

Tips for Adopters of Three-Legged Cats

Cats are quite ingenious and nimble, so the loss of a leg often doesn't stop them from enjoying life to the fullest. A helping hand and some lifestyle adjustments can enable your three-legged cat to have a healthy, happy and safe life.

To keep your three-legged cat safe and happy:

- Use identification: Microchip your cat and have her wear an ID tag.
 - Never let the cat outside unsupervised. If you want your cat to spend time outdoors, teach her to walk with a harness and leash, or construct a cattery to enable your cat to enjoy the outdoors safely.
 - If your adopted cat has recently lost a limb, be patient and supportive during the adjustment period. Most three-legged cats adapt well and, in time, become as active and energetic as they were before losing the leg.
 - Although you should keep a close eye on your three-legged cat, encourage independence and avoid being over-protective. Your cat must learn how to compensate for the missing leg. For example, the cat needs to build up additional strength in other limbs, so don't carry her everywhere.
 - At first, your cat may need assistance with grooming areas that would normally be groomed by the now-missing leg. Cats are resourceful, though, so your three-legged cat may devise new ways of grooming.
 - Be cautious when touching your cat near the stump of the missing leg, because this area may be very sensitive.
 - Make sure that food and water are within easy reach.
- Cats with a missing foreleg may have trouble landing properly when jumping down from a high place. So, place plenty of soft cushions around for safe landings.
 - A cat with a missing hind leg may not be able to jump up very high. For such a cat, a multi-level cat perch with a staggered-level design may work better than one with a vertical post design.
 - To make your cat's favorite spots more accessible, install ramps. If the windowsill is a special place for your cat, put a chair close by to make it easier to access.
 - Using the litter box may be challenging at first. You can encourage your cat by helping to cover and dig, and by ensuring that the litter is kept clean.
 - You may need to adjust the size of the litter box, based on your cat's abilities.
 - Depending on what limb is missing, the cat may not be able to stoop down and may stand to urinate, so you may need to get a litter box with high sides.
 - If the cat is missing a back limb, consider getting an arched grooming tool to scratch those hard-to-reach spots on the cat's head.
 - Maintain a healthy diet for your cat. Three-legged cats should not be allowed to become obese because they have fewer limbs on which to distribute their weight.
 - Make sure that your cat gets plenty of gentle exercise in the beginning and then, as she adapts to using three legs, allow her to become more active. Exercise will help her to strengthen the remaining limbs.

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Tips for Adopters of Three-Legged Dogs

Dogs can be very resilient and often a three-legged animal soon forgets the missing limb altogether. Three-legged dogs can live long, happy and healthy lives with minimal adjustment to their lifestyle or to yours.

To keep your three-legged dog safe and happy:

- Use identification: Microchip your dog and have her wear an ID tag.
 - Keep your dog on a leash when walking.
 - Always keep your dog in a fenced-in area when she's unsupervised outdoors.
 - Three-legged dogs may feel more vulnerable. To increase your dog's confidence, expose her to new experiences, but allow her to do it at her own pace. To help keep the new experiences positive, be sure to reward and praise her.
 - It's natural to feel over-protective toward a dog who has lost a limb. But it's important to let a dog be a dog.
 - Maintain a healthy diet for your dog. Three-legged dogs should not be allowed to become obese because they have fewer limbs on which to distribute their weight.
 - Exercise the dog regularly. Short, frequent walks and swimming are excellent ways to keep your dog physically fit.
 - It may be easier for a three-legged dog to hop along at a quick pace rather than to walk slowly. Watch for signs of exertion and stop to rest as needed.
 - Ask your vet which supplements will help to support your dog's joint health.
 - Provide raised water and food bowls, so that your three-legged dog can drink and eat without having to bend down.
 - Watch for elbow hygroma, a fluid-filled swelling around the elbow that may occur when there is too much weight on one elbow.
 - Take good care of the dog's remaining foot pads. Keep nails short and trim the fur at the bottom of your dog's feet for comfort and to prevent slipping.
- Stairs, uneven ground and raised surfaces may be difficult for your dog to navigate, so be patient and provide help as necessary.
 - Be aware of slippery surfaces in your home. Three-legged dogs have less balance and can easily slip on hard surfaces such as wood, tile, linoleum or marble. This is especially true when dogs are running or playing. To prevent slipping, put down throw rugs and runners. Rugs also provide a soft surface for a dog to rest on.
 - Check for uneven ground in the yard, and make sure that there are no deep holes. Three-legged dogs can trip on uneven surfaces and hurt themselves.
 - Clear away piles of sticks and leaves in your yard. Larger sticks may catch on a dog's nails and cause damage.
 - Provide soft surfaces for your dog to lie on that are elevated from the floor or ground.
 - For larger dogs, consider purchasing a lightweight harness with a handle on the back to help you lift your dog in and out of vehicles or out of harm's way.
 - Three-legged dogs may feel vulnerable in the presence of unfamiliar dogs. When your dog is around other dogs, be aware of the body language of all the dogs.
 - Dogs carry 60 percent of their weight on their front legs. If your dog is missing a front leg, protect the remaining front limb from strain or harm. Some ways to do this:
 - Use a car seat harness with wide chest bands.
 - Dogs missing a front leg may easily jump or climb up onto raised surfaces but have problems getting down. It may be best to keep your dog off of the furniture.
 - Your dog may have more trouble with certain toys, such as treat balls filled with kibble, which require a continual hop/stop motion. This type of movement places a lot of strain on the single front leg. Instead, use interactive toys that can be enjoyed from a fixed position, such as a Kong filled with peanut butter or cheese.

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