

Moving with your cat

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Moving with your cat can be stressful for all parties. Some cats take moving in stride, but many have difficulty settling in to a new home. Whether your cat lives indoors or out, preparing it for the move and dealing with the first few days in the new home can be very important.

Disruption within the house, which represents the cat's home territory, can be very



distressing. On the day of the move, confine your cat to a secure room with food, water, and a litterbox to prevent it from possibly escaping during the moving process. Cats should travel in a carrier for the trip to the new home.

Once you arrive at your new home, try to completely unpack and set up at least one room before bringing your cat into the house. This will ensure as stable an environment as possible for your cat. The room should have some furniture that is familiar to your cat, as well as your cat's bedding and food bowls. Adding a synthetic feline facial scent to the room may be helpful. Your cat should not be allowed access to rooms with packing boxes, which provide a convenient, yet possibly dangerous hiding place.

The length of time it takes a cat to adjust to a new home varies, because every cat reacts differently. Most cats start to relax within a few days of moving, but some can take weeks to adjust to their new environment. An important coping strategy for cats when they face a new challenge is hiding, and although you can encourage your cat to come out and explore or socialize, it is important to resist the temptation to force your cat out of its hiding places. You should consult your veterinarian if your cat shows no signs of adjusting or if it refuses to eat for a few days.

It's best to restrict your cat to the new home for a couple of weeks before letting it outside. Cats live in a scent-oriented world, and they find their way from place to place by following scent gradients. Therefore, cats usually return home to where their scent signal is strongest, provided there is no strong fear or anxiety associated with the new home.

A major concern with outdoor cats is potential conflict with other outdoor cats in the new neighborhood. If possible, it helps to work out a "time-share" system with other cat owners for the first week or so. This enables the newcomer to explore without risk of attack and to leave some scent signals for resident cats to read, smoothing the way for the first face-to-face encounters.

Q&A

How should I prepare my cat for the move?

On the day of the move, confine your cat to a secure, familiar room with food, water, and a litterbox. Also make sure that you have a cat carrier handy to assure a safe trip to the new home.

How about when we get to our new home?

Try to ease the transition by setting up at least one room with familiar furniture, bedding, food/water bowls, and litter before bringing your cat into the house. Your cat should not be allowed access to rooms with packing boxes, because these provide a convenient, yet possibly dangerous hiding place.

How long will it take my cat to adapt to the new house?

Most cats start to relax within a few days of moving, but some can take weeks to adjust to their new environment. Consult your veterinarian if your cat shows no signs of adjusting or if it refuses to eat for several days.

Credit: Reviewed by Amy I. Attas, V.M.D.