



# Cat Adoption Handbook



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## **CONGRATULATIONS!**

You just adopted your new best friend from JerseyCats. The days ahead will be full of change and adjustment for both you and your new pet. Not all of your time together will be fun, but you will learn and grow together, and share years of companionship and love.

This booklet contains advice to make this adjustment period as easy as possible, to avoid future problems and to understand a little more about your new pet.

### **What to Do When You Get Home**

Cats are sensitive animals, greatly affected by changes in their environment and routine. Bringing your cat home can be a stressful experience for him, especially if he has been in a shelter or crated in a foster home for a long time.

To make his transition to your household as comfortable as possible, select a quiet, closed-in area such as your bedroom or a small room away from the main foot traffic, and provide him with food and water, a comfy bed, some toys and a litter box.

For a few days, let your new cat become acquainted with this limited area. Let your cat explore on his own, sniff all your belongings and investigate all the hiding places. Never grab him, and if his tail is swishing and his ears are back, don't touch him. He may need a few days to become comfortable in his new home.

After a few days, slowly introduce him to the rest of your house, including the other pets and house hold members. If you have other cats, be sure to read the "Cat to Cat Introductions" section to help all your cats feel safe and secure. It will take a little while before your new cat begins to feel at home.

Cats that are given too much freedom too soon, are often overwhelmed and may hide underneath furniture until they get their bearings. This adds to the stress of the situation and makes the homecoming a less than ideal experience.

JerseyCats provides lifelong support to our adopters. If you have any problems, questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact us!



## **Being a Responsible Pet Owner**

By adopting a cat you accept the following responsibilities:

- Making sure you can care for your cat throughout his lifetime (and after yours)
- Providing your cat with nutritious food and fresh water every day
- Taking time and patience to train your cat
- Exercising and giving love and attention to your cat every day
- Arranging care for your cat while you're away for the day or on vacation
- Grooming your cat regularly
- Making sure you obey local pet laws
- Keeping your cat indoors with his family, where he belongs
- Never allowing your cat to run outside
- Making regular visits to a veterinarian
- Never putting your cat in a situation where he can be harmed
- Always returning the love your cat gives to you



## What You'll Need

Below is a list of items to have in hand before you bring home your newly adopted kitten or cat:

### Necessities

- **Two bowls: one for food and one for water.** Opt for metal or ceramic bowls over plastic as they wear better over time and are less prone to tipping over. Cats also prefer these materials over plastic. Cats should have access to clean, fresh food and water at all times.
- **Quality cat food.** Provide food made with quality ingredients and keep his diet consistent. Also, feed your cat both wet and dry food. Most studies recommend you leave out all food for 20 minutes and then store it for later. You can refrigerate wet food, but make sure it's at room temperature when you feed your cat again. Generally, cats should be fed twice a day (3 times for kittens). Cats and kittens can't go more than 2 days without eating. If your cat doesn't eat within 2 days, it's time for a vet visit.
- **A sturdy cat litter box.** Cats always need access to a litter box so they can go to the bathroom. Clean litter boxes regularly to ensure your home and pet remain clean.

### Extras

- **Tasty cat treats.** Many cats appreciate a special treat occasionally. Give treats in moderation, or your new pet will soon have a weight problem.
- **A scratching post made of rope or cardboard.** Scratching is a normal, healthy cat behavior, and scratching posts (or similar devices) offer an appropriate place to scratch. Without a scratching post, cats may scratch furniture and/or carpet. Avoid posts made of carpet, as many cats can't differentiate between carpet on the post, or on your floor.
- **A bed.** Cats prefer their own place to relax. Window perches and multi-level constructions are among many options that allow them to play or relax.
- **Toys.** Toys keep cats occupied and allow them to exercise. Providing toys of different shapes, sizes and materials helps relieve boredom and results in a happier pet. Do not leave out toys with strings, since they can harm your cat.
- **A well-constructed cat carrier.** Throughout your cat's life, you will have to transport him from one place to another, whether to the vet or to grandma's. To ensure a safe trip for your cat, keep him confined in a well-constructed carrier.
- **A brush.** Regular grooming makes for a healthy coat, reduces allergens, and promotes bonding with your cat.



## Choosing Food for Your Cat

A cat's diet can affect his general health and behavior, including mood and ability to learn. Food made with poor ingredients, and switching food often, can cause upset stomach, diarrhea, and excess gas. Food made with high quality ingredients promotes good overall health, good breath and a shiny coat. Cats need to eat meat and this should be the first *and* second ingredient in a good cat food.

Cat food labels can be difficult to read. Like human food labels, the ingredients are listed in descending order. The first three ingredients make up a majority of the contents, and reflect the food's quality. Since cats must eat meat, a healthy food should include clearly defined protein sources like beef, chicken, or lamb (not vague descriptions like "meat" or "poultry"). Ingredients can include meal (which is meat after removing all the water) or meal by-products, though meal is far superior. Avoid foods high in grains, like corn, because they're common allergens and because cats don't need a lot of grain in their diet.

Dry food isn't as nutritious as wet food and should be fed in moderation. Vegetables are unnecessary but may help with digestive issues. Food high in preservatives, artificial flavor and colorings are usually lower quality.

Cat food quality varies widely and can be divided in three categories: commercial, premium, and super premium. Commercial brands are found in supermarkets and are the lowest quality. Premium brands are sold in large chain and independent pet stores. Super premium foods, found in independent pet stores and online, are the best quality and usually contain the most meat and no artificial ingredients. Though price rises with quality, you can feed your cat smaller portions. Few fillers and better quality ingredients means your cat can get what he needs with less food, and your cat will be healthier. This means that veterinary expenses may be less in the long run. Organic and free-range foods are usually super premium brands.

To determine whether your cat is eating a well balanced diet, simply take a quick look at him. If you switch food, do it gradually to help prevent upsetting your cat's digestive system.



## Cat Food Terms

**Animal by-product meal:** Rendered animal tissues that don't fit any other ingredient definition.

**By-products:** Non-human grade proteins from animal carcasses. They vary widely in digestibility.

**Meat:** Clean flesh of cattle, swine, sheep, or goats.

**Meat and bone meal:** Rendered from mammal tissues including bone.

**Meat by-products:** Excludes meat, but can include lungs, blood, bones, fat, and stomachs.

**Meat meal:** Rendered meal made from animal tissues. Can't contain more than 14% indigestible materials.

**Poultry by-product meal:** Rendered poultry parts including necks, feet, and undeveloped eggs.

**Poultry by-products:** Same as above but non-rendered

**Rendering:** The process by which animal parts are heated slowly so the fat can be liquefied and removed. What remains is dry protein called "meal."

## Cat Food Examples

### **Commercial Brands:**

Figaro, Friskies, 9 Lives, Fancy Feast

### **Premium Brands:**

Wysong, Royal Canin, Evolve, Nutro, Natural Balance, Avoderm, Blue, Pet Authority, Triumph, Precise

### **Super Premium Brands:**

Felidae, Innova, Wellness, EVO, Merrick, Nature's Variety Prairie



## Avoid and Resolve Litter Box Problems

Cats are clean and love routines, so when your furry friend goes to the bathroom in places other than the litter box, something is wrong. If your cat has a litter box problem (especially if he is also exhibiting signs of illness) first consult your vet to rule out medical causes. Signs of illness include: if your cat strains to use the litter box, or constantly enters and leaves it. If this occurs, take him to the vet immediately, since he may be blocked, and this is life threatening. If the vet declares your cat is healthy, and he still has "accidents" then it could be a behavioral problem.

### Some Common Problems:

- Litter box is too dirty to use. Cats are clean. If the box is dirty, they'll find another place.
- Too much foot traffic around litter box. Cats won't go to the bathroom in a loud, busy place, so put the box somewhere quiet and calm.
- Litter box is too small/large. The litter box should be large enough (not too large) for your cat to stand and turn around comfortably, and the litter should be 2-3 inches deep.
- Your cat doesn't like the litter. Yes, cats can have litter preferences and some begin when your cat is young. Also, most cats don't like scented litter.
- Your cat was recently declawed. A newly declawed cat won't like the feeling of litter on his paws, and may avoid the litter box.
- Litter box is too close to food or water. Cats won't eat and go to the bathroom in the same area, so keep food and water away from the litter box, preferably another room.
- You changed the litter box location, and your cat can't find or remember the new place. After your cat gets used to his box in one place, try not to change it. If you change locations, make sure to pick up your cat and place him in it at the new site.
- Multiple cats use this litter box (in a multiple cat home), and your cat wants his own box. As a general rule, you should have at least one box for each cat in your home.
- Your cat doesn't like to urinate and defecate in the same litter box. If so, try to keep two litter boxes available for your cat and clean them often. Your cat is overly aggressive and marking. Try to find out the aggressive behavior's cause and counteract it.





- Your cat feels his territory is being invaded and is marking. Have you gotten a new cat or another pet? Can your cat see other cats from the window? Has something changed in the home? Try to find out the behavior's cause and counteract it.
- Your cat is marking to exhibit his dominance. This can occur when a new cat is brought into the house or your cat challenge the current cat hierarchy in the house.
- Your cat had a bad experience with his litter box and is scared to go there. This is one important reason not to put your cat's face in the "mistake" and then toss him into the box. Any bad event with the litter box can make your cat more likely to avoid it.
- A stressful situation occurred in your cat's life, like moving to a new home or a new child or cat is brought into the home. If so, you may need to retrain your cat to go to the litter box.

If your cat makes an elimination mistake, DO NOT punish your cat by taking him to the scene of the crime or the litter box, and rubbing his face in it. After a mistake, it's a common error among owners to place the cat in the box and yell at him.

Cats have a short memory. Unless you catch your cat in the act, your cat probably has no idea why he's being punished. He doesn't connect the spot on the carpet (or being put in the litter box) with poor litter box behavior. When you put your cat into the litter box and yell at him, he learns using the litter box or going to the bathroom is dangerous and results in punishment. This worsens the problem, because now your cat detests the litter box even more.

Often you can correct behavioral problems like the ones above with simple litter or litter box changes. However, if you feel you tried everything and your cat won't use the litter box, you may need to retrain him how to use the litter box. The process isn't difficult, but takes time and patience. Reintroduce your cat to the litter box, show him how to use it, give praise and treats when the cat "gets it right." Cat Attract™, a natural litter with herbs that appeal to many cats can help. Watch your cat for signs that he intends to go to the bathroom. If you see the sign, take your cat to the box, and give him treats when he finishes.

To help prevent your cat from repeating mistakes, clean the mistake area with a cleaner formulated to eliminate cat urine odor. If you use regular cleaners, it will still smell like urine to your cat. And if it smells like a litter box, your cat will probably treat it that way. If you still need help correcting this type of problem you may want to consult a behaviorist.



## **Cat Proof Your Home**

Cats are naturally inquisitive, especially in a new environment. Here are some tips to make your house safer for your new family member.

**THAT'S SHOCKING** - Cats can be enthusiastic chewers. Keep all wires out of reach.

**THEY'D DIE FOR CHOCOLATE** - Chocolate is poisonous to pets. Sweets can also upset your pet's stomach and lead to diarrhea and vomiting.

**NO BONES ABOUT IT** - Never give cooked turkey, chicken, or rib bones as a treat. Cooked bones can splinter and cause serious internal injury.

**COMMON HOUSEHOLD KILLERS** - Cleaning products, bleach, ammonia, drain cleaner, oven cleaner, paint, gasoline, rat poison, etc. Lock them up!

**KILLER PLANTS** - Poisonous plants include lilies, philodendron, elephant ear, eucalyptus, spider plants, azalea, ivy, Leander, and plant bulbs. See the ASPCA website for a full list (<http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants/>)

**KEEP OFF THE GRASS** - If you treat your lawn with chemicals, keep pets away.

**IT FIT YESTERDAY** - Kittens grow quickly. Always make sure collars and harnesses are properly fitted to avoid injury.

**TAKE CARE OF PERSONAL CARE ITEMS AND MEDICATIONS** - Cosmetics, shampoos, skin creams, hair "perm" solutions, depilatories, suntan lotions, sleeping pills, antihistamines, aspirin, and acetaminophen can all be lethal to pets.

**IT'S NOT A TOY** - Plastic bags can cause suffocation.

**THE HEAT IS ON** - Watch out for hot irons, coffee pots, and space heaters.

**A DIP TIP** - Keep covers on hot tubs and pools. Pets can fall in and may not be able to get out.

**'TIS THE SEASON** - Keep holly, mistletoe, and especially Christmas tree tinsel out of reach.

**OPEN WIDE** - Pets can be eating machines. Watch out for cigarette butts, rubber bands, balloons, sewing needles, thread, string ribbons, and even pantyhose. What goes in must come out, often via surgery.



## By Tooth and Nail: Feline Household Destruction

Many people think cats are easy pets to live with, not requiring obedience training like dogs. While they may not need to learn to come when called or heel at your side, untrained cats can cause tremendous household destruction. Destruction by tooth includes noshing on plants, and "Pica," which means eating inappropriate materials like dirt, leather or wool. Destruction by nail means using the furniture as a scratching post and the curtains as a jungle gym.

Feline destruction can be solved several ways: by managing the problem, by distracting the cat from the objects of desire, and/or by retraining. A combination of all three can solve almost any problem.

**Plants at Home.** Houseplants often fall victim to young cats. For cats that love eating plants, consider turning tabletop plants into hanging plants or putting plants in one room that's off-limits to felines. You could also swap live plants for plastic and silk ones.

If you move your houseplants to inaccessible areas, consider also growing catnip and wheat grass in easily accessible areas. Praise and reward interest in "appropriate plants." This should satisfy the cat's craving for fresh vegetation. If not, then add some string beans or fruit to your cat's bowl.

Or you can attempt to retrain your cat by spraying plant leaves with an anti-chew agent formulated for plants, and attaching balloons or double-stick tape to planters. Cats avoid sites of loud noised (popping balloons) or surfaces that feel tacky to their touch.

**Pica.** If your cat is eating odd things like leather, dirt or wool, then have a veterinarian examine him to ensure he isn't suffering from a physical problem or metabolic imbalance. Managing the problem could mean keeping attractive objects in drawers, closets, and other closed containers. Also, distract your cat from desired objects by providing lots of playthings. Some experts believe chewing inappropriate items is a sign of boredom and isolation. Longer exercise sessions and rotating toys might bring about a welcome change. Introducing a second cat as a playmate may also help the problem, but only consider this if you truly desire a second cat. Adding cats to a household is stressful initially to the existing occupant, and may cause misbehaviors (e.g. fighting or inappropriate litter box habits) or stress-related health disorders (e.g. Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease).

Attempt to retrain your cat through diet. Give him cat a premium quality dry food with adequate fiber in it. Feed only that food and no other supplements or treats, and keep the cat away from his former pseudo-food items for at least two weeks. After two weeks, douse the desired object with and anti-chew spray and reintroduce it to your cat.



**Scratching Furniture.** To manage the #1 destruction complaint — scratching the furniture, ensure furniture and drapery materials are tactilely unattractive to cats (Generally most smooth cotton fabrics, like chintz, or silky fabrics, like parachute cloth, don't interest cats.) They prefer rough, bumpy, textured surfaces like Haitian cloth, Herculon, raw silk, and leather. If the furniture pre-dates your cat, consider using heavy canvas slipcovers or a comforter to protect your furniture. Of course, there are always plastic slipcovers for the truly desperate! Trimming the cat's nails every two weeks will keep them blunt and minimize the damage done by any errant scratching.

To distract your cat from furniture, provide a scratching post. To remove dead nail sheaths around their claws, and allow new nails to grow out, cats have an inherent need to scratch. A sturdy, wide-based rough textured post that's at least three feet tall, and covered in sisal, burlap, or a similar rough fabric is best. Since the urge to scratch is strongest upon awakening, keep the post near your cat's favorite napping place or by a window.

Scratching also marks territory. Cats often mark an item that's prominent in the territory, like the corner of a sofa or wall, as a visual signpost. Cats also have scent glands in their feet which mark items with their scent. (This is why declawed cats will "scratch" and mark items.) Initially, it's important to place a scratching post beside (or in front of) items your cat usually scratches, then move it slowly to the place where you'd prefer it to be. Retrain the cat not to scratch furniture by making them undesirable - cover them with double-stick tape, balloons, tin foil, or contact paper (sticky side out).

The sound of human nails run over the scratching post often entices cats to the post. Praise the cat if they scratch when you do. Dragging a ribbon or other interactive toy over or around the post also attracts the cat. If your cat responds positively to catnip, then sprinkle a potent version on the post several times a month to increase its desirability.

By providing for a cat's physical and mental needs, and keeping its environment stimulating with kitty greens, appropriate scratching posts, and challenging interactive toys, you can avoid much of the destruction caused by tooth and nail.

Adapted from a Jacque Lynn Schultz article, ASPCA, revised 2000, [www.asPCA.org](http://www.asPCA.org)



## **Above All, Don't Declaw**

Please, take this as a given. Declawing isn't acceptable for the beautiful, loving animal that depends on you. The reasons to avoid declawing are compelling, for you and your cat.

Declawing maims a cat, a mistake that can cause physical, emotional and behavioral complications. It's wrong to assume declawing a cat is a simple procedure like trimming nails.

Declawing is an irreversible surgical procedure that amputates the last joint of the cat's "toes." It's a very painful procedure with a strong potential for secondary complications. Imagine having the last joint of your fingers amputated - not a pleasant idea.

On occasion, declawing may lead to contracture of the tendons. This makes it uncomfortable for your cat to walk. To compensate for the missing parts of their front paws, they place more weight on their hindquarters. This causes your cat to become out of balance, and may lead to the atrophy of the muscles in his front legs.

In addition, a cat's claws are it's primary defense. Once declawed, there is no going back. You may think this is fine since your cat never goes outside, but what if he accidentally gets outside and you can't find him. Your cat is now defenseless in a potentially hostile environment.

Deprived of his claws, your cat may become insecure and distressed. If your cat becomes emotionally distressed, you will too. Cats tend to display distress by urinating outside the litter box (on that brand new carpet perhaps) and spraying. Cats may also become more hostile to people (including you) and other animals, and become more likely to bite.

### **Alternatives to Declawing**

The good news is that there are safe and pain free alternatives to declawing:

- Provide your cat with a sturdy scratching post, preferably sisal or rope, that won't tip over when they go to use the post. Do not use the carpet covered scratching posts as this will confuse them and they may scratch your carpeting. Put the post in a favorite spot or place food, water, and toys near it to encourage use.
- You can clip your cat's nails yourself! The majority of cats are perfectly fine with you clipping their nails, although, it may be easier to have help with this task. Nail clippers can be bought for a few dollars and can often be found in the pet section at the grocery or any pet store. A JerseyCats representative would be happy to show you how to clip a cat's nails... don't be afraid to ask! You can also have your vet or local groomer do it for you for a minimal fee.
- "Soft Paws" are another, relatively new option. Made of lightweight vinyl, these caps are placed over your cat's claws. They have rounded edges, so your cat's scratching doesn't damage your home and furniture, and come in a variety of colors.

Adapted from [www.catscratching.com](http://www.catscratching.com)



## Medical Information

Below is a summary of medical care JerseyCats provides to our cats. All treatments given to your cat before adoption are listed on your adoption contract.

### Vaccinations

**FVRCP.** This is a combination vaccine that protects against feline distemper and viruses commonly associated with symptoms similar to upper respiratory infections. It's widely used by veterinarians. Your adoption contract lists the date this vaccination was administered.

### Dewormer

**Strongid.** Strongid is a standard dewormer against roundworms. Roundworms are the most common type of intestinal parasite. Your cat may also have other types of worms and it's recommended you provide your vet with a stool sample to check.

### Testing

**FIV and FELV.** All cats adopted from JerseyCats will be tested for these diseases. The test used will be a SNAP test. The test dates and results will be listed on the adoption contract.

### Flea Treatment

All cats are checked for fleas and, if necessary, receive a topical flea product application (such as Frontline) before being transported to the vet for altering. Many store bought flea products are harmful to cats (especially since they may lick them off). Please check with your vet about their safety.

### Surgery

All cats adopted from JerseyCats are spayed or neutered before going into their new home. The surgery date and location will be listed on your adoption contract. After surgery, your cat will have sutures at the surgery site, which may need to be removed 10 days after surgery. Some cats have dissolvable stitches, which will disappear within 2 weeks.



## **Introducing a New Cat to Resident Cats**

A carefully planned introduction is everything. Most cats do not readily accept a new member of the family. They need time to get used to the idea. It is important to have patience and not to rush the introduction.

### **Realistic expectations**

First, recognize and accept that you can't force your pets to like each other. We don't have a crystal ball to predict whether or not your pets will be friends, but we do have techniques for you to use to increase your chances of success. Most importantly, choose a cat with a similar personality and activity level. For example, an older cat or dog might not appreciate the antics of a kitten.

You need to move slowly during the introduction process to increase your chances for success. You mustn't throw your pets together in a sink-or-swim situation and hope they'll work it out

### **The nature of cats**

Cats are territorial, and in general they don't like to share. A cat who is unhappy about a newcomer may express his displeasure by fighting with the other pet and marking territory (peeing on the floor, wall, objects).

Cats also dislike change, and a new cat in the house is a huge change. These two character traits mean you could have a tough (but not impassable) road ahead.

### **Being social**

Some cats are more social than other cats. For example, an 8-year-old cat who has never been around other animals might never learn to share his territory (and his people) with other pets in the household. But an 8-week-old kitten separated from her mom and littermates for the first time might be glad to have a cat or dog companion.

All of this means that your current pet and your new cat need to be introduced very slowly so they can get used to each other before a face-to-face meeting. Slow introductions help prevent fearful or aggressive behavior from developing. Below are some guidelines to help make the introductions go smoothly.

Be aware that the introduction process can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, or even a few months in extreme cases. Be patient.



## **Confinement**

To allow time for the newcomer to adjust to you and her new situation, keep her in a small room with her litter box, food, water, scratching post, toys and a bed for several days to a few weeks.

- Feed your resident pets and the newcomer on each side of the door to this room, so that they associate something enjoyable (eating!) with each other's smells. Don't put the food so close to the door that the animals are too upset by each other's presence to eat.
- Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until your pets can eat calmly while standing directly on either side of the door.
- Try to get your pets to interact with a toy. Tie a toy to each end of a string, then place it so there's a toy on either side of the door. Hopefully, they'll start batting the toys around and maybe even batting paws.
- Be sure to spend plenty of time with your new kitty in her room, but don't ignore your resident cat.

## **The old switcheroo**

To animals, smells are far more important than appearances, so you want to get your pets used to each other's scent before they meet face-to-face.

- Swap the blankets or beds the cats use or gently rub a washcloth on one cat's cheeks and put it underneath the food dish of another. If there are more than two animals in the house, do the same for each animal.
- When the pets finally do meet, at least their scents will be familiar.
- Once your new cat is using her litter box and eating regularly while confined, let her have free time in the house while confining your other pets to the new cat's room. It's best to introduce your new cat to a room or two at a time and increase her access to other rooms over a few days. This switch provides another way for them to experience each other's scents without a face-to-face meeting. It also allows the newcomer to get familiar with her new surroundings without the other animals frightening her.
- You can do this several times a day, but only when you're home to supervise. If you have to leave the house, put your new kitty back in her room.
- Next, after you've returned the cats to their designated parts of the house, use two doorstops to prop open the dividing door just enough to allow the animals to see each other.
- Repeat the whole process over a period of days—supervised, of course.





### **Slow and steady wins the race**

It's better to introduce your pets to each other gradually so that neither animal becomes afraid or aggressive. Once the cats are face to face, though, there will be some kinks for them to work out.

If you're really lucky (and your cats are inclined), they may do some mutual sniffing and grooming, and you're on your way to success. They may sit and stare at each other. You can provide distraction by dangling toys in front of them at the same time. This may encourage them to play together.

They might sniff each other, hiss, and walk away. That's to be expected. This may go on for a few days or so, and then you'll probably find them both sleeping on your bed.

### **Break it up**

If you're not so lucky, they may be very stressed. Fortunately, they may only posture and make a lot of noise. But, as soon as there are signs of increasing aggression (flattened ears, growling, spitting, crouching) make a loud noise by clapping your hands or throw a pillow nearby to distract them. If the standoff continues, very carefully herd them into separate parts of the house to calm down. This could take up to 24 hours and the cats may take out their stress on you.

### **Be careful**

If the cats fight repeatedly, you may need to start the introduction process all over again and consider getting advice from a vet or animal behaviorist.

Note: Never try to break up a cat fight by picking one up; You're bound to get hurt.

### **Reducing tension**

There are other things you can do to help ease tension between feline roommates.

- Have your cats examined by your vet before introductions to make sure they're all healthy.
- Have one litter box per cat plus an extra one.
- Try to keep your resident pets' routine as close to what it was before the newcomer's arrival.
- Make sure all cats have a "safe" place to escape.



## Introducing Cats and Dogs

### Before Adopting

Before taking the plunge, it's important to know whether the dog is a good candidate to live with a cat and vice-versa. The best possible indicator is confirmation that the dog has successfully lived with a cat(s) before and that the cat has lived with a dog(s).

If there is no history of successful cohabitation, the next best thing is to gather history on the animals and "audition" them with the other species before proceeding. Dogs who are not well socialized to cats are likely to react to cats as though they were either other dogs or prey objects. This means they will direct play, investigation and posturing at cats or will give chase. Sometimes they will do both, partly depending on what "role" the cat plays.

If the dog is gentle, relaxed and friendly and is not much of a predatory type (i.e. doesn't chase cats or squirrels when outdoors), he is a good prospect to develop a relationship with a cat. Predatory types are much more stressful for cats and must be constantly managed when around the cat if they are to live with one. Predation is not something a dog can be easily trained not to do as it is deeply ingrained.

When you audition a dog with cats, do it on leash, to avoid overly stressing the cat(s) and any flat-out chasing. If possible, use cats with dog experience – they are less likely to flee or be stressed. It's also good to try out the same cat on more than one occasion and to try out more than one cat. Good signs are cautious investigation and wagging, along with respect (i.e. backing off) for cat defensive signals. Bad signs are instant attempts to chase, out-of-control straining at the leash, whining, barking and agitation. Many dogs will fall somewhere in the middle, which will make your decision less clear.

Sometimes, with diligence and perseverance, a dog with intense predatory drive can be taught to direct it at other outlets and to stick to carefully trained rituals and routines when around the cat, but this is tricky and does not work in every case. Dogs who are less intense are better prospects. It is important to know that dogs can and do sometimes injure and kill cats. Dogs who kill cats are almost inevitably highly predatory so often they can be picked out. A pair or group of predatory dogs is at greatest risk. It's also important to know that most dogs who chase cats are not in this category. They chase but do no physical damage if they catch or corner the cat. The psychological stress for the cat is still present with these dogs, of course, and is an important consideration.

There is a range of temperament in cats and this is a factor that will influence the success of dog-cat cohabitation. In general, relaxed, laid back cats and kittens are the best prospects to accept a dog. They are also at lower risk to flee and trigger chasing, which will allow a social – rather than a predator-prey - relationship to develop. Shy, skittish and de-clawed cats are less rosy prospects. De-clawed cats feel more vulnerable and are more likely to display aggressively when cornered.



Cats who have not been socialized to dogs will almost always behave defensively, by fleeing and/or with an aggressive display the first time they encounter a new dog. If the dog does not come on too strong, and if the cat is given dog-free zones to retreat to, many cats will gradually get used to the dog and sometimes even become bonded.

### **After Adopting**

If you've decided to blend a dog and a cat in your household, here are some pointers:

- Have a "safety room" or rooms as well as high places the cat can access but the dog cannot. Baby-gates, cat doors and clearing high surfaces can accomplish this. It is important that the cat can retreat to regroup and relax away from the dog and then venture forward into "dog territory" at her own pace. The cat should have access to food, water and litter in this area so no interactions with the dog are forced.
- Never force the cat (or dog) into proximity by holding her, caging her or otherwise restricting her desire to escape. This is stressful and does not help. Aside from it being inhumane, stress is a common reason for cats to break litter box training.
- For the first introduction, have the dog on leash in case he explodes into chase. If it seems to be going well, take the leash off and supervise closely.
- If the dog is behaving in a friendly and/or cautious way, try to not intervene in their interactions, except to praise and reward the dog for his good manners.
- Interrupt any intense chasing and try to redirect the dog's attention to another activity – this is very difficult so you may be forced in future to manage the dog on-leash around the cat until you have worked out a routine or divided up the house.
- In the first few weeks, observe the trend: are things getting better or worse? Monitor interactions until there is a pattern or plateau in their relationship.
- If the dog is the newcomer, be sure to give plenty of extra attention to the cat so she does not associate this change with reduced attention and affection. If the newcomer is a cat, it's also a good idea to make sure the dog associates the new intruder with good things for him. Shoot for positive associations always.
- Dogs should not have access to the cat litterbox – it is too stressful for the cat and the dog may eat cat feces and litter. Most dogs will also eat cat food the cat leaves behind – we suggest feeding cats in the cat's "safe" room or on a high surface.

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## Allergies

Allergies can often be triggered by cats, but sometimes they're not. There are hundreds of causes, and hundreds of ways to combat them too. Don't give up yet!

If you or a family member develops allergies, visit a reputable allergist. Scratch tests are no longer considered conclusive. Perhaps your cat isn't directly responsible. If your cat roams free, he may bring home foreign substances like pollen, plant juices, and poison ivy.

If you're allergic to your cat, it's dander, not fur, that causes an allergic reaction. It's fairly easy to get around this. Both people and animals shed dead skin, and excessive dander can be remedied. To avoid excess dander from dry skin, keep your cat's skin in good condition. To avoid dry skin and excess dander, buy a coat conditioner to add to his food. One of the least expensive and readily available coat conditioners is Linatone. Use daily.

Why are so many people allergic to cats? Because most people don't groom their cats, and their homes collect more dander. Brush your cat regularly to help avoid problems.

*A note on allergic babies:* When they are first born, all babies sneeze. It's their body's natural reaction to environmental stimulants. After all, they were living in water for 9 months and now have to get used to breathing air! Many people mistake sneezing as an allergic reaction to their cats. "Because it takes at least 6 months of regular exposure to an allergen for a child to develop a reaction to it, allergies in babies are not as common as people think," says Jose Carro, an allergist and immunologist at Miami Children's Hospital. However, if a child has any chronic nasal or breathing issues, many doctors recommend re-homing a cat.

It is unlikely your child will have an allergic reaction to your cat until he is a little older. Recent studies indicate a child who grows up with a cat is likely to have a strong immune system, and less likely to develop allergies in the future.



## **Disaster Planning and Your Pets**

If an area is unsafe for people, it's also unsafe for your pets. During a disaster structural damage to homes, and contaminated food and water pose great risks to a cat left alone. Even if you plan on leaving for only a few hours, take your cats with you. Often, people are away from their homes longer than expected. Some things to keep in mind are:

- Make sure your cats always have current identification. Consider including contact information for someone outside your area, in case phone service is down in the disaster area. If your cat is micro-chipped keep the registration information up-to-date.
- Find possible evacuation places in advance. Many evacuation shelters don't accept pets and you may want to consider a cat-friendly motel, a friend's or relative's home as an evacuation site. Boarding facilities and local animal shelters may also be an option.
- Always have a recent photo of your cat with you, in case you're separated. Photos are an invaluable tool when locating a missing cat.
- When you leave your home, leave a large message for rescuers that people and cats have left the home. Paint on a piece of wood "All people/animals safe" and attach it to a visible location on your home. This saves rescuers valuable time.

### **Important Supplies When Evacuating with Your Cat**

- All pertinent records and medical information for your cat, such as medical history, licensing, and owner and alternate contact information. It's a good idea to place copies of this info in a sealed plastic bag (zip top). Always keep it taped inside the carrier. If evacuated, this saves valuable time.
- Food, water, and bowls. Set aside bottled water, any special food, dietary, or medical supplies your cat may need. It's a good idea to bring newspaper, handy wipes for cleaning and a can opener for preparation purposes.
- A carrier large enough to accommodate your cat, and a small litter box. Your cat may have to spend a long time in the carrier and should have all the comforts of home.

### **If You're Not Home When an Evacuation is Ordered**

- Ensure a reliable neighbor or cat-sitter can evacuate your cat for you. To avoid confusion, set up a plan in advance, and makes sure the caretaker knows it. Select a meeting spot outside of the affected area to reclaim your cat.

### **Sometimes, You Simply Cannot Take Your Cat**

- Place your cat in the most secure place in the house. High ground is best when leaving a cat behind, as they will be able to avoid any flooding that may occur.
- Provide your cat with more than enough food and water. Consider leaving an entire bag of food (or more) out, in case you cannot return for some time. Set up a pan or bowl beneath a slowly dripping faucet will provide a reliable water source. Also, fill a bathtub or sinks with water before you leave. Leave toilet bowl lids open.
- Leave a sign outside your home, allowing rescuers to readily identify your home as one with animals inside. Rescuers are often granted access to disaster areas faster than residents, and can help to reunite you and your cat sooner.



## Further Reading

### Reference Books for Cat Owners

- *The Indoor Cat* by Patricia Curtis
- *The Cat Behavior Answer Book* by Arden Moore
- *Think Like A Cat* by Pamela Johnson-Bennett
- *How to Be Your Cat's Best Friend* by Elizabeth Randolph
- *The City Cat* by Roz Riddle
- *Housecat: How to Keep Your Indoor Cat Sane & Sound* by Christine Church
- *How to Raise A Sane & Healthy Cat* by Sean Hammond & Carolyn Usrey
- *The Cornell Cat Book of Cats* by Mordecai Siegal
- *The Cat Fanciers' Association Complete Cat Book* edited by Mordecai Siegal
- *How to Understand the Cat that You Love* edited by Mordecai Siegal
- *How to Get Your Cat to Do What You Want* by Warren & Fay Eckstein
- *Cats & the Law* by Anmarie Barrie
- *Dr. Jim's Animal Clinic for Cats* by Jim Humphries, DVM
- *The Cat Who Cried for Help* by Dr. Nicholas Dodman
- *The Cat Owner's Home Veterinary Handbook* by Carlson & Griffin
- *Caring for Your Sick Cat* by Himsel Daly

### For Those Adding Cats to Homes with Other Pets

- *Cat vs Cat: Keeping Peace When You Have More Than One Cat* by Pamela Johnson-Bennet
- *Cat Wrangling Made Easy* by Dusty Rainfield
- *Petiquette* by Dr. Amy Shojai

### Fun Reading with Cats

- *The Best Cat Ever* by Cleveland Amory
- *Dewey: The Small-Town Library Cat Who Touched the World* by Vicki Myron
- *The Name of the Cat* (re-released as *Secret of the Cat*) by Barbara Holland
- *Catwise* by Desmond Morris
- *A Cat is Watching* by Roger Caras
- *A Snowflake in My Hand* by Samantha Mooney
- *The Tribe of Tiger* by Elizabeth Marshall Thomas
- *Planet Cat* by Sandra & Harry Choren w. Arden Moore
- *Know Yourself Through Your Cat* by Dr. Vivienne Angus
- *Angel Cats: Divine Messengers of Comfort* by Allen & Linda Anderson
- *Cats Incredible! True Stories of Fantastic Feline Feats:* by Brad Steiger
- *Cat Miracles: Inspiring True Tales of Remarkable Felines* by Brad & Sherry Hansen Steiger
- *Cat People* by Michael & Margaret Korda

### Keeping it Real (Mostly Cats, Other Critters Included, Too)

- *Shadow Cats* by Janet Jenson
- *One at a Time: A Week in an American Animal Shelter* by Diane Leigh & Marilee Geyer
- *MUTTS Shelter Stories: Love. Guaranteed* by Patrick McDonnell

## Local Resources

### 24 Hour Emergency Care

Lyndhurst Animal Hospital  
620 Ridge Road  
Lyndhurst, NJ 07071  
Phone: (201) 635-1000

Oradell Animal Hospital  
580 Winters Avenue  
Paramus, NJ 07652  
Phone: (201) 262-0010

Manhattan Animal Hospital  
410 West 55<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY  
Phone: (212) 767-0099

Newport Animal Hospital  
31 River Drive South  
**Jersey City**, NJ 07310  
Tel: (201) 626-3785

Emergency Veterinary Clinic  
125 New Dorp Lane  
**Staten Island**, NY 10306  
Phone: (718) 370-1102

Oradell Animal Hospital  
580 Winters Avenue  
**Paramus**, NJ 07652  
Phone: (201) 262-0010

### Veterinarians

Animal Clinic of Bayonne  
926 Broadway  
**Bayonne**, NJ 07002  
Phone: (201) 963-3604

Animal Infirmary of Hoboken  
600 Adams Street  
**Hoboken**, NJ 07030  
Tel: (201) 216-5777

Animal Hospital and Clinic of  
Jersey City  
603 West Side Avenue  
**Jersey City**, NJ 07304  
Phone: (201) 435-6424

Downtown Veterinary Associates  
282 First Street  
**Jersey City**, NJ 07302  
Phone: (201) 420-7387

Oradell Animal Hospital  
1200 Palisade Avenue  
**Fort Lee**, NJ 07024  
Phone: (201) 947-2442

Oradell Animal Hospital  
343 Boulevard  
**Hasbrouck Heights**, NJ 07604-1320  
(201) 288-0299

Kenilworth Animal Hospital  
741 Boulevard  
**Kenilworth**, NJ 07033-1703  
Phone: (908) 245-8776

Animal General  
725 River Road  
**Edgewater**, NJ 07020-1149  
(201) 313-7000



## **Pet Stores**

Beowoof  
106 5th Street  
Hoboken, New Jersey 07030  
Phone: (201) 659-PETS (7387)

Canis Minor  
31 River Drive South  
Jersey City, NJ 07310  
Phone: (888) 848-8944

Cornerstone Pets  
105 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Hoboken, NJ 07030  
Phone: (201) 653-4644

PetSmart  
300 Mill Creek Dr  
Secaucus, NJ 07094  
Phone: (201) 583-0861

## **Grooming**

Furry Tails Dog Spa & Boutique LLC  
3607 Park Ave  
Union City, NJ, 07087  
Phone: (201) 601-0800  
E-mail: [furry-tails99@hotmail.com](mailto:furry-tails99@hotmail.com)

## **General Resources**

Critter Cab Pet Transport  
By Appointment  
Phone: (201) 963-6944