

CARING FOR YOUR NEWLY ADOPTED CAT



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Congratulations on adopting your new companion. You have taken on a very special challenge - to give a lifelong, secure home to an animal in need. Our work does not end when you take your pet home. We are also committed to helping you establish a good relationship with your new companion. Please read thoroughly all the information included in your adoption kit.

CHAPTER 1 NEEDED EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

The following is a list of equipment and supplies you will need as you prepare for your new arrival.

- Food and water bowls
- Bed with washable bedding placed in a quiet, draft-free area
- Adjustable collar with identification tag(s)
- Harness and lead (if you plan to take your cat outside with you)
- Scratching post
- Brush or comb and nail clippers
- Litter box and litter
- Toys
- Treats
- Cat travel kennel (for easy transportation)

Be prepared before you bring your pet home. This will reduce confusion and help the transition for everyone.

- Have all members of your household decide on the rules your new cat will have to follow.
- Decide who will be doing what in terms of care for the cat (feeding, changing litter, grooming). Do not give total responsibility for a cat to a child. Share tasks.
- Establish rules for handling the cat. Make sure everyone knows how to pick up the cat safely. Emphasize that an eating or sleeping cat is not to be disturbed.
- Purchase supplies and cat-proof your home ahead of time.

Your new cat will not automatically know what is off limits and so you must remove all temptation from their path.

- Prevent access to off-limit areas such as certain rooms, stairs, and furniture.
- Remove objects which may be damaged by your cat or which may injure your cat (string, yarn, drapery cords, rubber bands, corks, plastic). Kittens will chew anything.
- Some houseplants are poisonous, (*see Common Poisonous Plants in Appendix*).
- Prevent access to poisons such as disinfectants, cleansers, antifreeze, weed killers, insecticides and other chemicals.
- Prevent access to electrical cords especially if you're bringing home a kitten.
- Prevent access to children's toys, garbage, human food, medicine and sharp tools.

One of the first things you should do with your new pet before you take them home is to fit him or her with a new collar (or harness) and leash. It is also wise to have a travel kennel. This will prevent any attempts at escaping on the way to and from the car.

- The best place for your cat to ride is in a kennel inside your car. The next best place is on a passenger's lap with the leash securely fastened to his collar to prevent a sudden escape. Adjustable seat belts are available for pets.
- Never transport your cat in the back of an open pickup truck even if they are inside a kennel.
- Do not leave your pet unattended in the car even for a few minutes, especially on a warm day.
- Do not stop to shop or take your new pet visiting. Go directly home. If your cat is not inside a kennel be sure to have a firm grip when you remove the cat from the car. Cradle the cat's body against your side. Make sure the cat's legs are supported and have one hand gently holding onto the cat's scruff. This will give you more control if the cat is frightened and tries suddenly to get away.
- As soon as you arrive home, if the cat is in a kennel, set it down gently and open the door. Be patient and allow the cat to come out on his own time. Do not try to force him from the kennel. Giving your new cat the opportunity to hide and, in time, explore on his own will help build trust more easily than if you try to force him to bond with you. The first thing to do is to show him the litter box so he knows where it is located.



CHAPTER 2

THE FIRST FEW HOURS... WHAT TO EXPECT... ONCE YOU GET HOME!

Adoption is extremely rewarding, as you have saved a life, but remember, this cat is unlike any other cat you have ever met. This cat comes with a different background and personality. Do not compare this cat to any other, and help them mold into a well mannered, well socialized, happy and loved member of your family. Each cat is an individual.

- Welcome your cat calmly and without a lot of attention or demands. Speak in quiet, reassuring tones. Always supervise children when they are around the cat. Stress the importance of being quiet and gentle. Your cat may be frightened by sudden movements, loud noises or rough handling. Playtime can come later. Allow your cat to meet the family one at a time.
- The first few hours can be the most confusing and frightening time for a new cat. While things are exciting for you, the cat sees things differently and may exhibit signs of stress. Stress signals include hissing, a “puffy” tail (hair raised along the back and tail) growling, stretching, lip licking, pacing, hiding and loss of appetite.
- Show the cat the location of his bed and dishes. Do not offer large amounts of food or water for the first hour. Excited cats – especially kittens – often gulp too much food and then throw up. Providing lots of places to hide (i.e. kennel, cardboard boxes, blankets or towels) can be very comforting to an anxious cat.
- Make sure that everything has a positive twist for the cat and do not force him into human interaction or into situations he is not comfortable with.
- Use lots of treats and kind words for reassurance.
- Make sure you give him plenty of space and quiet time to relax, adjust and explore once your cat is comfortable.
- Pets already in the house would have been introduced at the Carla Cumming Sojonky Adoption Centre but re-introducing them should be under the supervision of adults.
- Keep him safe. All environments and people are new. Keeping your cat secure is essential. Make sure doors stay closed (put signs on doors warning visitors and family members that there is a new cat in the house; you can even put baby gates across the doors to prevent the cat from bolting when doors are open).
- Start thinking of a name if you have not already chosen one. You may want to observe your new pet several hours before you find the right name. Remember, your cat will learn his name quickly and have it for his entire life, so choose carefully. Adult cats can learn a new name as well as a kitten can.
- Once a name has been chosen, talk to the animal and repeat his name frequently while they are eating, being groomed and petted. They will learn to identify the sound with themselves.
- Micromanage his every move. Remember, the less mistakes he makes now, the more success he will have later.
- Set rules, don't spoil! You have brought him home, and want to show him the world. Create house rules for your new companion (i.e. No counter surfing, scratching on furniture, drinking

out of toilets, etc). Make the rules known to the whole family, so they too understand your new companion's limits. Be firm, yet reward for positive behaviours constantly.

- Structure your cat's day. If you create a “routine” that the cat can follow, then he will be much happier in his ability to predict certain events such as feeding time.
- Regular daily exercise and mental stimulation is essential.



CHAPTER 3 THE FIRST NIGHT AND BEYOND

- Think twice before allowing your new pet to sleep on your bed. This habit is a difficult one to break later.
- A kitten may be comforted by a warm water bottle and a ticking clock, each wrapped in a towel.
- Give your new cat time to adjust. Several quick clean-ups may be necessary during the first few days with your new cat. Kittens are still in training, but even house trained animals can be expected to make a few mistakes. (See *Litter Box Training*).
- It may take several weeks for your cat to feel comfortable in his new home. He may display behaviour problems during the first days. If these problems are handled with understanding and consistency, they will likely disappear. He may go through a period of testing his boundaries when he feels more settled. Simply enforce your rules with persistence and life will return to normal.

Remember, this is an adjustment period for your cat as they have just undergone a stressful period in their lives. Yes, he is safe and sound in your home now, but he may have been abandoned or lost or given up by his last family. He may have been recently separated from his mother and littermates. He may even have been abused. Do not forget he spent some time in our Adoption Centre and although it provides warmth, good food and care, the Centre is full of uncertainty and strange smells, people and noises.

Be consistent and clear in your expectations. Most importantly, give your cat time to adjust. It takes time – at least three months – to establish a trusting relationship! Be patient and you will be rewarded with a life-long friend.



CHAPTER 4 INTRODUCING PETS TO EACH OTHER



Purr-fect Feline Friends

Congratulations on adopting your second (or third) cat! The following guide will help you successfully introduce your new cat to the rest of the feline family. Like people, cats are choosy about their relationships - they can be the best of friends or just tolerate each other with a minimum of conflict. Timing is very important in order to ensure a good relationship can develop. Introduce your new cat to other family pets slowly. The time it takes for the new animal to settle in will depend on the animal. Your current pet may view the newcomer as a threat and acceptance may take time. The ability of pets to get along together in the same household depends on their individual personalities. As each animal assesses and establishes his place in relation to the other animal(s), there may be a few scuffles. As long as they are supervised and neither animal is in danger of injury, do not interrupt. Do not leave the animals together without supervision until you are certain of their compatibility.

The Introduction Process

When you bring your new cat home, confine her to one room with her own litterbox, food, water and bed. Feed your present cat(s) near the other side of the room (far away from door separating them from the new cat's room). This tactic will help start things out right by associating something enjoyable (eating) with the other's presence. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until the cats can calmly eat directly on either side of the door from each other.

Once the cats are comfortable eating on either side of the door from each other, use two doorstops (one on either side) to prop the door open just enough that the cats can see each other, but not enough that either can get through the door. Be careful--cats can get through pretty small spaces! Move the food and water dish back to the far side of the room and repeat the process of gradually moving them closer to the door. Only move the dishes towards the door as fast as your cats are comfortable with. Let them set the pace.

Switch sleeping blankets between the new cat and the resident cat so they have a chance to become accustomed to each other's scent. Try placing the scented blankets underneath the food dishes as well.

Once the new cat is using her box and eating regularly while still confined, let her have free time in the house while confining the resident cat(s). This switch provides another way for the cats to experience each other's scent without face-to-face meeting. It also allows the newcomer to become familiar with the new surroundings without being frightened by the other animals.

When your cats are ready to finally meet, make sure you are always present until they are fully accustomed to each other and getting along reliably well. Provide places for the cats to hide (such as a cardboard box) and vertical levels (such as cat play structures) that will give them the ability to get away if need be. Avoid any interactions between the cats that result in either fearful or aggressive behaviour. If these responses are allowed to become a habit, they may be difficult to change. It's better to introduce the animals to each other so gradually that neither cat becomes afraid or aggressive. You can expect mild forms of these behaviours, but don't give them the opportunity to intensify. If either cat becomes fearful or aggressive, separate them, and continue the introduction process gradually, as outlined above.

If a fight does break out, separate the cats by throwing a blanket or towel over each cat and keeping them in separate rooms until they have calmed down. Do not scold your cats for fighting, just leave them alone to calm down. Negative interactions between your cats or between you and your cats will only slow down the process. Keep all interactions positive and you will all have a happier household.

Important Things to Remember

- It may be advisable to wait until after your complimentary vet exam, before introducing the animals.
- During the introductory process, it is important to spend some play time with each cat. Alternating which cat you spend time with first, will allow the cats to smell each other on your clothing.
- Multiple cat homes should have as least as many litterboxes as there are cats (also see the section on Litterbox Training) and possibly multiple food dishes so that none of your cats have to wait for the other and “ambushing” is kept to a minimum. Ensure that there are plenty of toys and interaction with both cats so that they do not feel they have to compete with each other.
- You should expect some hissing, spitting and growling while your cats are establishing a dominance hierarchy. This should not result in fighting though, your cats should resolve these cues peacefully.
- Whenever your cats interact positively with each other, give them treats to reinforce their behaviour.
- Above all--be patient. Successful introductions will take time, but remember that the effort you put into introducing them calmly and gradually will form the basis for a lifelong relationship.

Introducing a Cat to a Dog

- Introduce the new cat to the dog under adult supervision.
- Keep your dog on a leash. Do not allow him to show any aggressive behaviour toward the cat. You may want to try introducing your leashed dog to the new cat with a barrier between them (such as a baby gate).
- The cat may hide. Give her time to gain confidence and decide when to face the unfamiliar family member.
- Do not leave pets together unsupervised until they have accepted each other. This may take several hours, several days or even a few weeks.
- Many pets become companions. Others simply tolerate each other.



Introducing a Cat to Caged Pets

Some cats can eventually be trusted around caged pets such as rabbits and guinea pigs, but some cannot. The first encounters between pets should be supervised. Some caged pets such as chinchillas and birds may be severely frightened by the presence of a cat. If this is the case, keep the caged pet in a room your cat cannot get into.

Some cats have a tendency to hunt, some do not. Those who possess the hunting instinct will be dangerous to most caged pets. It may not necessarily be a characteristic of a specific breed. Again use caution.

When, and if, you think your new cat can be trusted around your caged pet, introduce them slowly to each other.

- Keep the cat on a leash and the caged pet in the cage.
- Allow the cat to sniff the cage. Watch for signs of aggression from either pet. Look for signs of stress or anxiety from the caged pet.
- Keep encounters short at first (5 to 10 minutes). Allow your caged pet to rest quietly afterwards.
- If you usually take your caged pet out of the cage, hold it in your hands. Allow the cat to investigate while still on her leash.
- When you are sure there will be no aggressive encounters, then – and only then – allow the animals to be together. Always supervise these encounters.
- Cats and other animals have been known to become great friends. Be cautious in the beginning. It could mean the difference between life and death for your caged pet.



CHAPTER 5 CATS AND CHILDREN

The relationship between children and cats can be wonderful, but not always natural. Both the cat and the child need to learn to respect each other.

- Never leave children unattended with a new pet.
- Teach children the proper method of handling your cat. A kitten or small cat should be held with one hand under her chest and one supporting her hindquarters.
- Children must not disturb the cat when she is eating or sleeping.
- Do not allow children to chase the cat around the house or yard. An excited, overwhelmed or cornered cat may bite in self-defense or become timid around children. Instead, encourage activities where the child can interact with the cat in a calm, non-threatening way.
- Teach children the difference between teasing your cat and playing with her.
- Do not allow children to assume full responsibility for the care of your cat. Everyone should share the responsibility.
- Allow the children and your cat to develop their own relationship. Encourage the children to learn more about their cat by reading books on cat care. The Public Library is a great resource.

CHAPTER 6 THE GREAT INDOORS

Your cat is not a wild animal that needs to roam free in the urban jungle. While you may still see your cat acting out predatory behaviour with a toy mouse, or defensive behaviour with a mirror reflection or loud noise, do not be fooled--your cat is a domesticated animal and the remnants of his survival instincts are little match for the threats of the world today.

Here are some of the threats outdoor cats have to try and live with:

- Fighting with other cats or dogs
- Avoiding foxes, coyotes, wolves, cougars or even a mob of willful magpies
- Dodging cars
- Being stolen
- Target practice with rocks and bottles or worse
- Exposure to lice, worms, ticks, mites, and deadly diseases
- Poisoning by fertilizers, car fluids, garbage, insecticides or pesticides
- Getting lost
- Unpredictable and inclement weather
- Being brought home by bylaw enforcement officers and having the family fined for letting him “roam at large”.

Indoor cats can be perfectly happy, healthy and enjoy life with their families for nearly 20 years, whereas outdoor cats have an average lifespan of 3 years. Even cats who have previously been let out can change their behaviour and learn to love the indoors. If you think your cat needs more exercise--spend more time with him! There are limitless types of stimulating toys and “activity centres” you can purchase or build for your cat. Adopting another indoor cat can provide companionship and exercise for them both.

If you absolutely feel your cat needs to go outside--build them an enclosed run in the back yard or take them out on a harness and leash so you can enjoy the experience together. Do not tie your cat up and leave him unattended outside as he could slip out of his harness, get tangled up or not be able to escape a threat that enters your yard. Do not assume that a fence will keep your cat in the yard. Even the laziest, fattest or smallest cat will find a way to leap the fence, go under it or get through it.

Your cat depends on you to provide it with a safe and healthy environment and to protect it from dangers it does not recognize or understand. In return, your cat happily provides you with love, affection, entertainment and relaxing purr therapy.



CHAPTER 7 FEEDING YOUR CAT

What to Feed

A nutritionally balanced and complete diet includes the correct amounts of fats, proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals. All-meat diets do not provide the complete nutrition a cat needs and can lead to serious, life-threatening conditions such as bone diseases and deformities, blindness, and diseases of the heart and nervous system. Feed a high quality food to help protect

your cat against urinary tract problems. Talk to your vet about diets specifically formulated for urinary tract health.

Follow the feeding guidelines on the product label. Individual cats can vary in their requirements hence you may need to adjust feeding levels. Some cats will eat only what they need, and therefore it is okay to leave a full food dish. However, watch for signs of obesity and control the amount of food if your cat begins to put on weight. Your vet can help you choose the food that best suits your cat's age, breed, and condition. If you are changing cat foods, do so gradually over a week – mixing the new with the old. Provide plenty of fresh water for your cat at all times.

Canned vs. Dry

Most veterinarians recommend a combination of both canned and dry food. Canned food need not make up the majority of a cat's diet, but the high content of water and meat protein found in canned food is beneficial in reducing the incidence of lower urinary tract disease. Talk to your veterinarian for the most suitable diet for your cat's nutritional needs.

Premium vs. Economy

Feed high quality food, labeled as Premium or Performance. Look for foods with a protein content of 30% or higher. Economy cat foods will not save you money. Your cat will digest more of the high quality food and will not need to eat as much as an economy brand. Economy foods have lower energy values and poorer digestibility which means that most of the food will not be absorbed and will pass right through your cat's system and into the litter box. Premium foods are better for your cat's health, too, since they are made from higher quality ingredients and are nutritionally balanced and complete.

Foods to Avoid

Many cats will try to eat houseplants, and many are poisonous. Grow cat grass for your cat. Put cotton balls soaked with cologne or tea tree oil on top of the soil of the plants you do not want your cat to eat. You can also try spraying the leaves with a hot pepper juice solution. Try not to give table scraps because they can lead to obesity and digestive upset. Cats and dogs have very different nutritional requirements, so dog food is not appropriate for cats. A high quality cat food will give your cat the nutrition it needs. Avoid giving too much liver and fish. Liver is high in Vitamin A and too much can cause crippling bone disease. Too much fish can cause both a deficiency in thiamine, which affects the nervous system.

Obesity

Overweight cats are prone to many health problems such as bladder diseases, heart and muscle/skeleton disorders, and especially diabetes. If your obese cat needs surgery, it is at a greater risk from general anesthetic. Talk to your vet about a healthy weight reduction plan, diet, and target weight. Do not put your cat on a crash diet, as this is risky to his health. Prevention is best. Give your cat regular exercise through walks and playtime, measure out the proper amount of food, and avoid too many treats and table scraps. An overfed kitten will grow up to have a weight problem, so be aware of the dangers if you own a younger cat. For your adult cat, you might consider a "light" cat food if weight gain is a problem. Replace treats with affection. Make sure to pay particular attention to your cat's weight after it has been spayed or neutered, as there is the risk of weight gain.

KITTENS NEED KITTEN FOOD FOR THE FIRST YEAR

The higher levels of nutrients that kittens need are not available in adult cat food. Kittens, after they are weaned, do not need milk. Cow's milk, especially can cause diarrhea. For the first few days after you bring your kitten home, feed the same food and use the same feeding

schedule he or she was on before. If you plan to change foods, introduce the new food gradually (7 to 10 days to switch foods completely).

Schedule

Try to get the kitten on a set feeding schedule. If possible, do not leave food out for the kitten so that she can eat whenever she wants. If you do, look for signs of weight gain and discontinue if the kitten starts to look overweight. Obese kittens turn into obese cats. It is better to let the kitten eat what it wants at specific times, and pick up the bowl after about 15 minutes. Very young kittens should be fed 4 or 5 times daily, and when they reach about 8 months, they should be fed 2 times daily. Ensure that there is at least an hour of quiet time after each feeding because running and playing can lead to stomach upsets. Always have plenty of fresh water available.

Adults

Feed one or two times daily, following the instructions on the label and adjusting accordingly. Older cats may need less food if they have become less active, and they may also need that amount spread out in 3 or 4 small feedings throughout the day. Your neutered adult cat will also need much less food. Pay attention to your cat's weight and adjust the amount of food. You may wish to consider a "light" cat food.



CHAPTER 8 GROOMING

Grooming refers to the external care of your cat. Pay attention to your cat's coat and skin, nails, eyes, teeth and ears. Whether your cat is long-haired, medium-haired, or short-haired, he needs to be groomed regularly. Start grooming your cat within the first few days of their arrival.

- Grooming keeps your cat healthier and better looking and helps promote healthy skin and new coat growth.
- Grooming conditions your cat's coat and skin, reduces housecleaning and gives your cat regular, positive contact with you. Grooming is an ideal bonding experience.
- Grooming gives you the opportunity to check your cat for rashes, cysts and warts, parasites and sores you might not otherwise notice.

Coat and Skin Care



- Let your cat investigate the brush and comb before you use them. Once his curiosity has been satisfied, begin grooming him. Please be kind, patient and gentle with your cat while grooming him.
- Long-haired cats should be combed first to remove tangles. Stainless steel combs are best.
- Brush your cat's hair in the direction of hair growth. Choose a brush suitable for your cat's coat. For long-haired cats, choose a brush with longer, rounder bristles. For short-haired cats, choose a brush with short, flat bristles.
- Use your fingers on your short-haired cat to rough up his coat. This is important during shedding season (usually spring and fall). Then smooth the fur down and brush to remove excess fur.
- The best time to groom is after an exercise period. Your cat will be calm and you can check for burrs, ticks, ear mite residue etc.

Bathing

Bathe your cat only when necessary. Cats are meticulous groomers and do a great job of keeping themselves clean. If necessary, there is a dry shampoo that can be used instead of bathing a cat. It is available in mousse or powder form. The dry shampoo is massaged into the cat's coat and brushed out.

Nail and Foot Care

- Check your cat's nails regularly, including the dewclaws. These nails are located on the inside of the cat's front legs. If your cat's nails seem to catch on everything (i.e. blankets, sweaters) it means it is probably time for a trim!
- Before you clip your cat's nails, ask your veterinarian to show you how. If you clip them too short, you could cut the 'quick' causing bleeding and pain. The quick contains blood vessels and nerves that grow down into the nail. On white nails, you can see the pink quick. You can not see it on brown or black nails.
- Use appropriate clippers. Apply cornstarch or a commercial product that stops bleeding to the tip of the nail if you accidentally cut the quick.
- A scratching post will help a cat maintain its own nails by letting them remove the external husk of the nail.

Eye Care

- A small amount of discharge in the corner of your cat's eyes each morning is normal. Wipe it away with a piece of damp cloth or cotton ball.
- An abnormal discharge (excessive mucous or fluid, or green or yellow discharge) should be checked by your veterinarian.

Ear Care

Check your cat's ears for inflammation, dirt or a strong odour. If you notice any of these, talk to your veterinarian.

Dental Care

- Have your cat's teeth checked once a year by your veterinarian.
- A dental diet of hard, crunchy food helps remove tartar.
- You may want to try brushing your cat's teeth using special toothpaste and your cat's own toothbrush. Do not use human toothpaste. Ask your veterinarian for instructions.
- Routine grooming should include checking the teeth and gums for tartar build up and for red, inflamed or receding gums.

Clipping

Some cats need to have matts removed from their coats or have a yearly lion cut. This should be

done by a professional groomer, or by you after you have had training, so that no injury is caused to the cat.



CHAPTER 9 LITTER BOX TRAINING

Soon after bringing your new cat or kitten home, show them where their litter box is kept. Cats naturally seek secluded places where they can bury their waste, and most will automatically go there without much instruction. For the first week or two, you may wish to offer a variety of “bathroom” types and locations so your cat can choose what it likes best. Offer both an open litter pan and a covered one, and try different types of litter (clay, crystal, gritty, recycled newspaper pellets etc). You and your cat may not have the same opinion of what is best, but in the end, your cat is the one who has to use it so it is worth the extra time and effort to make sure your cat has a box it is happy with.

You should check your cat’s litter box daily and remove solid waste and clumped material. Weekly thorough cleaning and replacement of litter is also recommended. An overly dirty or smelly litter box will deter your cat from using it and he or she may seek out another place to go. If you have multiple cats, you should have multiple boxes.

So what do you do if your cat stops using its litter box? The first thing to consider is that your cat may be ill so it is advisable to take your cat to see a veterinarian. If a veterinarian determines that your cat

is healthy then you will have to do a bit of investigating to find the reason behind your cat's change of mind. There are several common causes:

- Your cat may not have stopped using the box, but may just be spraying vertical surfaces to mark territory. This behaviour should be short-lived with new cats or if another new pet has been brought into the home or once they have been neutered.
- If your cat's other behaviours and habits have changed along with litter box use, your cat may be experiencing stress. Consult your veterinarian to help you identify the source of the stress. Cats are very sensitive to changes in household routine.
- The litter box or its surroundings may have become unsatisfactory to your cat. Your cat may no longer like where the box is located, how it feels or smells, or they may have been scared or disturbed while using it. If your cat has grown from a kitten to an adult, you may have to go through the satisfactory "bathroom" discovery experience again.

After you determine why your cat has stopped using the litter box you will have to find a solution to the problem, or a way around it. Here are some suggestions:

Change

If you have changed the type of litter, the box location, the box type, the box orientation, your cleaning routine, the amount of litter you are using or anything at all--change it back.

Aversion

Your cat may not be using the box because it has been dirty or at least not clean enough for their taste. Thoroughly clean out the box and use a pet safe enzymatic cleaner to get rid of lingering odours that you can not smell but your cat can.

Litter box aversion can also develop if your cat associates unpleasant experiences with being in the litter box. If while she was using the box, something "bad" happened to her, she may now avoid the box. For instance, if she was startled by the noise of the vacuum cleaner. If this is the case, you may have to start over with a new box in a new location and even new litter material so that the things your cat associates with the unpleasant experience no longer exist.

Location

If you have not moved the box and your cat is still not using it they may no longer like the location. Place the litter box where they have chosen to go and then slowly (a few inches a day) move it to where you would like it to be. You may have to compromise.

Surface

If you have put the box where the cat prefers to go and they still do not use it, it might be because they prefer another type of surface such as linoleum or carpet. If your cat likes the carpet, try putting a piece of carpeting outside the litter box so they can wipe their feet or scratch after using the box. You may have to try changing the litter to a softer, sand-like clumping litter or even potting soil. If your cat likes slick linoleum or tile, try covering the bottom of your litter box with less litter.

Things NOT to do

Do not punish your cat. In no way does punishment solve the problem that caused your cat to stop using the litter box in the first place. You have to find a way to make the box appealing to the cat. Rewards or punishments will not change the box.

Temporarily confining your cat with the litter box may help your cat to re familiarize itself with the “new and improved” box. This may take as long as seven to ten days. However, if your cat reverts back to not using the box when not confined, then you have not solved the problem and prolonged confinement will not make the cat like the box any better.

Placing strong smelling products like perfume or muscle rub, or uncomfortable surfaces like sandpaper or double-sided tape in areas where your cat chooses to go will deter the cat from using that space, but if you have not discovered why the cat does not want to use the box then they will just find another place to go.

Do not lose patience and do not give up. Your cat is not doing this to spite you, aggravate you, or punish you. Your cat is depending on you to find out what the problem is and to fix it for them so you can both be happy again.

CHAPTER 10 TRAINING – RAISE WITH PRAISE

Training methods build confidence in the timid cat and teach discipline to the unruly one. In teaching your cat basic obedience, you are building a relationship and establishing a bond.

Whatever method you use, establish a **consistent routine** that the entire family can carry out. If your cat understands what is expected of him, he will be well mannered, happy and secure. The easiest way to stop him from doing something you do not want is to IGNORE it and reward the appropriate behaviour.

The keys to successful training are:

- **repetition** (your cat can not learn everything at once),
- **praise** (kind words and pats will motivate your cat and make training sessions more positive)
- **consistency** (everyone in the family MUST follow the same training methods).



CLICKER TRAINING is a positive reinforcement based way to communicate with your pet. It is easier than standard command-based training. You can clicker train any animal. Clicker training is fast, easy, and fun. Children can be wonderful clicker trainers. Clicker training is pet-friendly. It is

positive and never involves punishment or force. It is a form of communication to the animal and from the animal to you. Pets enjoy the mental stimulation of clicker training and clicker training helps the whole family enjoy their pet more.

- Make a contract. What does the cat want? Food, toy, praise, petting? For now, we will assume the object of desire is food. Keep the treats small, but delicious. Little cubes of tuna, say - not a lump of kibble.
- “Click” when the cat does something you like. Choose something easy, that the cat is likely to do on his own (sit, come toward you, lay down, walk next to you).
- “Click” DURING the desired behaviour, not after it is completed. The timing of the click is crucial. Give the treat after that; the timing of the treat is not important.
- If the cat sits, even for a moment, click when his bottom hits the ground. Then give him a treat.
- Fix bad behaviour by rewarding good behaviour. “Click” and treat for paws on the ground, not on visitors. Instead of scolding for meowing, “click” and treat for silence. Cure leash pulling by “clicking” and treating when the leash happens to go slack.
- “Click” for voluntary (or accidental) movements toward your goal. You may coax the cat into a movement or position. This is called “shaping”. If you want to work a little faster, you can start molding your cat into the right position. “Click” and treat when he puts his head back, shifts his weight back, lowers his rear end. Anything that is closer to sitting down than he was a moment before gets “click”/treat.
- Shape the cat, as you would land a fish. A bit at a time, not being afraid to back up and help him if he thought you were going to fast. Do not be afraid to sit still and let the cat do the thinking.
- Lure the cat if you have to. If you want the cat to sit, for example, hold the treat up to his nose and use it to “pull” his nose up and back until his rear goes down. If you hold the treat too high, the cat will jump up (oops!). If you push back into his mouth instead of raising his nose, the cat might back up, but not sit. Always try to “catch” the cat sitting before shaping or luring.
- When a cat has learned to do something for “clicks”/treats, he will begin showing you the behaviour spontaneously, trying to get you to click. Now is the time to offer a cue, like the word “sit” or a hand signal. Start clicking for that behaviour if it happens during or after the cue. Start ignoring that behaviour when the cue was not given.
- If your cat does not respond to a cue, he is not “disobeying”, he just hasn't learned the cue completely.



CHAPTER 11

CHOOSING THE RIGHT VETERINARIAN

We love our pets and want them to live long, healthy lives. One critical factor in their care is our trusting relationship with a veterinarian. You should do a bit of research to ensure that the vet you choose will be right for you and your new cat or dog. It is important to look for your vet before you bring home your new friend, or immediately thereafter. Develop your relationship before a problem arises. Your vet can be your best ally in your quest for a healthy life for your pet. Hopefully, this will be a long-term relationship and you should take care to ensure that you have chosen wisely.

Where to start

Word of mouth is the best place to begin your search for the right vet. Ask people that you trust to recommend a good vet and to tell you why they chose him or her. Remember that their choice might not be yours. Some vets are better with one type of pet over another or some personalities over others. You want a vet whose personality works well with you and your pet. Some sources of recommendations might include the BVSPCA, friends who have pets, or the trainer of your obedience class. Ask those that you know take good care of their pets and you will likely get the best recommendations. Your local phone book will have listings of area vets, but do not make your choice based on convenience alone.

Narrowing Down the Choice

There are many factors to consider when choosing the right vet. Some obvious ones are location and office hours. You should not make your choice on location alone, but it is a consideration. You may love the great vet an hour away, but can you get there soon enough in an emergency? Does the vet have office hours that work with your schedule? He or she may be wonderful, but it will not be very convenient if you have to take time out of work to get an appointment.

The First Visit

Once you have narrowed your choice to one or two, schedule an appointment with your top pick. When you arrive, take note of the condition of the office. It should look and smell reasonably clean. The size of the waiting room might be a consideration to you, as well. Are you and your cat or dog comfortable waiting in a tight spot?

What to Ask

One of the first questions you should ask is whether this vet is available in emergencies, and if so, how can you contact him. If he or she is not available, do they have a suggestion for emergency care? It may be that your area has an emergency hospital nearby. It is critically important to have this information on hand in an emergency when minutes may count.

If you have an unusual breed or a cat that has an unusual condition, you should ask the vet if he or she is familiar with it. Ask questions and be sure that you are comfortable with the response. Does he or she explain well or does he or she dismiss your questions?

Is there more than one vet working in the office? If there is more than one vet, do they have specialties? If so, can you request a certain vet? You may want to take the time to meet all the vets working in an office before you decide to see only one of them.

Does the vet provide any other services such as boarding or grooming? If these are services that you require, they may be important factors in your decision.

No one likes to discuss money up-front, but it may be an important consideration as well. Ask for fees for routine services like physical exams or vaccinations. Does the clinic accept major credit cards? Will they allow payment plans if your pet requires an expensive surgery or treatment?

What Else to Look For

The examination room should be clean and orderly. Has the table been wiped off after the last patient left? The vet should perform a check up on your dog or cat during the first visit. This should include feeling the animal over for suspicious lumps or bumps, looking in the eyes and ears, checking the teeth and checking the heart. The vet should also ask you questions about the dog or cat's general health. If they have never seen the animal before, the vet should ask for some of the dog or cat's medical history. Does the vet rush the exam (or not do it at all)? Does he or she listen to you? Is he or she comfortable with your pet and does he or she appear to have a good rapport with them? Does your pet seem to like the vet or at least seem comfortable? Of course, some animals are difficult at every vet visit. If your pet is one of these, is the vet able to handle them? An experienced vet can handle the most difficult pets with a minimum of stress for the animal.

Once you have chosen your vet, ensure that you and your pet visit him or her regularly. Keep the vet informed of any changes in your pet that concern you. Do not be afraid to ask questions and even get second opinions if the need arises. Take an active part in your pet's health care and you will keep your friend with you for many years to come!



CHAPTER 12 A BRIEF GUIDE TO YOUR CAT'S MEDICAL NEEDS

This guide is intended to be just that--a guide. If you have any concerns or questions about your pet's health or safety, please do not hesitate to contact your veterinarian. Never attempt to treat your cat without consulting a veterinarian, as some human medications are detrimental, toxic or even fatal to our pets.

Initial Veterinary Care

While in the care of the BVSPCA, your cat has had a full veterinary exam, has at least started (and possibly finished) a vaccination series and has been spayed or neutered (if this had not already been done before they joined us). Before you take your new family member home, the staff of the BVSPCA will acquaint you with their health record and let you know when your cat is due for further vaccinations or health checks.

The Bow Valley SPCA is pleased to offer a complimentary physical examination within the first seven days of adoption. The purpose of this examination is to check for any new health problems that should be addressed or that may preclude adoption. Where possible, it is best to keep the new cat away from other animals at home until your veterinarian has determined them to be free of infectious conditions. This is also a good time to consider having your cat marked with an identification microchip.

Please contact one of the following veterinary clinics to book your complimentary veterinary exam.

Bow River Veterinary Centre
1510 Railway Avenue, Canmore
(403) 678-9595

Canmore Veterinary Hospital
502 Bow Valley Trail, Canmore
(403) 678-4425

Banff Veterinary Services
Animal Control Building, Warden Compound on Hawk Street, Banff
(403) 762-3611



Why You Should not Declaw Your Cat

Although it may seem to be a quick and convenient way of solving scratching damage, declawing your cat is NOT NECESSARY. Your cat's claws are an integral part of your cat's life and scratching is as normal and natural as eating and breathing.

Scratching serves several purposes to your cat:

- it conditions the claws by removing the dead outer layer or sheath
- it provides a way of marking territory by leaving both a visual mark and an scent (from the scent gland in the paw).
- it is a method of relaxation
- scratching is also believed to communicate dominance when performed in front of other cats.

Myths About Declawing

“Declawing a cat will make him more mellow and safer around babies and small children. “

In fact, declawed cats often become morose, reclusive and withdrawn. Or they may become more irritable, aggressive and unpredictable. A cat relies on its claws for protection and security. Declawed cats often feel so vulnerable without their first line of defense that they resort to biting more often as a means of self-protection.

“Declawing a cat will stop them from instinctively scratching.”

Some cats develop hard, horny pads which can also cause extensive damage to furniture, as well as discomfort to the cats. Cats who cannot use scratching to mark their territory may resort to spraying urine.

“Declawing doesn't have any medical side effects.”

The feelings of vulnerability your cat may experience can lead to neuroses and psychological problems, skin problems and even bladder problems. A declawed cat must relearn to find balance and walk, as a person with amputated toes would, and will gradually lose muscle tone of the leg shoulder and back muscles.

“Declawing is just removal of the nail and is not dangerous.”

Declawing is a surgical amputation of the last joint of each toe, including the bone. It must be

done under general anesthesia and possible complications of this surgery include reaction to anesthetic, hemorrhage, loose bone chips, recurrent infections, nerve damage, pain and abnormal regrowth of the nails. Sometimes the nails can even regrow inside the paw, becoming very painful but not visible.

Humane Solutions

Two humane ways to deal with cat scratching are to keep the claws trimmed and to train your cat to only scratch appropriate objects. These will not only save your furniture, but will keep your cat healthy and happy as well.

Trimming your cat's claws will reduce the amount of damage caused by scratching before and after training begins. Before trimming, get your cat used to having his paws handled and squeezed. Begin by gently petting the cat's legs and paws while giving the cat a treat, making this a pleasant experience. Gradually increase the pressure so that you can gently squeeze the paw to extend the claw. Continue with the treats until your cat will tolerate this kind of touch and restraint.

How to Trim Your Cat's Claws

When your cat is relaxed and unafraid, gently press on the toes until the claws extend. Use a sharp pair of nail clippers and cut only the tip of the nail, taking care not to damage the vein or quick. The nail can be trimmed weekly, keeping the trimmer perpendicular to the claw so as not to crush the nail. If you are hesitant to cut your cat's nails, consult your veterinarian who can show you the proper method to use.

Training Your Cat What to Scratch

When training your cat to use appropriate scratching objects, it is very important to remember to praise the cat every time she uses an acceptable object. Disciplining a cat after she has scratched something will not help the cat to understand your intention and might rather just make her afraid of you. You must catch them "in the act" and tell them "NO." Immediately take her to the proper object to show her where she can scratch. Praise the cat when she uses the right scratching area.

Provide scratching objects that are appealing to your cat. Some cats prefer rough surfaces, some prefer soft; some like vertical areas to scratch, some prefer a horizontal plane; some prefer to scratch higher up to stretch, and some prefer to stay crouched. Note the characteristics of what your cat has been scratching and try to provide a similar scratching surface for them. Some ideas to try are carpet, wound rope, corrugated cardboard or cork bark. Surfaces that you wish the cat to scratch can be sprayed with catnip or honeysuckle spray to make them more attractive.

Pay attention to where your cat has been scratching. Perhaps your cat likes to exercise her claws near her favorite sleeping area, near her food dish or near a window. Place the appropriate scratching object near the inappropriate one. Once your cat is consistently using the appropriate object, you may start to slowly move it (a inch a day) to where you would prefer to have it.

While training, you can make areas or objects your cat wants to scratch less attractive by covering them with double sided tape, tinfoil or sandpaper, or placing a cotton ball with perfume or muscle rub near them. Don't remove the unappealing coverings or odours until your cat is consistently using the appropriate objects in their permanent locations for several

weeks or a month. They should be removed gradually and not all at once.

Be patient and kind to your cat while she learns to adjust her habits, it will take a bit of time but the investment will be worth it. Remember to praise your cat every time it scratches an appropriate object so that she learns to relate the object with a positive experience.

Ear Mites

If you have ever suffered any kind of ear infection, you know how irritating and painful it can be. Thankfully, human beings are able to tell a doctor where it hurts and for how long the pain has been there. Your cat, on the other hand, is not so lucky. When it comes to ear mite infections, they depend on you for help.

Although ear mites are not visible to the naked eye, the discomfort and distress they cause your cat makes up for their small size! The most common ear mites that set up shop in your cat's ears do not affect humans, so you can not assume your cat is okay, just because you are. Ear mites live on the skin of the ear and ear canal of the infected animal. The parasite feeds on your pet by piercing the skin and feeding on lymph in the ear tissue.

Symptoms

Given the irritation and pain ear mites cause your cat, it is wise to take actions as soon as your cat begins showing any symptoms of infection. The ear will become irritated and inflamed. Your cat is most likely suffering from ear mites if it frequently scratches his ears or shakes his head. As the infection progresses, a dark brown or black crumbly wax (much like coffee grounds or dirt) will be visible inside of the ear. By this point though, there will be quite a colony set up!

If you begin to observe these symptoms, see your vet as soon as possible. If left untreated, ear mites can lead to painful hematoma - a soft pocket of swelling usually found on the inner surface of the ear - which develops from your cat shaking his itchy, mite-infested ears. Further neglect can lead to deafness.

Treatment

Treatment of ear mites is easy, and effective with medication prescribed by your veterinarian.

Prevention

One of the primary concerns of a cat owner should be maintaining the cat's health and well-being. Given the severity of an ear mite infection, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! Regular grooming on a daily basis will bring any warning signs of an ear mite infection to your attention. Ear mites are extremely contagious - therefore keeping your cat indoors at all times will cut down on the risk of coming in to contact with other infected animals. If you own any other pets including dogs, rabbits and ferrets they must be inspected and treated or **a re-infestation is inevitable.**

Further Vaccinations and Annual Care

During your adoption, a staff member will go over your new pet's health record with you. Vaccinations are important to the health of our pets. Through annual vaccinations, the occurrence and spread of infectious diseases is kept under control.

Pets of all ages benefit from regular vaccinations, especially the very young and the very old. Kittens have developing immune systems, thereby needing repeated vaccinations to strengthen them against exposure to various infectious diseases. Kittens may require additional vaccinations to complete their series and this will be your responsibility.

Yearly health exams and vaccinations should be scheduled with your veterinarian and it is your responsibility to ensure your pet receives the proper veterinary care that they need. Always check with your veterinarian if you are planning on taking your pet on vacation with you, as other vaccines or treatments may be recommended for different provinces / countries.

General Vaccination Guidelines for Cats

Kittens 8 weeks of age: FVRCP (Rhinotracheitis, Calici Virus, Panleukopenia & Feline Leukemia)
Kittens 12 weeks of age: FVRCP, Leukemia & Rabies Booster

Adult cats should receive a FVRCP and Feline Leukemia booster annually, as well as a Rabies vaccine as scheduled by your veterinarian. You may also inquire about additional vaccinations such as Feline Infectious Peritonitis.

Additional information on common pet diseases can be found in the appendix.

Monitoring Your Pet's Health

Now that you have your new pet at home it is time to start getting to know them. It is important to learn your pet's routines and habits, their general energy level and appetite, and yes--even their bathroom habits. Knowing what is normal for your pet will help you spot anything that "isn't right." Instinctively, animals tend to hide signs of weakness, illness or pain, but if you know your pet well, you will notice a difference in their routine or behaviour that can indicate you may need to take them to see a vet.

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association suggests that you consult your veterinarian if your pet shows any of the following signs:

- Abnormal behaviour, sudden viciousness, or lethargy
- Abnormal discharge from the nose, eyes, or other body openings
- Abnormal lumps, limping, or difficulty getting up or lying down
- Loss of appetite, marked weight losses or gains, or excessive water consumption
- Difficult, abnormal or uncontrolled waste elimination
- Excessive head shaking, scratching, licking or biting any part of the body
- Dandruff, loss of hair, open sores, and a ragged or dull coat
- Foul breath or excessive tartar deposits on teeth

Additionally, watch for convulsions or seizures, vomiting or diarrhea, excessive coughing or sneezing, and "scooting" (dragging their bum on the floor.) It is also important to check your pets thoroughly for ticks after springtime and early summertime outings.



Poisons and Poisonous Products Around the House

Many common household products are dangerous to pets. This list contains some of the most common poisons. Check with your veterinarian immediately if you suspect your pet has been poisoned and be prepared to tell the veterinarian what your pet has eaten, how much and when, as well as their symptoms. Follow your veterinarian's instructions carefully. Common household products to keep your pets away from include:

- Weed killers
- Insecticides, or rat and mouse poisons
- Drugs, medications and other chemicals
- Paints
- Plants
- Bee stings, insect bites, snake bites
- Slug bait
- Garbage
- Antifreeze
- Chocolate
- Aspirin

Emergency First Aid

The following are ways to handle some emergency situations your pet may encounter. Ask your veterinarian about the availability of pet first aid classes.

- Auto accidents: if possible keep your pet quiet and warm to lessen shock and stop any bleeding. Transport your pet to the veterinarian on a blanket or board. Be careful--injured animals may bite.
- Burns: apply cold water and consult your veterinarian immediately.
- Cuts, tears, punctures and bites: clean the area with warm water and consult your veterinarian immediately.
- Porcupine quills: Keep your pet from pawing or biting at the quills and transport him immediately to the veterinarian. Do not cut the quills or attempt to pull them out yourself; porcupine quills must be properly removed.
- Eye problems: consult your veterinarian immediately.
- Frostbite: long periods of exposure to cold results in the freezing of tissue. Bring your pet indoors and wrap in a towel or blanket. Consult your veterinarian immediately.
- Heat stroke: the symptoms of heat stroke include uncontrollable panting, anxiety, blank stare, vomiting, collapse or unconsciousness. Place your pet in a cool area and offer water. Consult with your veterinarian immediately.
- Bloating: a swollen stomach is a serious emergency. Consult your veterinarian immediately. To help prevent bloating, avoid exercising your cat strenuously before or after feeding.
- Tick Removal: Loosen mouth parts with a drop of alcohol, peroxide or Vaseline, grasp tick close to skin with tweezers and pull straight back.

Pet Insurance

Exploring and trying new things can be some of the most endearing characteristics of our little loved ones, but it can also be one of the most unpredictable. Just as with people, illness and injury can happen suddenly and treatment, medication, or surgery can be a sizable and unexpected financial burden. Fortunately, just as with people, pet insurance is available and you can choose between a variety of plans to find the most suitable one. There are even plans for multi-pet families and senior pets. In its least aspect, pet insurance can buy peace of mind, and in its greatest aspect, it can mean you do not have to make the decision between treatment and euthanasia. Check with your veterinarian or the BVSPCA for contact information

CHAPTER 13
IDENTIFICATION, LICENSING AND REGISTRATION

Cats who undergo a spay or neuter procedure under the care of the BVSPCA will receive a tattoo in their ear as a unique identifier. If they have been spayed or neutered previous to the care of the BVSPCA, they will have a identification microchip inserted between their shoulder blades.

In addition to the unique tattoo and/or microchip your cat has been given, your veterinarian will provide you with a yearly rabies tag for your pet. You may wish to have this tag inscribed with your cats name and a contact phone number, or to buy a specialty tag with your contact information as well.

Under some municipal laws, cats must also be registered and/or licensed with the appropriate place of residence:

Canmore Licensing Fees:

There is no licensing fee for cats in Canmore at this time.

Banff Licensing Fees:

Altered cats \$15 / yr

Exshaw Licensing Fees:

There is no licensing fee for cats in Exshaw at this time.

My new cat

My Cat's Name: _____

My Veterinarian: _____

Clinic Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

License Number: _____

Tattoo Number: _____

Microchip Number: _____

Photo of my new cat

CHAPTER 14 RESPONSIBILITY OF PET OWNERS

Owning a cat is a responsibility that lasts the lifetime of the cat.

- It is the responsibility of all cat owners to provide adequate care and protection for their animals.
- As a cat owner, you must ensure your pet is not a nuisance to the public and does not contribute to the pet overpopulation problem.
- By being a responsible pet owner, you are ensuring the safety and contentment of your cat and the continued acceptance of cats in our society.
- It is the responsibility of all cat owners to register their cat with the local municipality if required.
- Responsible pet ownership extends far beyond what is required by law. The humane treatment of animals includes providing adequate exercise, grooming, attention, training and care, even during holidays and travel.

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

Gandhi