

FACTSHEET

Moving house with your cat

Moving house is always a busy and stressful time, so you need to try to minimise the effect on your cat. Here are a few hints for making your cat's move a safe one.

Plan ahead

Cats like routine. Changes in their daily routine can cause behaviour changes due to stress. Even something as simple as new furniture can stress some cats. Minimise the impact on your cat by packing your belongings slowly, over a period of time. If this isn't possible, ensure your cat's belongings are the last to be packed to help minimise stress.

Make sure you have a sturdy carrier. Try getting a pet carrier with a metal door, as cats can break free from the lightweight plastic type. The last thing you need is a runaway cat! If possible, try having your cat boarded or staying with a friend on the day of the move. This will help both you and the cat as there is no chance of the cat escaping if they are not in the house. If this is not an option, try confining the cat to one room with things that are familiar to them for a few days before the move. Place the carrier in the room a few days before you are moving, with the door of the carrier open. This will help the cat get used to the carrier; they may even sleep in it.

On the day of the move, keep the cat in the same room and place them in the carrier at least 30 minutes before you plan to move them. This will give them a chance to calm down. Try to avoid moving the cat in the hottest part of the day. The heat will stress the cat more. Most importantly, never leave the cat alone in a car. The inside of the car can heat up quickly and in summer the car interior can reach 60 degrees Celsius. This could kill your cat within a matter of minutes. If you are travelling a long distance, you will need to have the air conditioning on or a window open, as the stress can dehydrate your cat. You may even want to invest in a pet carrier fan. These are battery operated and attach to the carrier door.

If your cat isn't used to car trips, cover the carrier with a towel or blanket as the darkness will help relax the cat.

Prepare your new home in advance. Have a room set up with a litter tray, food and water bowls, and a bed for your cat. Have a few things they are used to in the room to make them feel at home. Try placing an igloo style bed or a box in the room as your cat may want to hide for a few days after the move. Don't be concerned if this happens; your cat is trying to adjust to the new surroundings. You might want to try using a Feliway diffuser in the room. Feliway is a synthetic feline pheromone that can help cats to feel more relaxed. Calming treats and Zylkene may also be needed to help your cat adjust to their new environment. If your cat is super-stressed, talk to your vet about medications.

Settling in

It is best to confine your cat to one room of the house for the first few days after your move. This will help your cat settle in. There will be less risk of them getting out or injured while you are unpacking. Once you have finished unpacking, you can let your cat start exploring the rest of the house. Ensure windows and doors are closed, the house will be new to your cat and you don't want them escaping. Make sure you don't neglect your cat in the move. They need the security of your love now more than ever.

Calming interventions may be needed for the first 4-6 weeks of moving to ensure your cat is as stress-free as possible.

Place your cat's litter tray in an area where they can see it easily when you first move, to avoid any mishaps. Once your cat is using their tray properly, you can slowly move it to a more secluded area where you would like the tray to be kept.

It is perfectly normal behaviour for your cat to display excess scratching when you first move. They are just reestablishing their territory and the scratching behaviour is a way for them to leave their scent throughout the home. Never reprimand them for doing this, simply pick your cat up and move them to the scratcher you want them to scratch on instead.

Outdoors

If you have decided your cat will be an indoor/outdoor cat, consider installing a cat enclosure. This will ensure your cat can go outside safely. If this isn't an option for you, you should not let your cat outside for at least four weeks after moving. Cats have a very good sense of direction, and they may try to go back to your old home if they are let out too soon. **There are a lot of myths about how to stop your cat from wandering off, please don't try these as they do not work.**

Once you have been in your new house for one month you should slowly introduce your cat to the outside. Try short periods of time outside with your cat on a harness so you know they are safe. Don't leave them unsupervised yet. Once you have let them explore outside with you for one week, you can start letting them outside alone.

Remember, you should always curfew your cat at night.

Identification

Before moving, ensure your cat has a microchip. It is illegal not to have your cat microchipped in NSW. Make sure you update your contact details when you move. Don't forget to change your address or you may not get your cat back if they do wander off. This can easily be done online or by calling your local council.

You should think about having a collar and ID tag on your cat as well. If your cat already wears one, make sure you change your address on this as well.

Even if you plan to keep seeing your regular vet when you move, it's important to familiarise yourself with the vets in your new area. If your cat does go missing, checking with local vets is a good place to start looking for them. Also, in the case of an emergency with your cat, you will know where the nearest vet is. Keep a record of vet phone numbers in a handy place or programmed into your phone.

Routine

Try to set a routine with your cat as soon as possible after you move. Feed them at set times and try to set times for playing. This will help them adjust to the move more quickly.

Abandonment

Sadly, many cats are brought to Cat Protection after being left behind when their owners move. For these people it is too much effort to take their pets with them. Abandoning your pet is an offence under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. If you can no longer care for your cat, investigate rehoming options. You can phone us for information. Never simply abandon your pets in the hope someone else will care for them.

Before moving, you should make sure the home you are moving to is cat friendly. Many people move and then surrender their cat to Cat Protection, or other welfare organisations, when they find out they can't have a cat on the property. This is devastating for the cat as they have been through the stress of a move and then are moved again to a pound or shelter. Not all surrendered cats can find new homes.

Moving is something many of us do, and with a bit of effort, our cats can enjoy their new homes as much as we do.

While all care has been taken in preparing this document, it is intended to provide general information only and should not be taken as constituting professional advice. Mention of a product or business does not mean endorsement by Cat Protection.