

FACTSHEET

Living with a deaf cat

If you are considering adopting a deaf cat, there are a few special needs the cat will have.

Living Indoors

It is very important that deaf cats live as indoors only cats as they cannot hear danger approaching. You can always build or install a secure cat enclosure so your deaf cat can safely spend time outside. As deaf cats are commonly white, you also need to be mindful of their risk of skin cancer.

Temperament

Deaf cats can often falsely be thought of as nervous or grumpy cats. This is due to the fact that they cannot hear what is going on around them and can startle easily. To avoid your cat becoming nervous, you should always try to approach them in a way that they can see you before you touch them. Also try to approach in a way that will cause a vibration on the floor, and if it is dark, switch on a light. This will stop them being surprised by your touch and harming themselves or you.

If your cat seems to be anxious or nervous try Feliway (diffuser or spray) around the home or Zylkene to help reduce stress.

Communication

Communicating with a deaf cat may seem difficult, but it doesn't have to be. There are ways you can communicate with your deaf cat without sound. You may need to try a couple of different ways to find the right way with your cat.

- Try establishing a number of hand signals instead of words, like sign language. Ensure you use the same signal each time and your cat will learn to respond
- Try using light signals. For example, every time you feed the cat turn on the light twice, if you do this each time the cat will soon learn they will be fed when the light is turned on twice
- You may need to feed the cat a food that has a stronger odour. The smell of the food will let the cat know it's dinner time
- Place a bell on your cat. This helps you know where the cat is and you are less likely to startle them
- Establish a routine. Doing things at the same time each day will help the cat get into a pattern that will help them feel more relaxed
- Timber floors. Carpet on the floor can dull vibrations so it is harder for your cat to know where you are. Timber floors carry the vibrations, giving your cat a sense of where you are in the house
- Speak to your cat, they may not be able to hear the words, but they can feel the vibrations of you speaking or see your mouth moving and this can be comforting to many deaf cats

Get two cats

Look at getting two cats, one with hearing. The cats will be able to communicate with each other in ways we cannot and the cat with hearing can teach the deaf cat routines. If possible try and adopt a bonded pair who already know each other as they will already have a strong connection.

Living with a deaf cat needs a little extra time, so you need to give thought to the time you have available **before** adopting. Like all cats, deaf cats are beautiful, and deserve loving and responsible homes.

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