



## YOUR NEW CAT

Congratulations! We are very excited that you have decided to adopt a new cat. We want this to be a positive experience so that you and your new cat can live happily together for a long time, so here are some tips for starting your new relationship off on the right “paw.”

### **First Day Home**

You have just committed to adding a new member to your family, which can be enjoyable but also stressful for all involved, including your new cat. When bringing your cat home for the first time, keep in mind that he has probably been through a lot in the last few days. He may have been lost on the streets for a period of time before coming to the shelter or been given up by his previous owner. Being adopted into a new family can initially be very overwhelming for a cat.

Your first day with your new cat should be spent allowing him to get used to his new home. Establishing a sanctuary room for your cat will help him adjust well. Cats are territorial animals and do best if they are introduced to one small part of a new home at a time. Pick a quiet room where your new cat can stay until he has adjusted.

### **Some Supplies Your New Cat Will Need**

- Food
  - We recommend Hill’s Science Diet, but if you do choose another brand make sure to transition your new cat to it slowly. Start by feeding him about 25% new food. After a few days, up the amount of new food to 50%, and increase it to 75% after a few more days before switching over completely to the new food. Going slowly allows your cat’s digestive system to keep up and his stools to remain normal so you don’t have a big mess on your hands!
- Water
  - All cats need fresh water available at all times.
  - Some cats prefer cat water fountains, which are available at the Dumb Friends League or at your local pet store. As long as you keep the unit clean and the water in it fresh, using a water fountain can encourage your cat to drink more.
- Litterbox, Litter and a Scooper
  - This is one of the most important acquisitions when adopting your cat as this is where your new cat will urinate and defecate. We recommend getting two litterboxes for your first cat and an additional litterbox for every other cat in the home—so, if you have two cats, for example, you would have three litterboxes placed in different areas in your home.
  - There are many types of litterboxes available. We recommend choosing a litterbox big enough for your whole cat to fit inside and turn around in, with sides high enough so that nothing is hanging out over the edge, and also one without a lid. Lids on litterboxes

can trap smells that can be adverse to the cat as well as causing anxiety when urinating or defecating especially if there are other animals around to ambush him.

- There are also many different types of litters you can purchase. We recommend a finer grained litter. Once you choose a litter, stick with it as it can become a preference for your cat. If you decide to change types, transition slowly to the new type, in the same way that you would introduce a new food.
- Make sure to get a scooper as well and scoop at least daily! Everyone likes a clean toilet.
- Scratcher
  - Cats need to scratch! Because scratching is a natural behavior that all cats exhibit, scratchers are important outlets for your cat so you won't have inappropriate scratching on walls or furniture.
  - Some cats like horizontal scratchers and some prefer the vertical variety. Several different types of materials are also available. Sisal is the most common and can be readily found at pet stores.
  - Declawing is not something condoned by the Dumb Friends League as it is a permanent physical alteration of the cat and can lead to other behavior issues. Please reach out to our Behavior Helpline if you need help with inappropriate scratching. There are many ways to redirect and manage this natural behavior.
- Cat Tower
  - Cat towers are similar to scratchers in that there is a wide variety out there to choose from and some cats have clear preferences.
  - Cat towers also provide your cat with more space and territory to run around on, which is very important, especially in multi-cat homes.
- Toys
  - All cats love toys! There is a huge variety of toys available, ranging from homemade entertainments like crumpled up paper and empty boxes to deluxe toys from the pet store. A good way to keep things fresh is to group your cat's toys into several collections and offer your cat a different selection every week or two.
  - Most cats really enjoy wands with toys on the end of a string. Playing with your cat using these interactive toys can help you form a lasting bond with him.

### **During the Weeks to Come**

Visit your cat regularly as he adjusts to his room. Everything he encounters will be new and possibly stressful for him, so it is important to allow him to adjust at his own pace. It could take two days for him to be his normal self, or it could take two months—every cat is different. A good indication that your cat has adjusted to his new home is when he is eating, drinking and using the litterbox normally. Your cat should also not show any signs of fear, such as hiding when you walk into the sanctuary room. When your cat is ready to see the rest of the house, simply open the door and allow him to explore on his own.

We strongly encourage you to take advantage of the free exam within 14 days of adoption generously donated by members of the Denver Area Veterinary Medical Society (DAVMS). However, be aware that a veterinary clinic is a stressful environment for any cat, and do everything you can to make it a positive experience for him, like bringing treats with you or using a calming spray like Feliway (see our "Stress Relief" handout).

## Introductions

If you have other pets at home, take your time introducing your new cat to them. Rushing through an introduction can cause long lasting conflicts between your new cat and your current pets. See our handouts "Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Cat" or "Introducing Your New Cat to Your Other Pets" on our website.

## Training

Training should begin early, no matter how old your new cat is. Socializing kittens is crucial to their development and will help you have a well-rounded adult cat. Talking to, touching and playing with your cat all lead to a more socialized pet. For all cats, we recommend clicker training (see our "Cat Clicker Training" handout online). This is a great form of positive-reinforcement training that can help teach a cat manners, help a fearful cat become more confident or relieve a cat's stress.

## Resources

If you have any questions regarding your new cat's behavior, we offer a free Pet Behavior Helpline. You may call the helpline at (303) 751-5772, Ext. 1359, or you can submit an online request at <http://ddfl.org/services/behavior-help-line>.

## Common Myths about Cats

Cats drink milk - **False**

- Cats are actually lactose-intolerant so those milk treats will hurt your cat's stomach.

Cats can enjoy human food - **False**

- Cats should be fed high-quality, commercial cat food. Other foods meant for humans or other animals, such as tuna, are inappropriate for cats. Not only can they cause digestive issues and weight gain, they are not nutritionally calibrated to meet a cat's daily dietary needs.

Certain cats are "alpha" cats - **False**

- Cats do not have a hierarchal social structure; they have very fluid relationships and while one might be more outgoing or more timid than another, this doesn't fix them in a set social position in relation to other cats.