



# Rehome

## A GUIDE FOR ADOPTERS

### TAKING YOUR NEW CAT HOME

You've chosen your new cat and are raring to take him/her home, but before you take one step through the front door there are a few things you need to sort out to make sure your home is ready for your new pet.

#### Moving on

Make sure that you have an appropriate cat carrier for when you pick up your new pet from the centre/branch. It should be secure and large enough for your cat to sit, turn around and lie down naturally in. Familiar smelling items, such as a blanket from his/her bed at the animal centre or branch cattery/fosterer, may also help him/her feel at ease while travelling to their new home.

#### Let your cat find its feet

As your cat settles in, the best thing you can do to reassure your new pet is be calm and patient. Cats can be frightened of unfamiliar places and smells so make sure that he/she has access to safe hiding places that they can go to if feeling scared and take things at his/her pace. Familiar smelling items from the centre/branch, such as bedding or toys, may also help your cat settle in more easily. Be consistent too - if there are any areas of your house that you would prefer your cat not to access, e.g. bedrooms, then keep the doors closed from day one.

Cats like to be up high so a safe and secure shelf might make a nice place for your cat to watch from as they find out more about their new home. Giving your cat access to just one safe and secure room for the first 24 hours may also help him/her get used to the sounds and smells of the household. This should be the room that you would like their bed, litter tray, food and water to be in from the beginning, although these should not be in exactly the same place as cats do not like to eat next to their toilet! The room you choose should also be secure and free from hazards - cats will hide up chimneys or even squeeze under floorboards to hide if they want to so make sure that your cat cannot get up, in or under anything that will be difficult to get them out of.

Remember your cat doesn't know you or your lifestyle, so introduce different activities and people over a period of time, particularly supervising any interactions with children.

#### Home comforts

When your cat comes home for the first time he/she will be faced with an unfamiliar environment. As well as somewhere to hide, your cat will need somewhere warm, dry and quiet to sleep. His/her litter tray will need to be cleaned at least once a day; otherwise your cat will refuse to use it and may toilet on the floor instead. Cats naturally mark their territory by scratching with their claws. Provide your cat with a sturdy scratch post which is tall enough for them to use fully stretched. Safe toys and regular opportunities to play with people and by themselves will also help your cat settle in. If your cat's behaviour changes or he/she shows regular signs of stress or fear, talk to your vet.

#### Food and water

Changing your cat's diet suddenly can cause an upset tummy so feed your new cat with the diet he/she has been used to in order to reduce any risk of this. Information about your cat's preferred food and advice on feeding will be provided in the adoption pack you will be given when you come to collect your pet. If you want to change your pet's diet to something else of your choice, do so gradually over three to five days, mixing a little of the new food with the old to gradually wean your cat onto the new diet. Cats should ideally be fed their daily ration in several small meals per day (unless advised otherwise by a vet) and they must always have access to a bowl of fresh water. Do not give your cat cows' milk - cats are intolerant of the sugars in milk (lactose) that can cause diarrhoea.

### **Out and about?**

When you get back from the centre/branch, don't let your cat go outside at first. He/she needs to be kept indoors for at least two to three weeks to adjust to the new surroundings and get his/her bearings. Introduce your cat to its new home slowly and make sure that they cannot climb out of windows and that doors are kept closed and secure.

Make sure that your cat seems settled before letting him/her outside. The first time you do, try to do it in the morning and about an hour before he/she is due to be fed. This way he/she will have time to explore and will not want to stray too far from food. Cats have efficient body clocks and will soon learn to come back at regular times for food. You may want to supervise your cat for the first few times he/she ventures out - this can be reassuring for both of you!

Your cat will be microchipped but they could also wear a snap-apart collar with an ID disc, so that he/she can be returned home even more quickly if he/she gets lost.

### **Good company**

How you introduce a new cat or kitten into your home, and to other resident pets, can make a difference to how their relationship will continue. Once a relationship becomes violent or fearful and the cat feels threatened, it is difficult to change behaviour patterns. Taking things slowly with careful introductions is vital to prevent excessive reactions. Choose a quiet time when the household is calm - avoid festivities, parties, visiting relatives or friends, and find time to concentrate on calm reassurance for both cats.

You can integrate the new cat into your home better by ensuring that the new pet smells of "home" before being introduced to the resident cat or dog as scent is an important communication method for them. It is a good idea to swap the bedding of your animals to enable them to smell each other prior to meeting. If you already have a pet, make sure that you provide enough litter trays, toys, beds and hiding places for all of them, as well as enough space for them to get away from each other - don't force them to interact. If you are having trouble introducing your pets, speak to an expert, such as your vet.

### **Vet for your pet**

Making sure you have someone professional to turn to if your cat is ill or involved in an accident is very important. Register your cat at a local veterinary practice before bringing him/her home from the centre/branch and research your choice thoroughly. You'll also need to give the vet your cat's medical record as soon as possible; this will be given to you in your adoption pack when you collect your cat. Think about taking out pet insurance too. For just a few pounds a month, you'll be covered for unexpected vet bills in the future and safeguard your pet's health.

### **Health check**

Make sure you treat your cat for fleas and worms regularly and continue his/her vaccinations - ask your vet how often and what products to use. If you have adopted a kitten that has not been neutered, don't forget to get this done at the recommended age.

Regular grooming is also important to keep your cat's coat in tiptop condition. You may need to have patience as your cat may not be used to being groomed. Reward your cat and don't shout at him/her if grooming is difficult at first - this will only make the experience more stressful for your pet. If you have a white cat, or a cat with a predominantly white face and/or ears, it is also important to remember to use a safe and suitable sunscreen when they go outside in warm weather. Ask your vet for more advice on when and what products to use.

### **Getting help**

If things aren't going smoothly and you have concerns about your cat, talk to your vet or contact the RSPCA centre or branch from whom you adopted your cat.

There is lots of useful information and helpful tips on the RSPCA website: [www.rspca.org.uk/cats](http://www.rspca.org.uk/cats) and your local RSPCA centre/branch has leaflets and guides on a range of pet ownership topics.

It takes time, effort and understanding to help your pet get used to its new life, and to help it overcome problems, but all the time and effort will be worth it when the end result is a happy addition to your family!

Please remember if you have any concerns, or require any advice, contact your local RSPCA animal centre or branch.