

Animal Care Tips: Cats

Congratulations on adopting your new feline friend! Our goal at Tails to Tell Animal Rescue Shelter Ltd. is to find the perfect match between families and their pets. We hope that these tips will assist in a successful introduction, and a happy, lifelong relationship with your new pet. For more tips, especially on shy cats, please ask for our cat integration paper.

Bringing Home Kitty

Cats are creatures of strict habit and routine. Bringing your new cat or kitten home will be stressful for him or her. Keep in mind; many of our rescues have spent most of their lives in our shelter. To help your new pet ease into their new lifestyle, follow these helpful hints:

- ✿ **Start small:** Give the new cat or kitten their own space. A spare room or bathroom, preferably with a window, is ideal. Place the litter box, food and water dishes, bed and any toys in the room. This way the new pet only has to deal with a small change at first. Kitty will also have a safe place to return to when the time comes to venture into the rest of the house.
- ✿ **Start slow:** Let kitty stay in the safe room for a few days at minimum before allowing him or her to begin exploring the rest of the house. It allows an opportunity to get used to the sounds and smells of the new home, as well as any other pets – they can smell each other under the door. Visit kitty frequently during the day and evening. Be patient if you are ignored or kitty is not cuddly. Remember, this is a stressful situation for the new pet.
- ✿ **Start right:** The success of any happy pet relationship is often defined by the beginning. While there are many people who brag about tossing the cats in together and they work it out, that is by far the worst thing you can do. Cats do not like change and are not quickly receptive to new-comers or new situations. It's only after the fur is flying that owners realize there is a problem and then starts damage control, and some damage cannot be undone.

Introducing Other Pets

Please talk to one of our shelter representatives about your current animals before adopting. We know our animals and their backgrounds so we want to be sure and make the perfect fit. Some tips on introducing your new pet to your current pet:

- ✿ **To another cat:** Follow the “bringing kitty home” tips and let them sniff each other under the door. Play with both cats by the door with strings or dangly toys so they can interact in a fun manner without direct contact. When the new kitty is comfortable, let him or her explore the rest of the house with your supervision. Break up any aggressive behaviour by putting a newspaper in front of the aggressor's face or shooing them away. Supervise all interactions until you are comfortable with the situation. Patience is the key. Some cats will learn to tolerate each other but may never be close friends. The cat that was there first is king or queen and will not want to be de-throned!
- ✿ **To a dog:** Follow the “bringing kitty home” tips and let them sniff each other under the door. When kitty is comfortable enough to explore the rest of the house, keep the dog under strict control, using a lease or muzzle if needed. A long tiring walk, or game of fetch prior to the meeting may help keep the dog's energy at a minimum. If your dog is overly curious about the new cat, bring out kitty's bed to sniff. Praise the dog to excess if he lies down or ignores the new kitty. Do not try to force them to directly interact. The key to success is a calm, relaxed and under control dog. Kitty will interact when ready and patience is a must.

Care & Common Issues

Taking care of your pet's health and happiness will insure a happy kitty with few behaviour problems.

- ✿ Keep the litter box clean to prevent house soiling issues and urinary tract infections.
- ✿ Groom regularly to prevent matting and hair balls.
- ✿ Yearly vet checks can help prevent serious illness and disorders.
- ✿ Provide acceptable toys and towers for cats to scratch on, trim nails or use “Soft Paws” to prevent kitty from scratching furniture.
- ✿ Don't leave out tempting treats and food on your table or counters. Many of our residents have never lived in a house and have survived prior to their rescue on whatever they found on the streets. They have no idea that counters and tables are off limits until they are taught.