

Bringing Your New Cat Home

The first thing you should know about your new pet is that most cats hate to travel! After the ride home from the animal shelter, the cat will most likely be quite stressed whether the cat shows this or not. Try to do what you can to make the trip home as stress free as possible. Firstly, confine your pet in a sturdy cat carrier. Don't leave him loose in your car where he might panic and cause an accident. Not only do most cats hate to travel, most are also easily stressed by a new environment. Here are some tips to make your cats transition into his or her new home as stress free as possible.

To make his or her move to your household as comfortable as possible, select a quiet, closed-in area such as your bedroom or a small room away from the main foot traffic (laundry room, bathroom, office or the like). This will ease the transition for your new cat by lessening the amount of stressors in his or her new environment. For most cats, being exposed to your entire house all at once would be extremely overwhelming and could cause behavioral problems due to stress. Make sure to provide all the necessities in the new room: litter box, food and water, and a nice place to curl up and relax. It may also help to place a radio in the room, perhaps with classical music, as this has demonstrated to be soothing for animals. Let your new pet become acquainted with that limited area for at least the first few days, but ideally one week. After one week, it is still best to have some control over what new stressors your pet is exposed to. This is best achieved by using a “baby gate” or other barrier at the door so that introductions to other members of the family can be done slowly. This is especially important if you have other cats. Cats do not always accept other cats, particularly if they are just “thrown together”. Cat on cat introductions absolutely need to be done slowly to make sure things go smoothly. The animals will already be aware of one another, so now it is important for them to come face to face, but not be forced to interact. If they start out on the wrong foot, it could prolong the new cats acceptance into the house. (It is also equally important to try to make this transition as easy as possible on resident cat or cats). Reassuring all members of the house that they are loved and safe will help tremendously. After about a week with the baby gate up, most cats will be adjusted enough to roam free. But, it is important to monitor all members of the household so that you can assure that no one is being picked on. It is important to remember that these are just guidelines. Some cats may need several weeks or more of the baby gate, or isolation. Observe your pet for signs of stress, and make sure that he or she is acting normally (i.e. drinking and eating, using the box, etc).

Cats vary in terms of how demanding they are as pets, so let yours guide you to the level of attention he or she wants, whether it's your hand for petting or your lap for sitting. Provide the cat with the necessary creature comforts and give him or her the companionship he or she seeks, and your cat will be content.

The following is a mini-primer of cats' requirements for a happy life:

Cleanliness: Your new cat will prize a clean environment and a clean body. Cats are naturally fastidious and most will instinctively use a litter box; for some, you may need to place the cat in the box and make little scratching motions with their front paws so they get the idea. It is a good idea to put your new cat in his or her new box at first so that they know where it is. Many cats place such a premium on cleanliness that you should clean the box daily or several times a day. If you are in a multi cat house hold remember that the rule is one litter box for each cat, PLUS one extra. So, for 3 cats you will want to have 4 boxes. Automatic boxes are extremely helpful in a multi cat household, and can eliminate litter box problems in some cats. Think about how you would feel having to walk into a bathroom while stepping on someone else's waste. You may choose other places to relieve yourself too! Cats also value privacy, so place the litter box in a convenient but secluded spot. Many cats do not like their box to be near a noisy area, such as next to a washing machine. It is also

important to know many cats can be picky about both the type of box they will use, as well as the type of litter they will use. Most prefer a rather large (approximately 2x3) open box. Some cats need a box with high sides, as they will tend to put their behind by the wall of the box and can miss if it is not high enough. The VAST majority of cats like a plain, unscented, clumping litter such as Everclean. Another great litter is called Cat Attract. It has e-ingredients that entice the cat to use the box. If you have adopted a declawed cat, it can be particularly tricky to find a litter that your cat likes. If this is the case, do not hesitate to do some research or ask rescue personnel questions. If your cat is avoiding his or her litter box, please contact rescue personnel IMMEDIATELY so the issue can be solved.

Most cats will spend hours grooming themselves, but even the most avid groomer can use a little help from time to time. If you have adopted a Persian, your cat will need to be brushed at least a few times a week, at the very least, or kept in a lion cut. Even short-haired cats benefit from weekly brushing, a task that can be pleasurable for both of you. Nail clipping and ear and teeth cleaning are tasks you can do to keep your cat well groomed. Anyone can clip nails and bath cats at home, with a few tricks. Feel free to call if you are having trouble grooming at home. Many, many serious and life threatening health issues are thought to be related to your cats dental health, so if you cannot brush your cats teeth yearly dentals can help your cat live a long and comfortable life. Nowadays, many vets offer a non-anesthetic dental option that is much, much more affordable than dentals done under anesthesia.

Security: Provide your cat with safety and security. Always use a cat carrier when transporting your pet. Protect him or her by making certain that all windows are securely screened, and that the washer and dryer are kept closed and are inspected before each use. Get into the habit of ensuring that drawers, closets, and cupboards are uninhabited before you close them. And for your own security, put a collar and tag on your feline if the cat is not microchipped—there's always the chance he may slip outside by mistake, and you want to make sure he can be identified as your pet. Countless beloved pet members of a family are mistakenly adopted out, or even worse, euthanized when their owner cannot find them in the shelter.

Health Care: Animal shelters take in animals with widely varying backgrounds, some of whom have not been previously vaccinated. Despite the best efforts of shelter workers, viruses can spread and may occasionally go home with adopted animals. If you already have cats at home, make sure they are up-to-date on their shots (FRCP) and in good general health before introducing your new cat. If you notice symptoms that concern you, please contact us to discuss. Most rescue cats (and cats in general) carry Herpes virus. This can cause mild to severe symptoms, especially during times of stress. Mild symptoms such as sneezing or watery eyes are nothing to worry about, as long as the cat is eating and drinking, and is not lethargic. If you see green or yellow snot, or the cat is not eating and drinking, or seems lethargic please contact us immediately as these are signs of secondary infection and can become a serious health problem. Remember to take your new pet into the vets office approximately one year after you adopt him or her. Yearly vet appointments are very important, and can help stave off many illnesses that you cannot recognize at home.

Manners and Rules: Despite what anyone tells you, you CAN train a cat! It is very important to provide your cat with some "basic training" to help him get along in your home. You and your cat will be much happier if your cat knows how to be a good housemate. It is true that cats usually have their own ideas about how to do things. But, most cats can be taught to obey simple rules like not scratching the couch, eating plants, rushing the door, or jumping up on the kitchen counter. With repeated, gentle, and consistent training, your cat will learn. Many people find a squirt bottle to be very helpful in training a cat to not exhibit inappropriate behavior. Some also make a loud noise such as clapping your hands, or a loud "agh!". This is not advised for shy, or untrusting cats.

Punishing at your cat never works. Instead, positively reward him and provide him with alternative choices. A good scratching post—coupled with the handy squirt gun filled with water—can save your

couch, your chair, and your nerves. If you help your cat understand the rules and give him a satisfying outlet for his scratching impulses, there will be no need to have him declawed, an unnecessary operation *no* cat should endure. Declawing is comparable to removing the last digit of your finger. It can cripple the cat and cause LIFE LONG behavior problems.

Room for Fun. Finally, provide your cat with an interesting indoor environment. Cats love to play and will appreciate simple and inexpensive toys. Ping-Pong balls and paper bags can provide hours of fun. A comfortable perch by a window can become your cat's very own entertainment and relaxation center.

Toys are very important for cats. They not only fight boredom, they also give cats a chance to express their prey-chasing drives. If you're the one moving the toy while your cat chases after it, playtime can be a bonding experience for both of you. There is more wild animal in your cat than you may realize. Cats need to stalk, pounce, and hunt, but NOT outside. The average indoor/outdoor cat lives a mere 3-5 years. The last thing any loving pet owner wants is to go through the heartbreak of losing your beloved cat to an outdoor danger that you were responsible for exposing him or her to. Indoor cats can live a fulfilling, and long, happy life. The average indoor cat lives 15-17 years! I promise you, any cat can be happy living an indoor only life.

Diet: A nutritionally balanced diet is vital to maintaining the health of your cat. There are many differing opinions on feline nutrition, so you should do some research on the subject if you have not already. Your cat is a carnivore. A raw food diet fit for a carnivore is absolutely best for your cat, but most people (and cats) are not willing to accept such a diet. If you are willing to give it a try, most pet stores sell pre made raw foods that you can try. Most cats will not take to this new diet (or any new diet) readily, but pet store employees can give you many great tips on getting your cat to eat raw food. As with most things with cats, SLOWLY, SLOWLY, and PATIENTLY are the keys to changing your cats diet. The next best thing to a raw food diet, is a meat based wet food. No, a wet food will not be bad for your cats teeth! High quality, meat based wet foods have a higher protein content than any commercial dry food. And cats need a high percentage of protein in their diet. Additionally, cats are desert animals. Your domestic housecat is thought to have evolved from a feral, desert dwelling cat from northern Africa. Being a desert animal, your cat is an expert at absorbing water from his or her food and does not have a strong instinct to drink plain old water. Most cats in America live their life chronically dehydrated, and many veterinarians believe this is the cause of a multitude of health issues, many of which are life threatening. A water fountain can encourage your cat to drink more water than a regular bowl, as many cats prefer a moving water source rather than a stagnant one (stagnant pools of water would have a higher likelihood of harboring bacteria in their original outdoors environment). Back to the food issue. If you are not comfortable feeding an entirely wet food diet, then the next best thing is to feed both wet and dry food. Ideally, the cat will eat mostly wet food and a small amount of dry food. Which dry food you choose is up to you, but do look at the ingredient list. The first ingredient should be meat, and not "meat by product". The list should include very little carbohydrates, especially corn and wheat. It is ideal to not have either of these particular carbohydrate sources, as many cats have allergies to these ingredients. How much your cat should eat depends on his or her age, weight, and activity level. Normally, a cat will adjust his or her appetite according to these factors. If you are feeding your cat a high quality, meat based wet or dry food your cat should not become obese. Most obese cats eat a very low quality dry food (and dry food only) such as Iams or Friskies. These foods are like junk food for cats. They are addicting, and provide very little nutritional value outside of calories. Many cats will be chronically hungry eating these foods and

will keep trying to fill their nutritionally void bodies with more food in an attempt to squelch this hunger, but they will never do so on these foods. All they need is real food! It is important to note that cats **CANNOT** be allowed to not eat! A cat cannot go without food for more than 72 hours. At about the 72 hour mark, cats will enter the beginnings of Hepatic Lipidosis (aka Fatty Liver Disease). This disease is often fatal, so it is an important subject to be well versed on. Please do some research to learn what it is if you do not know already.

If you have adopted a pet from Seattle Persian and Himalayan Rescue, you are welcome to call or email any time with questions or concerns, as we want you and your feline companion to be happy. I hope this document gives you a great start with your new feline family member!