



## **YOUR NEW CAT**

**Information and advice from the Oregon Humane Society  
for a happy life with your new pet.**



**OREGON  
HUMANE  
SOCIETY**

503-285-7722 • [www.oregonhumane.org](http://www.oregonhumane.org)



# CONGRATULATIONS!

Thank you for adopting a companion animal from the Oregon Humane Society!  
We would like to thank you for taking the time to adopt your new pet from our shelter. This booklet is designed to address many of the questions you may have about how to care for your new cat. Please give us a call if you need any additional information or advice.

**OREGON HUMANE SOCIETY 503-285-7722**



We also suggest that you take advantage of our pet advice section on our website at **[www.oregonhumane.org](http://www.oregonhumane.org)** and look for our educational classes held here at the shelter. Workshops and individual private training sessions are also available. Look on our website under “Pet Training” for more information.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Settling-In: Protocol for you and your New Cat, Weeks 1 and 2

Cats in your home? All the tips in Chapter 2 apply, but in addition:

- Put the new cat in a separate room as soon as you get home.
- Let the cats sniff under the door and get used to new scents.
- Bring the new cat out in a cat carrier and allow existing cat to sniff.
- Introduce your most friendly and social cat first.
- Do NOT allow one cat to attack another.
- Even if all seems well, separate when you're not at home to supervise.
- Do not force a meeting, and never restrain your cat (especially in your lap!).
- The slower you go, the better the outcome.

Dogs in your home? All the tips in Chapter 2 apply, but in addition:

- Allow the cat time to adjust in a cat-safe room for a few days.
- Let the dog and cat sniff each other under the door.
- Keep the dog leashed when he sees the cat, and give the dog tasty food treats (or his favorite reward) for sitting/lying calmly and staying relaxed in sight of the cat.
- Do not restrain the cat in your lap or arms—allow the cat freedom to move away if she needs to.
- Do not allow your dog to become aroused or excited with the new cat around. This can lead to the chase/prey drive. Don't play rough.
- Separate the new cat when left alone; put her in her "safe" room.

Kids in the home? All the tips in Section 3 apply, but in addition:

- Supervise, supervise, and supervise every interaction!
- Do not allow your kids to be rough with the cat—instead, have them scratch the cat on its head and face only.
- Do not scratch a cat on its belly or pull its tail.
- It is best if kids do not pick up the cat or squeeze too tightly.
- Do not let kids crowd or corner the cat.
- Do not have visiting children until the cat has settled.
- Do not let the kids try to pull a cat out of a hiding spot.
- Never let kids chase a cat or grab for a running cat.
- Teach kids to carefully LET GO if the cat struggles in their arms.



## Preparing Your Home

Before you bring your new cat or kitten home, it is important to “kitty proof” (for his safety as well as that of your belongings) and to purchase a few basic supplies. Here is a quick check list to get you started:

Prepare a safe room, such as a bathroom or small spare bedroom, for your new cat’s first few nights. Place the litter box at one end with the food and water dishes and bed at the other. Allow your cat lots of time to adjust, and initially, when you’re away and at night, keep the cat in this safe place. (If it is your bathroom, remember to close the toilet lid!)

Many plants are poisonous to animals, so do a thorough check of your home before bringing home your new cat. Here is a list of some of the most common household plants that are toxic: Amaryllis, Azalea, Baby’s Breath, Bird of Paradise, Calla Lilly, Cyclamen, Daffodil, Dieffenbachia, Easter Lily, Eucalyptus, Mistletoe, Narcissus, Oleander, Peace Lily, Primrose, Philodendron, Tiger Lily, and Tomato plant.

Help reduce potential human allergies by getting a good HEPA air cleaner and vacuuming frequently. Remember, cats are naturally curious, like to explore and can get on top of most anything. It is a good idea to put away breakables that may be knocked off a shelf by an exploring kitty. It’s as easy as closing a door to a room.

Have the following supplies on hand. You can find most of these at the Oregon Humane Society’s Best Friend’s Corner pet supply store:

### Litter box and Litter

You will want to experiment to find the litter your cat prefers. There are many different kinds of litter to choose from, but in studies most cats prefer non-scented fine clumping litter.

### Food

We feed (and recommend) the high-quality dry food sold in our store.

### Food and Water Dishes

Avoid plastic dishes; they harbor bacteria. Make sure food and water dishes aren’t placed near the litter box.



### Safety Collar and ID Tag

Even indoor-only kitties need to wear a collar and ID tag.

### Nail Clippers and Other Grooming Supplies

A flea comb and a brush are needed to keep your kitty beautiful. Hairball medication should be in your supply drawer if your cat has medium to long hair.

### Safe Toys

Cats love to chase and hunt down toys. Avoid those with small parts that can break off and be ingested. Also avoid yarn, string, and curling ribbon as these will cause problems inside your cat’s digestive tract if swallowed.

### Scratching Post

This will give your cat an appropriate place to do what comes naturally. Scratching not only helps kitty shed the sheath of his claws, but also marks territory. Try a post that will allow your cat to get a full stretch. Post materials vary—rope, carpet, wood—so find one your cat likes.

## The Ride Home

Many cats do not like traveling. Here are some tips that will help your cat have a safe and calm time during the ride home.

Keep your new cat in his carrier no matter how much he is crying—it is the **ONLY** safe way to transport your pet. Have an adult carry the cat in its carrier to your vehicle to eliminate “swinging” of the carrier. Use a seat belt or tether to secure the carrier in your car.

Do not allow children to tease or excite the cat. Have them keep their hands and fingers to themselves! Never allow them to open the carrier to pet the cat.

Do not leave the cat in the car unattended, even for a short stop to shop. Cats can over-heat very quickly. Buy your supplies at our retail stores and then you can take kitty straight home.

Keep the cat in the carrier until you are safely inside your home (or the cat’s safe room if there are other pets in the home) with the doors shut. Once home, the cat will need time and a quiet place to settle.

## The First Few Days

Your new cat is embarking on a journey to a fun and wonderful life. You are aware of all the joys that lie ahead, but your cat does not know what is happening. The first few days can be very uncertain for your cat. Be patient and take things slowly.

Please review the information provided to you by the Oregon Humane Society, paying particular attention to any information given by the previous owner of your new cat. Schedule the complimentary first veterinary examination within 10 days of adoption and begin integrating your new kitty into your household.

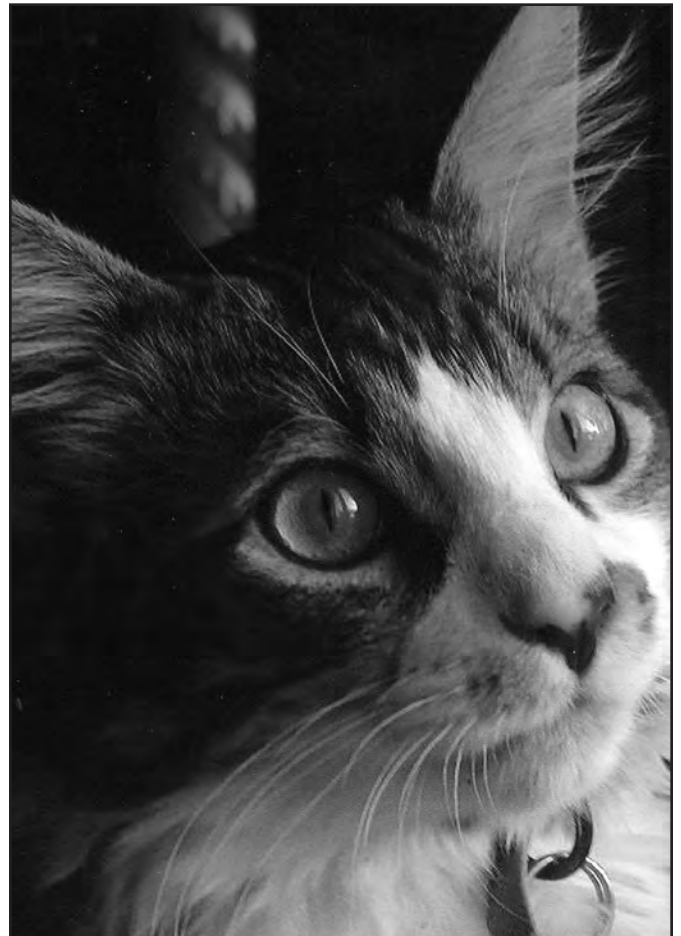
A frightened or unsure cat’s tendency is to hide. Let

her do that and know that she will eventually become comfortable and come out. Under no circumstances should you force a cat from her hiding place by pulling her legs or other body part. Coax her out gently with food or a toy, or leave her alone for now.

## What To Expect While Settling In

Do not be alarmed if your new cat exhibits any of the following behaviors in the first few days.

- Not eating
- Sniffing everything
- Upset tummy, vomiting, loose stools
- Hiding (sometimes for days)
- Not using the litter box (See litter training)



## Things You Can Do To Help

### Be calm, be patient.

At first, keep your cat in a small room, such as the bathroom (make sure the toilet lid is down!), with the litter box at one end of the room and food and water and a bed at the other, to give him time to adjust. Gradually give your pet more freedom as he successfully goes back to and uses his litter box. Allow several weeks for your new pet to adjust.

Keep your cat indoors. Check for open windows and loose screens, as a frightened cat could easily break out. It can take weeks or even months for your new cat to feel at home.

Never drag your new cat out of hiding. Use a lure such as food or a toy to encourage your cat to come out.

Provide plenty of fresh water and high quality food.

Initially, keep your new cat separated from other pets. (See introducing your new cat.) It is best not to introduce your kitten/cat to your home during very busy times such as birthdays and holidays. If you do, provide them with a quiet area away from the action and limit over-handling of the new cat. Cats get bored, so provide lots of fun toys, perches and social interactions with you to help your cat adjust. If you have a windowsill with a view of the yard, open the curtain or blinds so your cat can get a view of the world outside.

## Feeding Time

The Oregon Humane Society encourages feeding a high quality dry food—use wet food for treats or if there is an illness or obesity. Talk with your veterinarian about dietary requirements.

## What To Eat?

### Kittens (under 1 year)

Feed high quality, dry kitten food that is high in nutrients and low in magnesium ash (which may contribute to urinary disorders). NOTE: very young

kittens may tire of eating dry food so you may want to supplement with a quality canned food if your kitten is under two pounds.

Dry food helps to clean teeth and, if nutritionally complete, can be the bulk of the kitten's diet.

Dry food can be left out for the day so the kitten can eat when hungry.

Supplement with canned food if the cat needs more protein for growth.

Fresh water should be available at all times in a spill proof, clean bowl.

Limit "moist meal" or fish.

Do not give cow's milk as it can cause diarrhea.

Clean food and water dishes thoroughly every day.

## Adult cats (over 1 year)

Feed high quality adult maintenance dry food.

Feed two scheduled meals per day. Free feeding of high quality dry food may work but can lead to obesity in some cats.

Discard any food left after 24 hours before cleaning and refilling the dish. Follow amount guidelines on the pet food bag. Monitor your cat's weight and adjust food portions accordingly. If you cannot feel his ribs, he may be overweight, a condition that can lead to serious health problems. Check into pet food brands that have a low-cal option.

Fresh water should be available at all times.

## Where To Feed

Place the cat's food and water dishes in a safe, quiet place, where she can eat without being disturbed by other pets, children or loud noises such as the laundry. The feeding place should be far from the litter box (which should have its own calm and quiet location).



# CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO OTHER PETS

Before introducing your new cat to your other pets, make sure your existing pets are healthy and current with their vaccinations. Introducing your cat to other pets should be done slowly over a period of weeks. Prepare a spare room (like a bathroom or small spare bedroom) where your new cat can reside for a while before being introduced to the other pets. **REMEMBER**—it may take a month or more for the new cat to be accepted.

A proper introduction is very important and can eliminate many problems from the start.

### Cat To Cat

If your new cat is showing signs of illness, please do not introduce it to your existing cat until you consult with your veterinarian.

Make sure the new cat has a place to himself for a few days, allowing him time to adjust.

Spend time with your new cat out of sight of your existing cat. Be sure to lavish attention on your existing cat as well.

Allow your original cat to follow his usual routine. He will be aware that something is different and will seek out the location of the new cat. Allow them to sniff under the door.

After a day or so, swap the cats so they can investigate each other's areas. Getting used to each other's scents is an integral part of adjustment. If all seems to be going well, allow the cats to meet one another through a screen/baby gate or crate, etc. It is normal for cats

to hiss and growl at each other, but an all-out physical attack is very inappropriate and rare. However, be prepared with a water spray and a towel or blanket to separate the cats, as allowing them to fight will elongate the introduction period or may even damage the process altogether.

After a comfortable period of introductions through a baby gate, carrier, or monitored encounter, increase the area and time the new kitty can explore outside his safe room. Allow only short periods of contact, increasing as time goes on.



Once the new cat has been allowed access to the rest of the house, leave his safe room intact so he may take refuge there. Improvement in attitudes toward each other should begin in a week or so. Do not be discouraged if it takes longer. The length of adjustment will depend on the personalities of the cats and the length of time your existing cat was a solitary pet. Be sure to lavish attention on all your cats to make everyone feel part of the family. The social interaction level may vary; you may have cats that groom, play and sleep with each other, or just tolerate the existence of the other—and that is okay, too!



## Cat To Dog

First, prepare a safe room and have a clear escape route set for your new cat, as a precaution to the encounter. Make sure the dog does not have access to the cat's food and water and especially the litter box! Use a baby gate or cat door to block the dog's access.

When introducing your new cat to a dog, put the cat on a raised surface like a table or dresser. This will help the cat feel less threatened. Put your dog on a leash. Allow them to see each other (try to keep the leash loose) and then distract the dog with a treat or praise. With a flat collar on the dog, you can let him drag the leash around the house so you can grab it if necessary. It is normal for the cat to hiss and growl at first, especially if she has not lived with a dog before. Cats take time to adjust to changes; the more the animals are together in the same room, with you to supervise, the quicker they will adjust. Arm yourself with a squirt bottle and spray them with water if they start to fight. You can also throw a towel over the cat if she attacks the dog. Make sure the cat has an escape route or can leap to a high place. Do not let the dog chase and/or corner the cat or vice versa.

Separate them when you are not there to supervise until you are comfortable with the situation. Some dogs are too predatory to adjust safely to a cat. Proceed with caution and, if you find this is the case, never leave them together unsupervised.

If your cat hides, don't worry. Keep the well-behaved dog around as much as possible so the cat can get comfortable with his presence. Make sure the cat has a private place not accessible to the dog where she can eat and drink in peace and feel safe. Ensure that the cat has unthreatened access to her litter box.

Allow the pets to adjust in their own time—be patient and act calm and relaxed. Often they become friends; sometimes they just tolerate each other. Either way you should respect the arrangement.

## Cat To Other Pets

Remember, cats are curious. Fish, rabbits, rodents, birds, etc., should be protected from the inquisitive cat. These animals are the natural prey of cats and may become very stressed around your new pet, especially if she is sitting on top of their house! Make sure cages are secure and well maintained; they may have to be in another room altogether.



# CHAPTER 3

## CHILDREN AND CATS

If there are children in your household, it is important to teach them how to handle and act with your new cat to avoid stressing the cat and causing potential injury to both. Children learn responsibility by good examples, so please guide your children and regularly monitor the care being provided for your pets.



Here are some guidelines to help your children and your new cat live happily together:

Instruct children to be calm, quiet, and slow moving when being introduced to the cat.

A kitten or cat should be picked up and held with one hand under its chest and the other hand supporting its hindquarters.

Handle the cat gently and tell children not to squeeze or hold too tightly. Most children under the age of 5 cannot hold a cat properly without squeezing too tight. Young children should be taught to sit calmly while you place the cat in their laps. This way everyone is safe and happy.

Children should leave the cat alone when he is sleeping, eating and using the litter box. Also, instruct

youngsters not to put the cat in inappropriate places like the dryer, on the top bunk, in a closed box, etc.

Cats should not be dragged out of hiding against their will.

Children should not chase the cat around the house. If cornered and frightened, the cat may scratch and bite or may become timid.

Never leave young children alone with a new pet.

Teach children appropriate play and petting. Do not allow them to encourage the cat to bite them or run after them. The children should not BE the toys. Provide safe toys for both the cat and the kids.

Teach children to look for signals that show their pet is getting irritated or over-stimulated. A swishing tail, ears back or gentle nips can lead to being scratched or bitten.

Always allow the cat to escape if he tries to run. If the cat struggles to get away, let him go!

Never allow rough handling, as this teaches the cat that it is OK to be rough in return!



## CHAPTER 4

### KEEPING YOUR CAT INDOORS

Indoor cats lead healthier, longer lives. Keeping a cat indoors is not cruel. You can keep your cat happy by scheduling regular playtime, giving her toys to chase and catch and providing things for the cat to climb on (like a kitty condo). If you must let your cat outside, consider harness training your cat and taking her into your yard. While this can be done with patience, it is best to start harness training early, knowing that your cat may or may not accept the harness.

Here are some of the hazards that await a cat that roams freely outdoors:

- Becoming lost
- Being stolen
- Being killed by wildlife (even in the city!)
- Having fights with other cats, dogs, raccoons, etc.
- Being hit by a car
- Getting infectious diseases, feline leukemia, feline intestinal peritonitis, feline aids
- Getting fleas, ticks and worms
- Being exposed to the elements
- Neighbor complaints
- Ingesting antifreeze or poisons
- Deciding to take the offer of living INSIDE someone else's home



# CHAPTER 5

## CAT BEHAVIOR

Cats need to scratch, play, hunt, hide, sleep and have social interaction. Cats are by nature curious and adventuresome. They can get into places you would not imagine and make toys out of the least likely items. Many cat behaviors are similar to those you would observe in wild felines (lions, tigers, cougars). They sleep, hunt, stalk, chase, scratch, bite and watch.

### Scratching

Scratching is a normal behavior and can be directed to appropriate places. Your cat scratches not only to clean away scales from its nails but also to mark territory. Try providing your cat with a variety of scratching options such as a rope scratching post, a log with the bark intact, a cardboard box, etc.

Put the scratching post near a favorite sleeping place as cats love to stretch and scratch after a nap. Reinforce his good behavior by praising him whenever he uses appropriate places. Put catnip on the “right” scratching item. If you catch him scratching the furniture, try a water spray bottle, set on stream. Only punish the behavior, not the cat (that is, catch him in the act). If the cat just loves scratching one corner of your couch, for example, place something there to block access like plastic carpet protectors turned upside down with the little spikes facing outward to discourage cats from walking over them. You can also use foil or double sided sticky tape.

### Declawing

Once people learn more about declawing, they are usually discouraged from having the surgery and are happy to seek out alternative solutions. Consider the following:

Declawing is the amputation of the entire last digit

of the cat’s toes. Declawing includes severing of ligaments and tendons, which is painful.

Cat owners have reported having to change cat litter as some declawed cats find clay litter painful and may stop covering their litter. Declawing also can cause impaired balance, increased stress because they cannot defend themselves or injury during a fall because they cannot grip anything.

It’s hardly surprising that, deprived of its claws, a cat may turn to its only other defense —its teeth. You may have a cat that does not damage your furniture but is now quick to bite!



Leave your cat with its claws and use the simple alternatives.

Keep claws trimmed—carefully trim the tips off the nails being careful not to cut the quick (the vein that runs down the nails). Ask your veterinarian to instruct you so you can do this at home or take your pet to a groomer.

You can buy nail sheaths, little plastic caps that fit over the nails to prevent scratching. These have been used successfully by many people.

Train your cat to use the alternative scratching posts that you provided.

## Biting

Some cats are gentle while others are rowdy with nipping/biting. Choose a cat that will work well in your household. Biting, even while playing, is natural. You can avoid getting your hand bitten by not using your hand as a toy for your cat.

Biting may also be saying that your cat has had enough petting or playing. So stop what you are doing and leave kitty alone.

Stroking your cat near its tail and on the belly may also elicit biting behavior. Avoid petting in that area as biting is a natural reaction to that stimulation.

You can retrain kitty by playing gently and using toys.

## Playing

Buy, or make, a few cat toys. Playing and hunting desires can be closely related. A nice mouse toy can be used for a fun chase game, and allowing the cat to catch the toy mouse will help satisfy hunting desires. Most cats will play with anything that moves!

When you play, be sure to avoid wrestling or roughhousing with your hands. Otherwise, it teaches the cat that it's all right to use claws and teeth on you.

Avoid string, wool, curling ribbon (used for gift packages), or anything similar, as cats can ingest these substances and cause serious internal problems.

If you work all day, greet your cat affectionately when you arrive home and give him a few minutes of your undivided attention. Allow your pet to be with you in the evening. A brief play period and just being petted every evening will keep him happy. Set time aside for longer play periods. Many behavior issues are avoided by spending quality time with your cat.

Be aware of normal cat behavior.

Part of playing with your cat may include mock hunting: stalking, ambushing and pouncing. These can be delightful antics to watch, but be aware that anything that moves may become a target (including you).

Cats also incorporate climbing and leaping into play routines. A young or determined cat can jump two or three times his body length. Cats desire to be on high surfaces to survey their territory for prey or intruders.



## Sleeping And Relaxing

Cats love high places to perch and look out from and cozy safe places to hide and sleep. You can buy “kitty condos” or leave suitable closets open. NOTE: always check that your cat is not inside before closing pretty much anything —especially the dryer!

Letting your cat sleep on your bed and relax on your lap will add pleasure and contentment to her life and yours! (Cats can sleep as much as 18 hours a day.)

Know that your bed time may not be the same as your cat's; they are largely nocturnal. Your cat's increased activity around the bedroom or house at some early morning hour is not a behavior problem, just instinctual. Playing with your cat prior to your bed time and feeding your cat when you go to bed may help her sleep peacefully at night.

## Litter Box Training

The general rule of thumb is one litter box per cat plus an extra box for insurance.

Here are some tips that will help ensure that your cat uses its litter box:

Place the litter box in a convenient location, but it must be private and quiet for the cat (a laundry room or hallway may be too noisy and busy).

Keep the boxes away from heavy traffic areas and the cat's feeding area. Be certain a shy cat can reach the box without feeling threatened or exposed.

Scoop away waste every day—this makes kitty happy. Thoroughly clean the box once a month. Empty out all the litter, wash with dish soap and dry.

When you first arrive home with your new cat, calmly place her in the litter box a few times to be sure she knows the location. Allowing the cat to watch you when you scoop the litter box has been reported to encourage the cat to jump in and use it.

You may need to experiment with different types of litter until you find the one that is acceptable to your cat. Any accidents should be cleaned with an enzyme-based cleaner.

### Why Is My Cat Not Using The Litterbox?

You need to determine if the problem is inappropriate elimination or territorial marking. If your cat is marking, you will usually find the urine has been deposited on vertical surfaces, whereas inappropriate toileting is on horizontal surfaces. Each has different suggested remedies. For territorial marking (spraying), look into what has changed in your cat's environment that may cause him or her to feel the need to assert a presence in an area. Your veterinarian should perform a health exam to rule out any underlying medical reasons for the behavior.

Possible reasons for inappropriate elimination:

The cat has not learned the location of the litter box or

forgets where it is if allowed too much house to roam. This is especially true for kittens.



The cat may have a physiological or physical condition (illness). Any cat displaying inappropriate litter box habits should see your veterinarian right away to rule out infection or other medical issues.

The cat may not like the brand of litter, so try some others simultaneously. Observe which one he selects.

The litter box is not clean. Soiled areas should be removed DAILY. The entire pan should be emptied and washed at least once a month, replacing with fresh litter.

The litter box has been disinfected with a strong smelling solution and needs to be rinsed thoroughly. Cats do not like strong smells.

The cat is soiling an area previously used for elimination by another pet. Clean thoroughly with an enzyme-based cleaner.

Place the food bowl on a previously soiled spot as this may deter the cat, or place another litter box on the spot.

The location of the litter box may be unacceptable; try a new quiet area.

Another pet may be keeping the cat away.

Another cat is using the litter box. Some cats will not share a litter box, especially at first.

A child or pet is terrorizing the new cat while you are not there, causing fear-related elimination or the cat simply may be responding to stress and family and household changes.

### **Be Patient And Consistent.**

It can take a few weeks for a cat to settle—not much to ask for a new lifelong friend and companion. **NEVER** punish the cat for making a mistake. This may make the problem much worse. Patience and praise work far more quickly to solve any problems.

Remember to look at our website at [oregonhumane.org](http://oregonhumane.org) for pet behavior advice and classes.

### **Understanding Body Language**

Cats have a varied body language. Here are some ways to read your cat's more subtle language:

#### **Eyes**

The pupils tell you a lot – watch for dilated wide pupils as this indicates fear and stress. Try to avoid petting or picking up a cat with widely dilated pupils!

#### **Ears**

Ears flattened and pressed onto the head are expressing fear or defense.

#### **Tail**

A cat holding his tail straight up is displaying confidence and pride. A bottlebrush tail is a sign of fear/stress. Then there is the slow wag of mild annoyance and finally the slow twitching of the tail indicating your cat has had enough!

#### **Purring**

While generally thought of as a sign of affection, purring can also indicate a serious problem. Injured cats may also purr just as much as if they are being affectionately petted. They may purr to comfort and reassure themselves when they are nervous or in pain.

### **On-Going Training**

Cats love routine. Many do the same thing at the same time daily. Something as simple as closing the door to the room they routinely sleep in during the afternoon can cause a behavior change. Watch for these types of changes to your cat's routine when assessing a behavior problem.

The best training tools are patience and praise of the desirable behavior. If your cat continues to perform the undesirable behavior, a water spray bottle set on stream will often be sufficient. Remember to **PUNISH ONLY THE BEHAVIOR, NOT THE CAT.**





## Dispelling Myths About Felines

There are many popular misconceptions about cats. Here are some of the common ones:

**You should allow your female cat to have one litter before spaying her:**

**FALSE.** Having a litter will not only add to the high pet overpopulation problem, but having kittens can cause stress and there can be medical complications with pregnancy and birth. Remember SPAY AND NEUTER NOW as cats can reproduce as young as 5-6 months of age.

**An indoor-only female cat does not need to be spayed:**

**FALSE.** Not only will you experience the restlessness and noise of your cat's heat cycle but she will discover any and every way to get out of the house. Heat can be experienced as frequently as every other month.

**A fixed cat will get fat:**

**FALSE.** Only a cat that eats too much and does not get enough playful exercise will get fat.

**Only a male cat will spray:**

**FALSE.** Spraying is territorial marking. While usually associated with tom cats, your spayed female or neutered male may spray if she or he perceives a threat on territory.

**Cats are street-smart and can do just fine outside:**

**FALSE.** Cats are domesticated pets. They face many hazards outside that can and do shorten their lives. Your cat is dependent upon you for her health, safety and survival so keep her indoors!

**Cats are loners:**

**FALSE.** Cats are not anti-social animals and do want companionship. They may not desire to accompany you like a dog, but your cat will let you know when it is time for interaction and play and when it is time for solitude.



# CHAPTER 6

## HEALTH CONCERNS AND MEDICAL TREATMENT

### Feline Upper Respiratory Infections

Your cat may have a cold when you get him home. Cats are subject to an airborne virus disease that is very similar to the common cold experienced by humans. It is called URI (Upper Respiratory Infection), and we deal with it every day in the shelter. We do all we can to prevent its spread, including carefully disinfecting our kennels and vaccinating each cat with FVRCP. Despite our best efforts, some cats will come down with URI. When multiple cats are confined to one room, a single sneeze from a cat can expose all the others, just like a cold is spread through a classroom. Also, all the cats in the shelter are under stress just by virtue of being here, which lowers their resistance to illness.

If your cat begins to sneeze or has a runny nose or eyes within 6 days after you get him/her home, chances are that the cat has come down with URI. The virus is quite contagious to other cats, so if you have any resident cats, keep them separate. You can expect symptoms to continue for 7-10 days and they may vary in intensity (just like a cold!). The cat may sneeze, have discharge from eyes and nose, drool and breathe with difficulty through his or her mouth. The



cat may lose its appetite and even stop drinking. If the discharge from your cat's eyes and nose is watery and the cat's temperature is normal, you are dealing with "simple" URI virus. Mucous and fever are indicators that a secondary bacterial infection is complicating the picture. With these conditions the cat most likely will need antibiotics. It is imperative that you seek veterinary treatment for the cat as soon as possible.

#### Can my other pets get URI?

URI is contagious to other cats. Vaccinating against URI is not 100% effective, so it is a good idea to isolate cats that are showing signs of URI, and wash hands after handling sick cats. We recommend isolating all new arrivals in your household for 8-10 days after adoption to give them a chance to settle in and make sure they are not coming down with anything. URI is not contagious to people or to animals other than cats.

#### What are signs of URI?

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Red/runny eyes
- Fever
- Sores on tongue/lips/nose
- Lack of appetite
- Decreased energy

#### What should I do if my new cat has URI?

- Provide your cat with a quiet, warm place to rest.
- Make sure the cat is eating. Sometimes with a stuffy nose they can't smell their food very well and may not want to eat. Offer smelly wet food to increase their appetite.
- If the cat is congested, use a humidifier or put the cat in the bathroom and run hot water in the shower for a few minutes a couple of times a day. Moderate to severe congestion is often a sign of a secondary bacterial infection, so contact your veterinarian to discuss treatment if this occurs.
- If any medicine has been prescribed, be sure to give the full course as directed, even if the symptoms seem to have gone away.

## When should I contact my veterinarian?

With rest and care, many cats will recover from mild URI in one or two weeks. Sometimes cats need additional help, however. If your cat has any of the following signs, contact your veterinarian:

- Not eating for more than 24 hours.
- Green or yellow discharge from the nose or eyes.
- Difficulty breathing, especially panting or breathing with an open mouth.
- Depressed or unresponsive.
- Vomiting or diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours.
- Little or no improvement after a week of care.

## Feline Panleukopenia

Feline panleukopenia (also known as feline distemper) is a rare but infectious viral disease of cats. It attacks susceptible cats of all ages, but young cats and kittens seem to be most vulnerable. It is often fatal. The disease is not related to the virus of distemper of dogs nor does it infect people. It is a close cousin of the parvovirus of dogs and is itself a parvovirus.

Symptoms of panleukopenia include vomiting and diarrhea, lethargy, lack of appetite and sudden death. The disease strikes suddenly and progresses rapidly. All cats and kittens entering the shelter without a documented vaccination history are immediately vaccinated with a combination vaccine which provides excellent protection against this virus. Occasionally though, a cat will have been exposed to the virus prior to entering the shelter, or in that window of hours



before the vaccination provides complete immune protection. For this reason we typically will see a few cases of panleukopenia in our shelter population each year. If you suspect that your newly adopted cat is showing symptoms of this disease, contact your veterinarian immediately.

## Feline Infectious Peritonitis

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) is a disease that fortunately most cat owners will never need to know about first hand. It affects about one in 100 cats—most under the age of two.

The underlying cause of Feline Infectious Peritonitis is a type of coronavirus. This virus is very common in the feline population, and studies show that in most shelters and multi-cat environments 80-100% of cats have been exposed to this virus at some point. Most of these cats (about 99% of them) will never be sick from the virus. In a small portion (about 1%) of cats, however, the virus will be able to mutate into the form known as Feline Infectious Peritonitis. There is no test currently available that will allow one to determine which cats are going to be able to mutate the virus.

Cats that do mutate the virus become very sick. They commonly have fevers that are not responsive to antibiotics, and many of them accumulate fluid in their abdomen or chest. In the “dry” form, they can have eye inflammations (uveitis), kidney or liver disease, or neurological problems.

There is no good test to determine if a cat has the disease, although if a kitten has fluid in his chest or abdomen, there is a high likelihood that FIP is the cause. There is no treatment for the disease, and it is almost always fatal. Vaccination has not proven effective against the disease, and most cats are exposed to the coronavirus before they are 16 weeks old (the youngest that a cat can be vaccinated with this specific vaccine). The risk of contracting FIP is highest in kittens in the first year of life, and becomes very low after two years of age.

If your kitten shows any sign of illness, please take him to a veterinarian, who can provide more information about this devastating disease. Our shelter attempts to keep records of kittens and cats adopted from us who are diagnosed with FIP in order to better understand the disease and its risk factors. If your kitten is diagnosed with FIP, please contact the shelter and give us all the information that you can.

## **Feline Leukemia Virus**

FeLV is a virus that causes a breakdown in a cat's immune system. This, in turn, causes the cat to become susceptible to many other diseases which a healthy cat might otherwise be able to fight off. We recommend that all newly adopted cats and kittens be tested for FeLV after adoption.

FeLV vaccines are reasonably effective in preventing persistent FeLV infection should your cat be exposed to the virus. No vaccine is 100% effective. The immune response produced by these vaccines will protect most cats from becoming infected with the virus. Consult your veterinarian regarding sufficient inoculations for your new cat or kitten.



## **OHS Treatments, Procedures, Vaccines & Recommendations**

While at the Oregon Humane Society, the cat you adopted may have received the following vaccines and/or treatments.

### **FVRCP**

This is a standard vaccine administered to cats. It is sometimes referred to as the Distemper vaccine but it also includes Rhinotracheitis and Calici virus. Kittens and some cats may need additional doses administered by your veterinarian over a period of weeks to achieve maximum immunity from diseases. Until these are complete, it is best to limit the exposure of your kitten to other cats. Many serious cat illnesses are spread through sneezing and nose touching with other cats. Limit contact until you are certain that your new cat is healthy. While at the shelter, all cats and kittens receive initial vaccines at admission to help ensure they receive maximum protection against illness and disease. Upon adoption, follow your veterinarian's advice regarding a vaccination and booster schedule for your cat or kitten.

### **Worming**

A dose of medicine to eliminate roundworms and/or tapeworms was given. Do not be surprised to see worms passed in your cat's elimination. This is to be expected. Continued treatment and other types of parasite control may be provided by your veterinarian depending on your cat's individual needs.

### **Rabies Vaccine**

Animals featured at Outreach events are vaccinated against rabies. OHS uses a one-year vaccine. Follow your veterinarian's advice regarding follow-up vaccination.

### **Antibiotics**

When an animal is sick with an upper respiratory infection, we may administer a course of antibiotics. If your adopted cat is issued medication to go home with him at the time of adoption, it will be important that you continue the medication for the duration

# CHAPTER 7

## CONCLUSION

prescribed, and follow up with your veterinarian regarding recovery and the need, if any, for further medication or treatment. Upper respiratory infection is a nuisance but common in an environment with many cats of undetermined medical background. It is necessary to keep the new cat away from existing cats in the household until it is no longer showing symptoms.

### Flea/Parasite Control

Many products exist that protect your cat from fleas and parasites. Ask your veterinarian for information about different approaches to flea control.



### Spaying/Neutering

Unaltered cats are spayed or neutered at the OHS Animal Medical and Learning Center prior to adoption. If your cat or kitten was altered recently, be sure to monitor the surgery site carefully for signs of swelling or discharge. Refer to the aftercare instructions included in your adoption packet for further information regarding alter procedures. All animals adopted from OHS must be altered to prevent domestic animal overpopulation. Altering dogs and cats also keeps them healthier and easier to live with!

### Grooming

Persian and long-hair cats require ongoing grooming; it is necessary for their health and well-being. Grooming is not just for looks; it prevents painful mats and allows the skin to breathe. Neglecting this type of care can constitute neglect and causes needless suffering. If you are not able to accommodate your cat's grooming needs yourself, ask your veterinarian to recommend a good groomer.

Animals in our lives provide a blessing and an opportunity to share the world with another species. It is a responsibility to take seriously. "Working through" behavior and medical issues will deepen your relationship with your animals and provide a valuable lesson to children and adults, teaching that the bond is indeed one that will endure tough times and last for the lifetime of your pet. "Getting rid" of an animal because it does not meet expectations, has not been taught good manners, or needs expensive medical care is a poor example of animal ownership.

### When the match isn't right....

Sometimes a relationship is not successful. If keeping your companion animal becomes impossible, you will need to notify the Oregon Humane Society of plans for placement or make an appointment at 503-285-7722 ext. 211 to return the animal to the shelter. If you wish to place the animal yourself, please select the home with care. Once transfer of ownership has taken place, please notify OHS with the new owner's information so that the microchip and owner information can be updated in our database.

In some cases, an exchange will be offered to you for another animal. Depending on the reason for surrender, OHS may place restrictions on the types of animals you select to prevent another poor match. For instance, if the cat you selected did not interact well with kids, it will be important that the next animal has a good history with children.

All of us at the Oregon Humane Society want to help you make the right pet choice and to keep the loving bond for the lifetime of the pet. Please give us a call at 503-285-7722 with any questions you may have; we are glad to assist!



## SERVICES DIRECTORY

OHS is dedicated to making our community a better place. Call (503) 285-7722 for more information or visit us online at [www.oregonhumane.org](http://www.oregonhumane.org).

### ANIMAL ADOPTIONS

Cats, dogs, birds, rodents and rabbits are available for adoption. (503) 285-7722.

### ANIMAL ASSISTED INTERACTIONS (AAI) TRAINING

The AAI prep school prepares people and pets for the national evaluation exam. (503) 285-7722; [lorik@oregonhumane.org](mailto:lorik@oregonhumane.org).

### ANIMAL CRUELTY INVESTIGATIONS

OHS officers investigate animal neglect and abuse. Cruelty complaint hotline: (503) 285-7722, x214.

### ANIMAL RESCUE

OHS responds to situations where an animal is trapped and needs human help (in case of emergency, call your local police). (503) 802-6707.

### ANIMAL SHELTER ASSISTANCE

Food, supplies and training are offered to animal agencies throughout Oregon. (503) 416-2993.

### BEHAVIOR HELP LINE & WEB PAGES

Call the free OHS telephone help line with questions about problem pet behavior or consult our online resources. (503) 416-2983.

### EMERGENCY ANIMAL BOARDING

OHS works through various agencies to provide emergency animal care for victims of disasters and domestic violence. (503) 285-7722.

### FIND A HOME FOR YOUR PET

If you are unable to keep your pet, OHS may be able to place your pet in a new home. Call first to schedule an appointment. (503) 285-7722, x211

### HUMANE EDUCATION FOR YOUTHS

OHS offers classroom presentations, after school clubs, summer camps and more. (503) 416-2986; [barbc@oregonhumane.org](mailto:barbc@oregonhumane.org).

### LOST AND FOUND PETS

OHS does not accept stray dogs; call your local animal control agency. We accept other stray animals under certain circumstances. Call ahead before bringing in a stray and visit our website for more resources. (503) 285-7722, x211.

### PET MEMORIALS

OHS maintains an animal mausoleum, columbarium and cemetery and provides private cremation services. Euthanasia services are offered if no other options are available. (503) 285-7722.

### PET TRAINING

OHS offers classes and consultations to help resolve pet behavior issues. (503) 285-7722 x225; [suel@oregonhumane.org](mailto:suel@oregonhumane.org).

### SPAY & NEUTER FINANCIAL AID

OHS offers interest-free loans and discount coupons. (503) 285-7722.



## WAYS TO HELP

To learn more about opportunities to help animals, call (503) 258-7722 or visit us online at [oregonhumane.org](http://oregonhumane.org).

### AUTOS FOR ANIMALS

Donate your vehicle to OHS and claim a charitable deduction. Contact Marsha Chrest, (503) 416-7079; [marshac@oregonhumane.org](mailto:marshac@oregonhumane.org).

### CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITIES

Lifetime income plus a tax deduction. Contact Gary Kish, (503) 416-2988; [devdir@oregonhumane.org](mailto:devdir@oregonhumane.org).

### CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

Sponsor an OHS event or organize a benefit. Contact Jane Morrison, (503) 416-7084; [janem@oregonhumane.org](mailto:janem@oregonhumane.org).

### ESTATE GIFTS

Include OHS in your will, trust or with a beneficiary designation. Contact Gary Kish, (503) 416-2988; [devdir@oregonhumane.org](mailto:devdir@oregonhumane.org).

### FRIENDS FOREVER™

Ensure the welfare of pets who may outlive you. Contact Gary Kish, (503) 416-2988; [devdir@oregonhumane.org](mailto:devdir@oregonhumane.org).

### GIFTS OF STOCK

To make a gift of securities contact Mary Henry, (503) 416-7083; [maryh@oregonhumane.org](mailto:maryh@oregonhumane.org).

### IN-KIND DONATIONS

See our wish list on-line at: [oregonhumane.org/donate/needed\\_supplies.asp](http://oregonhumane.org/donate/needed_supplies.asp).

### MEMBERSHIP

A \$30 membership includes a 10% discount at

OHS retail shelter stores, and more. Call (503) 416-5024 or join online.

### MONETARY DONATIONS

OHS relies entirely on private donations. Contact Jacob Riordan, (503) 416-2989; [jacobr@oregonhumane.org](mailto:jacobr@oregonhumane.org).

### ONE COOL THING

Donate fine art, jewelry, popular electronics, or memorabilia. Contact Marsha Chrest, (503) 416-7079; [marshac@oregonhumane.org](mailto:marshac@oregonhumane.org).

### PAWS

Monthly gifts through the Planned Account Withdrawal System (PAWS) support OHS throughout the year. Call Nicole Edson, (503) 416-5024 or join online.

### TLC

The Thomas Lamb Eliot Circle (TLC) honors donors contributing \$1,000 annually. Contact Mary Henry, (503) 416-7083; [maryh@oregonhumane.org](mailto:maryh@oregonhumane.org).

### TRIBUTE GIFTS

Tribute gifts can be made in memory of, or in honor of, a pet or loved one. A card will be sent to your loved one. Contact Rachel Good, (503) 416-5027; [rachelg@oregonhumane.org](mailto:rachelg@oregonhumane.org).

### VOLUNTEER

OHS volunteer programs are available for teens, adults, groups and companies. Contact Kim Hudson, (503) 285-7722, x204; [volun@oregonhumane.org](mailto:volun@oregonhumane.org).

### WORKPLACE GIVING CAMPAIGNS

To learn more about workplace giving campaigns, contact Marsha Chrest, (503) 416-7079; [marshac@oregonhumane.org](mailto:marshac@oregonhumane.org).

## REMEMBER TO LICENSE YOUR NEW PET WITH YOUR LOCAL COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL:

**MULTNOMAH COUNTY** 503-988-7387

**WASHINGTON COUNTY** 503-846-7041

**CLACKAMAS COUNTY** 503-655-8629

**CLARK COUNTY** 360-699-2096

# CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW CAT!

## PLAN FOR PET DURING DISASTER

**REMEMBER:** If you must evacuate, take your pet(s) with you!

The Oregon Humane Society encourages pet owners to keep their pets in mind when preparing for disaster or an emergency. While the sun is still shining, consider packing a “pet survival” kit which could be easily deployed if disaster hits.

In order to contain and control your pets during an evacuation, you’ll need a harness and leash for each dog and a carrier for each cat. In choosing a cat carrier, choose one that is large enough to serve as a temporary apartment for your cat.

Pre-pack your pet’s kit in a backpack for ease in transportation and include supplies for at least one week. Include dry food, clumping cat litter, water, serving dishes, small litter box, litter scoop, and plastic bags for waste disposal. Pet first aid kits and vaccination records are a must.

Remember any pet medication, favorite toy or bed, and some treats.

Tag, microchip, and photograph your pets. Current identification is the single most important thing you can do to help ensure that you will be reunited with a lost pet. Make certain your pet (even an indoor only cat) is wearing a collar with visible identification tags with your phone number. A microchip implant is a secure form of identification that can’t be lost. Be sure to carry a photograph with you to increase the likelihood of finding a missing pet.

**Tip:** If your cell phone has the camera feature, take and store photos of your pets on your cell phone.

Pet’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Adoption \_\_\_\_\_

Feeding Schedule

Morning \_\_\_\_\_

Afternoon \_\_\_\_\_

Night \_\_\_\_\_

Medicine/Treatments

Morning \_\_\_\_\_

Afternoon \_\_\_\_\_

Night \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Notes







Founded in 1868, the Oregon Humane Society fosters an environment of respect, responsibility, and compassion for all animals through education, legislation and leadership. With your support, we take care of the homeless, defend the abused, and fight with unrelenting diligence for the recognition of the integrity of all animals.