



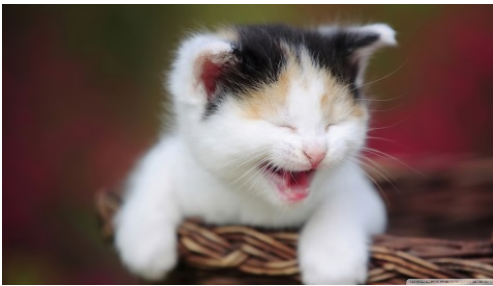
Action Volunteers for Animals

ADOPTING A RESCUE CAT

Congratulations on adopting a rescue cat! Thank you for making a decision to adopt an adult cat that has been waiting for someone like you to come along and give it a second chance at a forever home.

A rescue cat is a unique type of feline. It has experienced some rough times in its all too short life and has seen some of the worst of humanity. Most likely it was somebody's pet and for whatever reason, found itself abandoned and homeless. The fortunate one gets rescued by organizations such as AVA, cared for in a foster home and put up for adoption. With any luck at all, a caring adopter like yourself, comes along and now a deserving cat has a second chance to be loved.

The information provided here is designed to help you prepare your home and your life for your new feline companion. One important fact to remember about rescue cats is that it could take some time for it to learn to trust humans again.



Your Cat's Basic Needs

Safe Room: (Sanctuary Room)

Your cat will need its own space, a 'safe room', which is usually a spare bedroom, a den, an extra bathroom, a separate space with a door, where you can put the cat and keep it safe and comfortable. This is necessary in order to provide a place of security for your new cat so that it can adjust to its new surroundings that include you, your family members and your pets. It is highly recommended that you keep the new cat isolated from any family pets and in this safe room for a week to ten days minimum. Of course family and friends can visit the safe room to interact with the cat.

Set the safe room up with a large enough litter box, a comfy, cozy place to sleep, water and food dishes, toys and hopefully a window for your cat to look out. Leave the cat carrier in the room and either remove the door or prop it open for the cat to use. You will need to cat-proof this room.

One important rule to remember at the start is... **Never pick up a cat that does not know you and you are not familiar with!**

Food:

- Your cat will need both wet (canned) and dry food unless you are told otherwise
- Always use a good quality medium-priced adult food that you purchase at your veterinarian's clinic or at a reputable pet store
- Read the pet food labels and choose a food that does not have a lot of filler such as: corn, rice, meal, gluten, by-products
- Do not shop for cat food at your grocery store as there is a limited selection with limited nutrition
- Depending on the age of your cat and any recommended nutritional requirements due to a health issue, you may need to purchase your cat's food at your veterinarian's clinic. Only vet clinics carry food designed to meet medical issues such as: diabetes, kidney disease, urinary blockages, etc.
- Check the pet food labels for the recommended daily amounts and do not overfeed
- Your cat may not like its food fresh from the cold fridge so you may have to warm it for a few seconds in the microwave
- Monitor your cat's eating habits daily to ensure that all is well
- Avoid using the packaged treats on a daily basis as your cat may view these like candy and then will not eat the food it should
- Always provide fresh water daily

The Litter Box:

- Starting with a brand new litter box is highly recommended
- Keep the litter box in a quiet, low traffic area, away from doors, noisy appliances and food dishes
- The box should be easily accessible to your cat so leave it uncovered
- Two litter boxes are better than one; *the rule for litter boxes is one more box than the number of cats you have*
- You can use clumping litter, but do not use the scented type as this is unnecessary and cats can have an aversion to it
- If the litter box smells, scoop out the waste more often and replace with fresh litter
- Use only enough litter to cover the bottom of the box, your cat does not need to be knee deep in it; it must be able to scratch through the litter to the bottom
- Scoop the box after every use as much as possible and add a little fresh litter each time
- Clean the litter box thoroughly every 3-4 weeks or more often if you prefer
- If you wish to try a different type or brand of litter, start by adding some of the new to the old litter
- While working on the process of changing the type of litter, keep a second litter box with the 'old' litter available anyway and continue to add some of the new to it. Cats are creatures of habit and are slow to adjust to change of any kind
- Monitor for any signs of diarrhea, constipation, straining to urinate or excessive urination and if you are concerned, check with your vet immediately

More Basic Items:

- Plastic carrier
- Nail clippers
- Medium bristled brush
- Adult sized litter box and scoop
- Unscented and clumping litter
- Metal food dishes, not plastic
- Heavier water dish that will not tip over easily
- Suitable cat toys
- *Find a veterinarian as soon as possible who is close to home and open seven days a week*

Cat Proofing Your Home

a. All surfaces in the safe room should be wiped down with a diluted water/bleach solution of 10% bleach (½ cup bleach to a gallon of water) *Scrubbing Bubbles can be used. Do not use Lysol, Pine Sol, 409, Spic and Span, or any cleaner ending with 'ol'* as these ones are highly toxic to kittens and cats.

b. Safety Check of the Safe Room /Household:

- Remove all things that a cat might break or harmful substances it might ingest
- Keep all craft supplies such as needles, thread and balls of yarn in a closed container as these can be fatal to a cat if swallowed
- Secure window blinds so the cat cannot get tangled up in the cord and strangle
- All windows must have screens on them that are in good repair
- Clear the floor of stray rubber bands, ribbon and twine as these are all hazardous when ingested by a cat and can require surgery
- Keep cupboard doors and dresser drawers securely closed
- Cover electric cords with covers, sold for that purpose, or anything that will keep the cat from chewing on the cords
- Make sure that each heating and air vent is enclosed with a secure metal cover
- Remove any living plants from the safe room/household
- Please ensure that all the toilet lids in your home are kept down to deter the cat from using it as a water bowl
- If your floors are carpeted, you may wish to put a vinyl covering over the area in the safe room (See the dollar type stores for tarps which work well)
- Always check your refrigerator and dryer to ensure that the cat has not jumped inside
- Keep balcony doors closed at all times

The real secret to cat proofing your home is to look at each room through its eyes. Find everything that looks like it might make a great toy, and if it is something harmful, remove it.

Feline Behaviour

Appropriate Play Time:

Playtime should be a vital part of your cat's daily activities. It gives you both a chance for some bonding and fun time while providing some much needed exercise for your cat. Try to provide a play session everyday even for a few minutes. You must set the house rules for your cat's behaviour and everyone who interacts with it is required to adhere to and reinforce these rules.

- Play will provide your cat with an opportunity to practise skills that it would normally need for survival
- Always try to redirect any aggressive behaviour onto toys by dragging, dangling or throwing a toy
- Some good cat toys are: anything on a stick or string, furry toy mice, rubber or plastic balls, any small toy that makes noise like prey
- Do not leave out string, shoelaces, any wand toys, feather toys, or toys with pieces that can be chewed or swallowed
- Discourage your cat from playing with your hands or feet; always redirect to a toy
- If after all your attempts to discourage inappropriate play, you feel that your cat is playing too roughly, simply stop all attention and leave the room
- Do not pick up your cat and take it to a 'time out' spot as you will be reinforcing the behaviour you want to change because it will not make the connection
- *You must be the one to leave;* close the door, or walk away long enough to make your point, be consistent with this course of action and your cat should get the message
- During rough play, never slap, tap, flick or hit as your cat will become afraid of your hands
- **Physical punishment never works, it just teaches your cat to fear you**

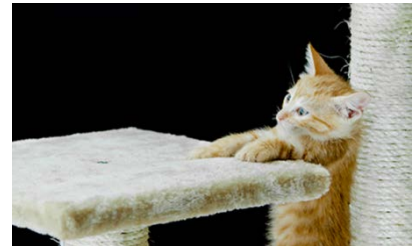
Handling and Grooming:

- Sit down at floor level and approach your cat from behind, rather than hand outstretched at its face.
- Often cats do not like to be picked up
- Talk to it softly, go slowly, be gentle and observe the signs your cat gives and encourage affection and continue to do this until it relaxes and starts to enjoy being touched
- Cats may be sensitive in certain areas such as the back, abdomen and paws so avoid touching those areas initially
- Tail swishing, pupils dilating, ears flattening are signals that your cat has become over stimulated **STOP what you are doing**; the cat has had enough for now
- Come back every hour or so and repeat the process as often as possible
- Give your cat time to settle in and get to know you before attempting to brush it
- Your cat needs to be brushed and will hopefully enjoy it
- Brushing gives you an opportunity to examine your cat's body for any possible medical issues

Scratching:

This is a very natural activity for a cat and an essential exercise to maintain healthy muscles. Its muscles can weaken due to an inability to stretch if it does not have a suitable place to scratch. A cat uses its claws: to defend, to climb, to exercise, to mark its territory and for an emotional release when stressed or excited or because it just feels good.

- Trim nails
- Provide a scratching post, a tall, sturdy, vertical one is best; train your cat to use it
- A horizontal post will work if your cat likes to scratch carpet
- Put the posts beside any piece of furniture that your cat seems to like
- Cover any area or piece of furniture that your cat has chosen to scratch; double-side tape will help



Inappropriate Elimination/House Soiling:

Litter box issues make up the number one behavioural reason that adopters surrender their cats to shelters. Here are some reasons that a cat may choose not to use the litter box.

- *Wrong location:* Make sure that the box is in a quiet, low traffic area, away from doors and its food dishes
- *A dirty box:* Cats want the box to be clean, scoop after every use
- *Too much litter in the box:* Your cat needs to be able to scratch the bottom without going through layers of litter
- *Changing the type of litter:* Take your time changing from one type of litter to another by adding some of the new type to the old type; this could take a week or two or longer
- *Anxiety or stress:* The cat is now in yet another strange place with unfamiliar people, noises and smells
- *Aversion:* The lingering scent from the use of deodorizers, cleaners, scented litter can be off-putting to a cat
- *Interruption:* Something startled or distracted the cat while it was in the box
- *Territorial behaviour:* If reusing a litter box, make sure that it has been thoroughly cleaned with a water/bleach solution
- *Medical reasons:* House soiling can indicate a number of medical issues; so watch and listen. If you hear the cat crying while in the box and there is only a small amount of urine, then an immediate visit to your vet is necessary

Socialization/Introductions

- **New People**
Invite any of your friends or family who visit, to meet your kitten while you control the interaction, keeping the kitten safe. Use the toys, and insist all shoes off and that everyone is down at floor level. Keep in mind that most people have no idea how to handle a cat.
- **New Noises**
It is always helpful to expose your kitten to as many of the normal household noises as possible. Start with radio/TV with the volume on low. Work up to running the electric broom or vacuum briefly near the safe room but behind the closed door.

Children and Cats:

You must teach your children the proper way to behave around the new cat and what they can and cannot do.

- Above all, shoes off, down at floor level and using quiet voices only
- Your child should by no means approach a cat that is eating, sleeping or using a litter box
- Never allow your child to pick up, squeeze, yank, pull, hit or throw objects at a cat
- Always supervise your children and do not allow them to chase or corner the cat
- Cats that feel threatened will resort to aggression

Reasons to Keep Your Cat Indoors

You may think that letting your kitten outdoors is the natural thing to do; however, cats like children, depend on you to recognize the dangers and protect them from harm. The list below contains just a few of the lethal risks the outdoors poses to your cat.

- **Traffic** – Being hit by a vehicle can leave your cat very seriously injured but most likely dead
- **Poison** – Pets can easily come into contact with poisonous substances put out by your neighbours even though it is illegal to do so; antifreeze dripping from a car has a sweet taste and is lethal
- **Cruelty** – Regrettably there are a lot of people in this world who have no qualms about intentionally being cruel to animals
- **Trauma** – Allowing your cat outside exposes it to all sorts of injuries from fighting with other cats, dogs and wild animals; bite wounds which tend to abscess and prove fatal
- **Disease** – Even a vaccinated pet can contact serious diseases such as: FIV, Feline Leukemia, FIP and so on

No kitten or cat, no neighbourhood is immune to these dangers. Save yourself some hefty veterinarian bills and the heartache of losing a beloved pet.

KEEP YOUR CAT INDOORS!

Signs That Your Cat May Be Sick:

Keep in mind that if you have concerns about your cat's health, you should always check with your veterinarian.

- Appetite loss
- Dragging hind quarters on floor
- Severe constipation, severe diarrhea, dehydration
- Increase drinking
- Straining to urinate
- Enlarged abdomen
- Red or swollen gums
- Excessive drooling
- Weight loss despite good appetite
- Upper respiratory infection
- Shortness of breath
- Lumps
- Low energy/Hiding

Cat Introductions:

See the AVA handout, ***"Introducing the New Cat to the Current Cat"*** and check websites such as www.petfinder.com for even more information before starting.

Cat and Dog Introductions:

Do Not Be in a Hurry! The basis for a successful cat and dog introduction is to expose them to each other gradually and under strictly supervised conditions. If your dog has had a positive experience living with a cat and your cat has had a positive experience being around a dog, then quite possibly they will move easily into tolerating each other. However, it is likely that your cat and dog will need much more time and structure to achieve coexistence.

Check websites such as www.petfinder.com for helpful information before you start.



"The more love you give, the more love you get back."

Cheryl C – 04/07/2015