

Adopted Cat Booklet



Congratulations on your new cat! Bringing home a new cat is very exciting and can be overwhelming not only for you as a new pet parent but for your new cat as well. The key to making a successful transition from a shelter to a home is being prepared and patient. Throughout your adoption booklet we have many resources to answer your questions and to help this transition go as smoothly as possible. Please call us if you need additional information or advice.

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1. New Cat Check List

When adopting a cat, you are going to need some supplies. These are the items SoHumane recommends all adopters purchase and have ready when you take your adopted cat home:

- ☐ Litter box and litter
- ☐ Safety Collar/Breakaway Collar
- ☐ ID Tag: One of the most important things you can get for your cat is an ID tag with your phone number on it. Accidents happen, and if your cat gets out it is important for whoever finds him to be able to contact you.
- ☐ Cat Tree and/or Scratching Post.
- ☐ Nail Clippers, Brush, and other Grooming Supplies.
- ☐ Water and Food Dishes
- ☐ Dog bed: To provide a comfortable place in the house so your dog can relax with the family.
- ☐ High-Quality Cat Food and treats: Purchase a high quality food with healthy ingredients.
- ☐ Safe Toys. (Wand Toys, Catnip Toys, and Ball Toys are all safe toys for your new cat to chase/hunt)



Set your cat up for success: Do's

Take your cat straight home. It is not a good idea to go to a pet store, groomer, or vet's office (unless the cat needs immediate medical attention) because the cat is not familiar with you and this may be too overwhelming.

Provide your cat with a small room to start. Set up a litter box at one end of the room and food/water and a bed at the other. Doing this will prevent your cat from having accidents in the house. Gradually give your cat more freedom as he successfully uses his litter box.

Give your cat several weeks to adjust. Transitioning from the shelter to your home can be stressful for your cat. Creating routines, such as feeding or playing with him at the same time every day, can help your cat feel more comfortable in his new home.

Set your cat up for success: Don'ts

Don't drag your cat out of hiding. Use food or toys to help lure your cat out of hiding to help build confidence in his new home.

Don't let your new cat outside of the home. It can take weeks, or even months, for your new cat to feel at home. If your cat is going to be indoor/outdoor you will want to gradually introduce him to the outdoor space after he is confident with his indoor surroundings.

Don't have visitors over for the first few days. Allow your new cat to relax and get comfortable with his surroundings before inviting friends over to meet him.

Don't use your hand/fingers as a toy. You can avoid getting your hand bitten by not using your hand or fingers as a toy to play with your cat. Use appropriate, safe toys to play with your cat instead. Examples of safe toys can be found on the new cat check list.

3. Bringing home your cat.

Bringing home a cat can be a wonderful experience but it does bring its challenges as well. Being prepared for your new fuzzy bundle of joy is one of the most important things you can do to start your cat off on the right paw.

Many cats do not like traveling. Keep your new cat in his carrier no matter how much he is crying is the **ONLY** safe way to transport your pet. Do not leave your cat in the car unattended, even for a short stop to shop as cats can overheat very quickly.

Your new cat is embarking on a journey to a fun and wonderful life. You are aware of all the joys that lie ahead, but your cat does not know what is happening. The first few days can be very uncertain for your cat. Be patient and take things slowly.

Prepare a safe room isolated from other pets in the home, such as a bathroom or small spare bedroom, for your new cat's first few nights. Place the litter box at one end with



the food and water dishes and bed at the other. Allow your cat lots of time to adjust, and initially, when you're away and at night, keep the cat in this safe place.

A frightened or unsure cat's tendency is to hide. Let him do that and know that he will eventually become comfortable and come out. Under no circumstances should you force a cat from his hiding place by pulling his legs or other body

parts. Coax him out gently with food or a toy, or leave him alone for now.

Do not be alarmed if your new cat exhibits any of the following behaviors in the first few days.

- o Not eating
- o Sniffing everything
- o Upset tummy, vomiting, and loose stools
- o Hiding(sometimes for days)
- o Not using the litter box

A. Scratching

Scratching is a normal behavior and can be directed to appropriate places. Your cat scratches not only to clean away scales from its nails but also to mark territory. Try providing your cat with a variety of scratching



options such as a rope scratching post, a log with bark intact, a cardboard box, ect. Put the scratching post near a favorite sleeping place as cats love to stretch and scratch after a nap. Reinforce his good

behavior by praising him whenever he uses appropriate places. Put catnip on the “right” scratching items. If you catch him scratching the furniture, try a water spray bottle, set on stream. Only punish the behavior, not the cat (this is, catch him in the act). If the cat just loves scratching one corner of your couch, for example, place something there to block access like plastic carpet protectors turned upside down with the little spikes facing outward to discourage cats from walking over them. You can also use foil or double sided sticky tape.

Declawing

Once people learn more about declawing, they are usually discouraged from having the surgery and are happy to seek out alternative solutions. Consider the following:

- o Declawing is the amputation of the entire last digit of the cat’s toes. Declawing includes severing of ligaments and tendons, which is very painful.
- o Cat owners have reported having to change cat litter as some declawed cats find clay litter painful and may stop covering their litter.
- o Declawing can cause impaired balance, increased stress because they cannot defend themselves, or injury during a fall because they cannot grip anything.
- o A declawed cat, deprived of its claws, may turn to its only other defense – its teeth. You may have a cat that does not damage your furniture but is now quick to bite!

Leave your cat with its claws and use these simple alternatives!

Keep claws trimmed. Carefully trim the tips off the nails being careful not to cut the quick. Ask your veterinarian to instruct you so you can do this at home or take your pet to a groomer.

You can buy nail sheaths, little plastic caps that fit over the nails to prevent scratching. These have been used successfully by many people.

Train your cat to use the alternative scratching posts that you provided.

B. Why Is My Cat Not Using the Litter box?



You need to determine if the problem is inappropriate elimination or territorial marking. If your cat is marking, you will usually find the urine has been deposited on vertical surfaces, whereas inappropriate toileting is on horizontal surfaces. Each has different suggested remedies. For territorial marking (spraying), look into what has changed in your cat's environment that may cause him to feel the need to assert a presence in an area. Your veterinarian should perform a health exam to rule out any underlying medical reasons for the behavior. For more information on territorial marking please review the 'Unwanted Urine-Marking' section of this guide.

Causes for inappropriate elimination:

Setting Up and Managing Your Litter Box

- o The general rule of thumb is one litter box per cat plus an extra box for insurance.
- o Place the litter box in a convenient location, but it must be private and quiet for the cat (a laundry room or hallway may be too noisy and busy).
- o Keep the boxes away from heavy traffic areas and the cat's feeding area. Be certain a shy cat can reach the box without feeling threatened or exposed.
- o Scoop away waste every day – this will make your cat happy. Thoroughly clean the box once a month. Empty out all the litter, wash with dish soap and dry.
- o When you first arrive home with your new cat, calmly place him in the litter box a few times to be sure he knows the location. Allowing the cat to watch you when you scoop the litter box has been reported to encourage the cat to jump in and use it.
- o You may need to experiment with different types of litter until you find the one that is acceptable to your cat. Any accidents should be cleaned with enzyme-based cleaner.

The cat has not learned the location of the litter box or forgets where it is if allowed too much house to roam. This is especially true for kittens.

The cat may have a physiological or physical condition (illness). Any cat displaying inappropriate litter box habits should see your veterinarian right away to rule out infection or other medical issues.

The cat may not like the brand of litter, so try some others simultaneously. Observe which he selects.

The litter box is not clean. Soiled areas should be removed DAILY. The entire pan should be emptied and washed at least once a month, replacing with fresh litter.

The cat is soiling an area previously used for elimination by another pet. Clean thoroughly with an enzyme-based cleaner.

Place the food bowl on a previously soiled spot as this may deter the cat, or place another litter box on the spot.

C. Reducing Urine-Marking Behavior in Cats

It's important to first distinguish the difference between urine-marking behavior and house soiling because the solutions differ for these two behaviors.

Marking

Cats may mark on something new brought into the home, an object that smells like the owner or the inside of a door or window in your home if they have detected cats outside. If the issue is marking, you will find that your cat is continuing to use the litter box for toileting.

The longer the marking has been going on the harder it is to tackle, so don't delay. If you have multiple intact cats living together, it's time to schedule spay/neuter surgeries for them. Intake males and females are more likely to urine mark than those who have been spayed/neutered. However, some spayed/neutered cats can also mark.

Causes for Marking

1. Disruption or any changes in your cat's routine. Cats generally do not like changes.
2. Anything that increases anxiety in a cat who may be anxious to begin with, such as a new animal in the home.
3. Upset by outdoor cats or conflicts with other pets in the home.
4. New objects in your home that smell unfamiliar.

Solutions

1. Block visual access to windows where your cat can see outdoor cats.
2. Keep your cat indoors.
3. Thoroughly clean any marked areas with an enzymatic cleaner.
4. Increase the time you spend with your cat. Feed, play, brush and interact with your cat in ways he enjoys in the areas where he was marking.
5. Move any objects that are likely marking targets out of the cat's reach.
6. Create positive associations between a new roommate, a visiting friend, or your new baby and your cat. Anything that your cat loves to do or eat appears only when the new person is right there by the cat. If your cat is too nervous to get close, provide some distance and toss a treat or use a wand toy instead of a toy that requires closer proximity.
7. Interrupt your cat's sniffing behavior around areas where he has marked previously by clapping your hands or squirting him with water. It's better if he doesn't know these things are coming from you as we want him to avoid the area when you are not there. You could also lay down carpet strip with the pointy sides up in the target area.
8. Never punish your cat after the fact. It will confuse him, be ineffective and could damage your relationship with him.

D. Helping a Fearful Cat

Cats need to feel safe in their environment to truly be happy, relaxed and playful. When they feel threatened they usually respond in these ways to the object, person or situation they perceive as a threat:

- o Hiding
- o Puffing up, hissing, growling, swatting, biting, scratching
- o Loss of control over bladder and/or bowels
- o Freezing in place

You'll notice that your cat probably tends to try one option first, and if that doesn't work, he's forced to try a different option. For instance, if your cat is afraid of dogs and a friend brings his dog to your home to visit, you might notice your cat puffs out his fur to make himself look big, then hisses at the dog. If the dog doesn't retreat, your cat may flee the situation, finding a hiding spot and freeze until she deems the situation safe.

What Triggers Fearful Behavior?

You'll need to closely observe your cat to determine the trigger for his fearful behavior. Some common triggers are:

- o A stranger intruding into the home
- o Other animals
- o Children
- o Loud noises
- o A new environment
- o A car journey
- o A trip to the veterinarian's office

Remember: just because you know there is no real danger doesn't mean your cat feels safe.

What You Can Do

It's understandable that you want to help and comfort your cat when he's frightened; however, this isn't necessarily the best thing to do from your cat's point of view. Often, a new cat will hide for a day or two when you first bring him home – this is normal. Sometimes, a traumatic experience – like a visit to the veterinarian, or introducing a new animal into the household – can disrupt his routine and send him under the bed for a few days.

Take the following steps to reduce your cat's anxiety and help him feel more confident:

- o Schedule an appointment with your veterinarian to rule out any medical reasons for your cat's fearful behavior. Any sudden behavior change could mean your cat is ill.
- o If your cat is healthy, but hiding, leave him alone for a few days. To force him out of his hiding spot will only make him more fearful. Make sure he has easy access to food, water, and his litter box from his hiding place. Clean the litter box and change the food and water every day so you know whether he is eating and drinking.
- o If you know the trigger, keep any contact with the trigger to a minimum.
- o Keep your cat's routine as regular as possible. Cats feel more confident if they know when to expect daily feeding, playing, petting and grooming.

- o Try to desensitize your cat to the fear stimulus (you may need help from an animal behavior specialist):
 1. Determine what distance your cat can be from the fear stimulus without responding fearfully.
 2. Introduce the fear stimulus at this distance while you're feeding your cat tasty treats and praising him.
 3. Slowly move the fear stimulus closer as you continue to praise your cat and offer him treats.
 4. If at any time during this process your cat shows fearful behavior, you've proceeded too quickly and will need to start over from the beginning. This is the most common mistake people make when desensitizing an animal, and it can be avoided by working in short sessions, paying careful attention to your cat so that you don't progress too rapidly for him.

What Not To Do

- o Don't punish your cat for his fearful behavior. This will only cause him to become fearful of you and he most likely won't understand why he's being punished.
- o Don't force him to experience the object or situation that is causing his fear. For example, if he is afraid of a certain person, don't let that person try to pick him up and hold him. This will only make him more frightened of that person.



E. Introducing Your New Cat to Other Pets

Cat to Cat

Make sure the new cat has a place to himself for a few days, allowing him time to adjust. Spend time with your new cat out of sight of your existing cat. Be sure to lavish attention on your existing cat as well.

Allow your original cat to follow his usual routine. He will be aware that something is different and will seek out the location of the new cat. Allow them to sniff under the door.

After a day or so, swap the cats so they can investigate each other's areas. Getting used to each other's scents is an integral part of adjustment. If all seems to be going well, allow the cats to meet one another through a screen/baby gate or crate, etc. It is normal for cats to hiss and growl at each other, but an all-out physical attack is very inappropriate and rare. However, be prepared with a water spray bottle and a towel or blanket to separate the cats, as allowing them to fight will elongate the

introduction period or may even damage the process all together.

After a comfortable period of introductions through a baby gate, carrier, or monitored encounter, increase the area and time the new kitty can explore outside his safe room. Allow only short periods of contact, increasing as time goes on.

Once the new cat has been allowed access to the rest of the house, leave his safe room intact so he may take refuge there.

Improvement in attitudes toward each other should begin in a week or so. Do not be discouraged if it takes longer. The length of adjustment will depend on the personalities of the cats and the length of time your existing cat was a solitary pet. Be sure to lavish attention on all your cats to make everyone feel part of the family. The social interaction level may vary; you may have cats that groom, play and sleep with each, or just tolerate the existence of the other – and that is ok too!

To increase the chances of a peaceful multi-cat household provide one litter box per cat plus one, food and water in various locations, lot of toys, many safe resting spots (both high and low), and multiple scratching posts. If spats occur between cats, make a loud noise, gently throw a pillow/towel, or use a squirt with water to separate the cats. Carefully put one in a different room entirely and wait until they are both calm before re-introducing them to each other. Going back to the gradual steps outlined above.

Before introducing your new cat to your other pets, make sure your existing pets are healthy and current with their vaccinations. Introducing your cat to other pets should be done slowly over a period of weeks. Prepare a spare room (like a bathroom or small spare bedroom) where your new cat can reside for a while before being introduced to the other pets. REMEMBER – it may take a month or more for the new cat to be accepted.

A proper introduction is very important and can eliminate many problems from the start.

Introducing a Cat and a Dog

By: Sherry Woodard

Some dogs do fine living with cats; others simply cannot live safely with felines. Sometimes, a dog can live with certain cats (depending on their age, temperament and activity level), but not others. Even if your dog has successfully lived with cats in the past, it is important to remember that each dog and each cat is an individual and therefore each introduction is different.

When introducing your dog to a cat, pay attention to the body language of both animals. If the cat's ears are pinned back or his tail is swishing back and forth, this is a good indicator that he is displeased. You particularly want to be aware of dog body language that could be potential warning signs. If your dog has a strong prey drive (the inclination to seek out, chase and potentially capture animals seen as prey — usually smaller animals such as cats or rabbits), she might become very focused on the cat. She'll stiffen, stare, and may start barking or whining. If you see these signs, do not let her near the cat. Ideally, her body language will be loose and relaxed around the cat. It's OK if she pays attention to the cat, but you don't want to see her fixated on him.

In addition, a dog's interaction with a cat can change depending on the environment. Just because your dog is OK with the cat inside the house doesn't mean she'll exhibit that same behavior outdoors. She might fixate on the cat and start stalking him when they are outside together. So, be aware of her body language around the cat in each new situation, until you know how she is going to respond toward him.

There are many different ways to introduce a dog to a cat. If the first method of introduction you try doesn't work or you don't feel comfortable with it, try a different option. Even if the dog has had experience with cats and the cat has lived with a dog before, proceed cautiously during the introduction. It's best to have two people present — one to intervene with each animal, if necessary. If you have

more than one dog, introduce each dog separately to the cat.

Option 1 - Slow and Steady Desensitization:

If your dog is too fixated on the cat, you can try desensitization, the goal of which is to reduce your dog's reaction to the cat by gradually increasing her exposure to him. Put the cat in a room (e.g., a bedroom, a bathroom or a spare room) with a tall baby gate across the door. The room you choose should be one the dog cannot access and doesn't need to access. For example, if the dog sleeps in the bedroom with you at night, don't pick that room for the cat. The idea is to separate them and only allow them to view each other during specific times.

In his room, give the cat all needed supplies:

litter box, toys, food and water.

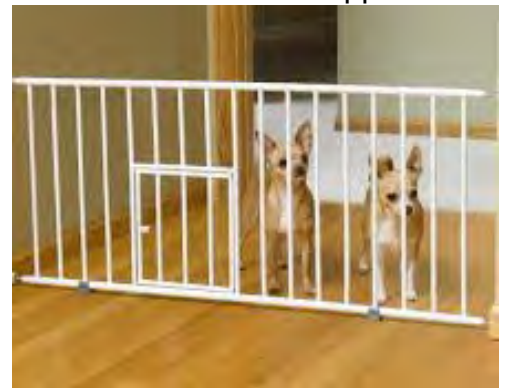
Keep in mind that cats are good at squeezing through small gaps and are also

good climbers and jumpers. So, make sure your cat can't get past the gate you put up. The gate needs to be a barrier that allows the cat and dog to see one another, but does not allow them to access each other.

To begin desensitization, let the dog view the cat briefly through the gate, and then get the dog to focus on something else, such as playing with a toy or practicing cues.

Sometimes it helps to keep the dog on leash so that you can move her away from the cat when you try to refocus her attention. Praise and reward the dog for being able to focus elsewhere. Continue to give the dog short viewings of the cat throughout the day.

Sometimes, even seeing the cat at first is too exciting for the dog. If this is the case, close the door and begin feeding each animal on his



or her side of the door: The cat eats his food in his room, right next to the door, and the dog eats her meal on the other side of the door. This allows each animal to associate the smells of the other with something good: food. You can also swap out the blankets and bedding of each animal, giving it to the other. That way, the dog can get used to the cat's smell and the cat can get used to the dog's smell, without overstimulating either of them.

Hopefully, through this process of slowly letting the dog see the cat and get accustomed to the cat's presence, the dog will eventually become desensitized and lose interest in the cat. In some cases, the dog will lose interest in the cat within a couple of hours, but it can take days, weeks or even months. Each dog (and each cat) is an individual and will learn at his or her own pace.

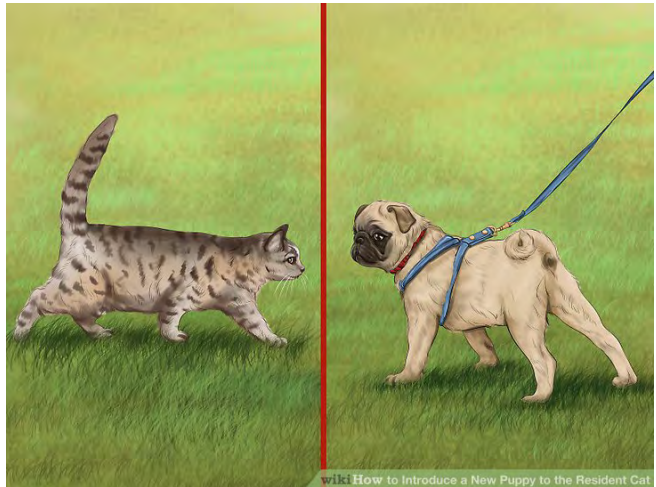
With that said, though, it is possible that your dog may not ever be able to safely share space with a cat. If you don't feel you can trust your dog around your cat, you should keep them apart. Many dogs can injure or kill a cat very quickly, and your dog can also be injured by the cat. Your first priority should be ensuring that everyone stays safe.

Option 2 - Face-to-Face Introduction:

This is a more fast-paced introduction. One person should hold the dog on a loose lead and watch the dog's body language. Someone else should watch the cat's body language. If the cat is not raising his back or hissing around the dog, he can be allowed to move around freely. A cat is rarely a threat to a dog, but some cats will be on the offensive when meeting dogs.

If the dog is calm around the cat, you can ask the dog to sit, or lie down and stay, if she has been taught those cues, while the cat moves about freely, sniffing the dog if he wishes. The dog should be praised and rewarded if she ignores the cat. If the dog is too fixated on the cat (e.g., staring at the cat, has stiff body language, will not listen to you when you call her name) or if she lunges and tries to chase

the cat, you should try a different strategy for getting them to share space, such as Option 1 or Option 3.



Option 3 - Look at That:

If the quick introduction did not work and your dog is not becoming desensitized to the cat, you might need to try some more structured training. By playing Look at That (LAT) with your dog, you can help to teach her not to fixate on the cat. You'll be teaching her to look at the cat and then look back at you for a treat. Essentially, she'll learn that it is more rewarding to not pay attention to the cat.

To start working on LAT, you need to figure out the dog's threshold while on leash: At what point does she notice the cat, but still respond to you when you say her name? That is her threshold. Each dog has a different threshold. For one dog, five feet away from the cat might be her threshold; for another dog, it might be 25 feet. You'll know you have gone past the threshold when she starts barking or lunging at the cat. Another sign that you're getting too close to the cat is if she starts moving more slowly, staring and stiffening her body. If you call her name and she doesn't respond to you, move a few feet away from the cat.

Once you've figured out the dog's threshold, grab a clicker and some really delicious, pea-sized treats. If you don't have a clicker, a verbal marker (a word like "yes" or "good") will work just fine. Put 10 treats in your hand and keep the bag close by for later.

When you see the dog looking at the cat, click the clicker or use your verbal marker and give her a treat. The first few times, you might have to put the treat right in front of her nose, but fairly soon she should start looking expectantly at you as soon as she hears the marker. That's because the marker (either a clicker or a word like "yes") always means a treat is coming. Use up the 10 treats, clicking as soon as she looks at the cat.



The 11th time, before using the marker, wait and see if she will look at the cat and then look right back at you. If she does that, either click or use the verbal marker when she looks at you and then give her a treat. If that doesn't happen, go back a step. Mark her 10 more times for looking at the cat and then try again. Once she is reliably looking at the cat and then looking back at you, you can slowly start moving closer and closer to the cat. If the dog becomes fixated on the cat when you move closer, you've gone past the threshold and need to move back.

As you train, her threshold decreases, which means that the two of you will be able to move closer and closer to the cat. Continue practicing LAT with your dog until she can be

right next to the cat without an issue. How quickly your dog's threshold decreases will depend on you (how much you practice and the types of treats you use), your dog (since every dog learns at a different pace) and your cat's comfort level.

Introducing Kittens and Puppies:

If you are introducing a kitten to a dog, keep in mind that kittens may not have any fear of dogs, so you must watch the dog carefully. Because kittens are small and want to run and play, dogs with a strong prey drive may be very excited by a kitten's movements. Even if your dog is OK with your adult cats, it is important to watch her closely when she's with a kitten. If your dog is young and high-energy, she could hurt or kill the kitten simply by trying to play. So, for safety's sake, keep kittens and dogs apart any time you are not watching them.

Introducing adult cats to puppies can sometimes be easy, since a well-socialized adult cat might be fine with a puppy acting like a puppy. However, if your rambunctious puppy is chasing your shy cat, it is up to you to intervene. Until the puppy is old enough to have more self-control and has had some training, you will want to manage their interactions. You don't want your puppy to learn that chasing the cat is a fun game. Baby gates can be used to keep the animals safely and comfortably apart. To help you keep an eye on your puppy, you can also put her on a leash. That way, if she begins to chase the cat, you will be able to easily direct her away from that behavior.

Seeking help from a professional:

Animals with good past experience often adjust well and quickly to a new pet in the house. But if introductions don't go well, seek help from a professional dog trainer or behavior consultant. Don't ever use punishment: It will not help and it could make matters much worse.

5. Enrichment

Enriching the environment for your indoor cat can help her live a happy, fulfilled life and may prevent behavioral problems. Cats love having access to multiple resources. If you have more than one cat, the need increases. Resources can include: litter boxes, food, resting spots, window perches, toys, cat trees, etc.

Recommended Resources:

Bring the Outside in: Research has proven that cats live three times longer living inside. Put a window perch or cat tree in front of a window and place a bird bath or a bird/squirrel feeder outside for their enjoyment. Grow kitty grass inside (and catnip if you have very sunny spot) for your cat to feast on. “Catios” are also a fun solution to allow “outside” time but in a protected, fenced in environment.

Resting spots and Cat Trees: Cats love their naps and providing safe places for them to curl up can be enhanced when their resting spots are at different levels: a cozy nook up on a bookshelf, the top platform of a cat tree, or a tucked-away bed down by the fireplace are all great options.

Scratching Posts: Scratching posts is a normal healthy cat behavior. Some cats like to scratch on horizontal surfaces while others prefer vertical posts. Find your cat's preference by giving your cat choices. If your cat responds to catnip you can use it to lure him to use the scratching post and remember to always **praise** him when using the designated spot.

Toys: Toys that encourage interactive play while discouraging rough play with hands and feet are a great way to interact with your cat.

Food/Treat Dispensers: Cats have a natural instinct to search for food so feed and/or treat your cat from one of the many food dispensing toys available at your local pet store.

Multi-Cat Homes Need Multiples of Everything

Cats find comfort in knowing the resources are abundant and accessible. A good example is the litter box. If it cannot be accessed without another cat's intimidating presence, then it's time to add more!

- o One litter box per cat, plus one extra, placed in different locations
- o Provide 2 or 3 feeding areas including water
- o Multiple scratching posts, hiding spots, window perches
- o Daily playtime with you! Don't underestimate the importance of this.

Remember to consider the physical limitations of your cats, especially as they get older. Can they still get into the litter box? Can they access their favorite sleeping spots or use the window perch? Older cats might seek more heat and enjoy having their beds close to a heater vent to stay warm.

6. Safety with Kids and Cats

If there are children in your household, it is important to teach them how to handle and act with your new cat to avoid stressing the cat and causing potential injury to both. Children learn responsibility by good examples, so please guide your children and regularly monitor the care being provided for your pets.

Guidelines to help your children and your new cat live happily together:

- o Instruct children to be calm, quiet, and slow moving when being introduced to the cat.
- o A kitten or cat should be picked up and held with one hand under its chest and the other hand supporting its hindquarters.
- o Handle the cat gently and tell children not to squeeze or hold too tightly. Most children under the age of 5 cannot hold a cat properly without squeezing too tight. Young children should be taught to sit calmly while you place the cat in their laps. This way everyone is safe and happy.
- o Children should leave the cat alone when he is sleeping, eating, and using the litter box. Also, instruct youngsters not to put the cat in inappropriate places like the dryer, on the top bunk, in a closed box, etc.
- o Cats should not be dragged out of hiding against their will.
- o Children should not chase the cat around the house. If cornered and frightened, the cat may scratch and bite or may become timid.
- o Never leave young children alone with a new pet.
- o Teach children appropriate play and petting. Do not allow them to encourage the cat to bite them or run after them. The children should not BE the toys. Provide safe toys for both the cat and the kids.
- o Teach children to look for signals that show their pet is getting irritated or over-stimulated. A swishing tail, ears back or gentle nips can lead to being scratched or bitten.
- o Always allow the cat to escape if he tries to run. If the cat struggles to get away, let him go!
- o Never allow rough handling, as this teaches the cat that it is OK to be rough in return!



7. Safety with Kids and Cats

Feline Upper Respiratory Infection

Your cat may have a cold when you get him home. Cats are subject to an airborne virus disease that is very similar to the common cold experienced by humans. It is called URI (Upper Respiratory Infection), and we deal with it on a regular basis in the shelter environment. We do all we can to prevent its spread, including carefully disinfecting our kennels and vaccinating each cat with FVRCP. Despite our best efforts, some cats will come down with URI. When multiple cats are confined to one room, a single sneeze from a cat can expose all the others, just like a cold is spread through a classroom.

If your cat begins to sneeze or has a runny nose or weepy eyes within 6 days after you get him home, chances are that the cat has come down with URI. The virus is quite contagious to other cats, so if you have resident cats, keep them separate. You can expect symptoms to last 7-10 days and they may vary in intensity (just like a cold!). The cat may sneeze, have discharge from eyes and nose, drool and breathe with difficulty through his mouth. The cat may lose its appetite and even stop drinking. If the discharge from your cat's eyes and nose is watery and the cat's temperature is normal, you are dealing with "simple" URI virus. Mucous and fever are indicators that a secondary bacterial infection is complicating the picture. With these conditions the cat most likely will need antibiotics. It is imperative that you seek veterinary treatment for the cat as soon as possible.

Can my other pets get URI?

URI is contagious to other cats.

Vaccinating against URI is not 100% effective, so it is a good idea to isolate cats that are showing signs of URI, and wash hands after handling sick cats. We recommend that all newly adopted cats be seen by a veterinarian a few days after adoption for a routine health check.

What are signs of URI?

- o Sneezing
- o Runny nose
- o Red/runny eyes
- o Fever
- o Sores on tongue/lips/nose
- o Lack of appetite
- o Decreased energy

Feline Panleukopenia

Feline panleukopenia (also known as feline distemper) is a rare but infectious viral disease of cats. It attacks susceptible cats of all ages, but young cats and kittens seem to be most vulnerable. It is often fatal. The disease is not related to the virus of distemper of dogs nor does it infect people. It is a close cousin of the parvovirus of dogs and is itself a parvovirus.

Symptoms of panleukopenia include vomiting and diarrhea, lethargy, lack of appetite and sudden death. The disease strikes suddenly and progresses rapidly. All cats and kittens entering the shelter without a documented vaccination history are immediately vaccinated with a combination vaccine which provides excellent protection against this virus. If you suspect that your newly adopted cat is showing symptoms of this disease, contact your veterinarian immediately.

8. Safety with Kids and Cats

People foods to avoid feeding your pet!

Chocolate, Coffee and Caffeine

These products all contain substances called methylxanthines, which are found in cacao seeds, the fruit of the plant used to make coffee, and in the nuts of an extract used in some sodas. When ingested by pets, methylxanthines can cause vomiting and diarrhea, panting, excessive thirst and urination, hyperactivity, abnormal heart rhythm, tremors, seizures and even death. Note that darker chocolate is more dangerous than milk chocolate. White chocolate has the lowest level of methylxanthines, while baking chocolate contains the highest.

Dairy Products

Adult cats are often lactose intolerant and cannot digest dairy products properly. Dairy products like cow's milk, cheese, yogurt, or butter can be harmful to cats.

Consuming dairy products can cause diarrhea, upset stomach, and vomiting in cats since they do not have the enzyme lactase that would break down the milk sugars.

Coconut and Coconut Oil

When ingested in small amounts, coconut and

coconut-based products are not likely to cause serious harm to your pet. The flesh and milk of fresh coconuts do contain oils that may cause stomach upset, loose stools or diarrhea. Coconut water is high in potassium and should not be given to your pet.

Grapes and Raisins

Although the toxic substance within grapes and raisins is unknown, these fruits can cause kidney failure. Until more information is known about the toxic substance, it is best to avoid feeding grapes and raisins to your pets.

Macadamia Nuts

Macadamia nuts can cause weakness, depression, vomiting, tremors and hyperthermia in cats. Signs usually appear within 12 hours of ingestion and can last approximately 12 to 48 hours.

Nuts

Nuts, including almonds, pecans, and walnuts, contain high amounts of oils and fats. The fats can cause vomiting and diarrhea, and potentially pancreatitis in pets.

Onions, Garlic, Chives

These vegetables and herbs can cause gastrointestinal

irritation and could lead to red blood cell damage. Although cats are more susceptible, dogs are also at risk if a large enough amount is consumed.

Salt and Salty Snack Foods

Large amounts of salt can produce excessive thirst and urination, or even sodium ion poisoning in pets. Signs that your pet may have eaten too many salty foods include vomiting, diarrhea, depression, tremors, elevated body temperature, seizures and even death. As such, we encourage you to avoid feeding salt-heavy snacks like potato chips, pretzels, and salted popcorn to your pets.

Xylitol

Xylitol is used as a sweetener in many products, including gum, candy, baked goods and toothpaste. It can cause insulin release in most species, which can lead to liver failure. The increase in insulin leads to hypoglycemia (lowered sugar levels). Initial signs of toxicosis include vomiting, lethargy and loss of coordination. Signs can progress to seizures. Elevated liver enzymes and liver failure can be seen within a few days.