



Skydiving Cats

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It's a popular belief that falling cats always land on their feet, but unfortunately that is not always the case. Cats have been and can be seriously injured by falls from windows, rooftops and balconies. Veterinarians actually have a name for the trauma sustained from a fall of over two stories, they call it *high-rise syndrome*.

Cats do possess superb coordination, balance and flexibility, and they can usually right themselves in a fall, but their legs and feet are not always capable of absorbing the shock on impact. This is greatly affected by the distance the cat falls as well as the landing surface.

An article published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* reported findings from veterinarians who studied cases of cats that had fallen out of windows. They found that the number of broken bones and injuries exponentially increased with the number of stories the cat fell, up to seven stories. In falls from above seven stories, the number of injuries actually declined. It seems preposterous, but this is something that falling cats and skydivers have in common called terminal velocity.

Terminal velocity simply means that the speed at which a body falls will only increase to a certain level until it is interrupted by air resistance. A skydiver falls for about 30 seconds and reaches a terminal velocity of around 130 to 140 mph. A falling cat reaches terminal velocity after about five floors, a speed of approximately 60 mph.

Cats, especially indoor cats, have no concept of height and have been known to jump right out of a window or off a balcony after birds flying by or other animals across the way. To ensure your cat's safety, make sure any windows you open have heavy screens, and do not allow your cat access to unscreened balconies or porches.

Remember, a little prevention will go a long way to protect those cats who suddenly decide to take up skydiving. Just because cats, like skydivers, have terminal velocity, skydiving is not a sport that is recommended for cats!