



## Introducing A New Cat To Your Home

Fearful behavior in cats is caused by various factors. A lack of socialization with people or exposure to a variety of everyday stimuli as a kitten can leave them untrusting of new people and new situations. Unpleasant or traumatic experiences can also cause prolonged fear.

However, many fearful cats bond with their caretakers and make wonderful pets, though they may still remain shy with strangers and hide when people visit. Here is how you can introduce them slowly and help them bond to you comfortably.

### DECOMPRESSING: THREE DAYS



Your new cat may be feeling overwhelmed, insecure, and frightened. They may shut down, hide, and avoid food and water.

- Establish a quiet and calm safe room (see reverse side) for them and confine them there.
- Don't pressure them to interact; let them come to you.
- Create reliable routines including feeding them on a schedule. Don't free feed!
- Give them lots of praise and treats.

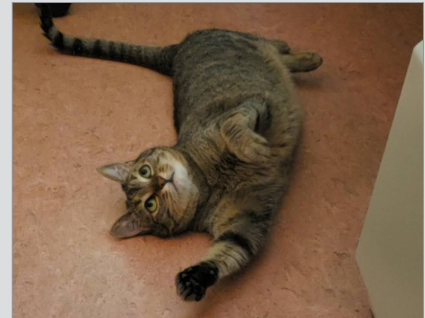
### ACCLIMATING: THREE WEEKS



Your new cat will be adjusting to their environment and will start showing their personality more. They will start recognizing their new routine and testing the exploring their new home.

- After about 2 weeks, gradually expand the areas that they are able to explore and begin introduction to other pets.
- Establish a safe / no-petting zone where your cat can go for quiet time.
- Offer plenty of play time, enrichment, treats, and positive reinforcement for desired behaviors.

### SETTLING IN: THREE MONTHS



As your new cat continues to settle in, they will gain a sense of security and feel settle into a routine. They will begin bonding and building trust, and their personality will flourish.

- Give them full access to the home
- Maintain routines, offer play time and enrichment, and give treats and positive reinforcement.

## **SUPPORTING YOUR CAT'S INTRODUCTION**

- Going to a new, strange environment can cause insecurity and regression in a cat's behavior at first, but many fearful cats will become more confident over time as they acclimate to their new living space and daily routine.
- The amount of time it takes a cat to settle into a new home varies from case to case. Some cats may take a week; others may take months, depending on the individual.
- If you have other pets, do not introduce them until your new cat has bonded with you and is reasonably comfortable in the home.

## **SAFE ROOM**

- Start by confining your new cat to a safe room, preferably a small room that is quiet and calm. Keep them there for about 2 weeks until they feel comfortable in the room and don't hide anymore.
- Block off any inaccessible hiding places like under the bed or other furniture.
- Provide hiding places that are easily accessible to you and comfortable for the cat.
- Ensure food, water, and litter are all nearby and separate from one another.
- Provide enrichment such as: toys, climbing structures, and scratching posts.
- After at least two weeks in their safe room, you can let them explore the rest of the house gradually. Note that too much territory at once could be overwhelming.
- If at any point during the process your cat regresses and starts hiding or acting fearful, confine them to the safe room again for a few days and start over.

## **ESTABLISH SAFE AND NO-PETTING ZONES**

- While your new cat is acclimating, avoid invading the safe spots they frequent.
- Never attempt to pull them out of their safe spots. Instead, offer treats, toys, or pets to encourage them to come to you.
- For very fearful cats that haven't come out for food or toys, offer gentle pets in their hiding space. Always offer your hand to sniff first and if they don't lean in for pets, give them more time. Do not insist.

## **A TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP**

- Speak softly and move slowly around the cat.
- Avoid staring as this is often perceived as a threat.
- When possible, get down to the cat's level when interacting with them.
- Anytime your new cat gives you a desired behavior (like coming out of hiding, playing with toys, using scratchers, etc.), offer praise and/or a treat so they create positive associations.
- Encourage play with interactive toys (like the Cat Dancer or other wand toys).
- Create a consistent feeding schedule. You can use these regular meals as bonding time and a reliable routine will help your cat feel secure
- Try not to startle your cat. If you have to do anything noisy in the house (vacuuming, loud appliances, friends over,) confine your cat to their safe room.