



## SETTLING YOUR VERY SHY CAT INTO YOUR HOME

You have adopted a very shy cat and so the first few days or weeks will be challenging as both you and your cat adjust to life together. Your cat will be very frightened at first. Your home is a very strange, scary place for them & their senses are totally overwhelmed with the many new smells, sounds, sights & people.

**THE CAT'S ROOM** - you need to keep your cat in a quiet room with no access to the outside or the rest of the house. It should not be the laundry which is too noisy or a bathroom where people come and go all the time.

The room needs to have a door. This door and any windows should be kept closed at all times. The biggest mistake people make is letting their cat out into the rest of the house just a day or so after taking them home. No matter what you think this is too soon!

### **Do not allow your cat out of their room for at least two weeks, even if you think they are ready**

- The room should have a litter tray and a bowl of water placed away from it  
Provide several hiding places so they can choose where to hide such as: the cat carrier (see below 'When you get home'), an igloo bed, an upside down cardboard box with holes cut in the side
- If there is a human bed in the room which has a gap underneath, clear this space and drape a sheet to hang partially over the side of the bed
- For a really frightened cat, you could make some paper bag/cardboard tunnels between hiding places so they can move around without feeling too exposed

Help the cat to relax

- A good scratching post which includes a hiding box is a good investment so they can stretch, scratch and hide
- Use a Feliway plug-in or spray. You can buy Feliway online or in pet stores. It is a product which releases 'good feel' pheromones.

### **When you get home – the cat might hide and/or try to escape!**

**It's really important that you make absolutely sure that any windows in the room are kept securely closed even if you have fly screens. Cats can, and do, escape by clawing holes in the fly screen or batting them until they dislodge from the frame! You can open the window when you are in the room supervising the cat but don't leave them alone with any windows open.**

- Take the cat carrier straight into the cat's room, remove the carrier door or wedge it firmly open & drape a large towel part of the way over front so the cat can hide
- Leave the room, close the door and stay out until feeding time. For the next few days go into the room only to feed and clean the litter, all the time talking softly to the cat but not trying to find it or searching around for it looking at it.

The first thing your cat will do is try to escape from this new unfamiliar place. They will check every bit of the room, mostly when you're not there, to see if they can find a way to escape and they will do anything to get out including dashing out when you open the door.

### **The first few days -**

Almost every cat will hide when taken to a new place, but very shy cats take much longer to feel safe in their new home. Don't feel sorry for your cat or force them to do anything. As long as they are safe in their room it will be OK in the end. Your cat might not eat, they might have an upset tummy or they might not use the litter tray especially if you are around. They might sneeze a few times as they get used to the dust in the house. They also might cry or make a noise at night. Your cat is just showing how overwhelmed they are. Try to imagine what they are experiencing & don't be tempted to go to them or give them food as you will create a habit that will be very hard to break. If necessary wear earplugs and ignore the noise. Once they get used to the new routines everyone will be much happier

**The first few weeks** Your cat may still hide and not show any interest in interacting with you. Try to build trust by giving them space but also spending time in their room with them even if you can't see them. The aim is to get the cat to choose to come to you not the other way around. If they stay hidden when you are in the room that's fine. Use feeding time to work with them

- At first put the food bowl down near their hiding place and leave the room so they can eat without you there
- After a couple of days when you've put the bowl down sit quietly on the floor at a distance for 3 or 4 minutes. At first the cat may stay hidden & not come out. Sit for a while and then leave.
- Repeat at every feeding time until the cat starts to eat in your presence. Don't look at them eating.
- Once this has been happening for a few days you can put the food bowl down a few cms further away from their hiding place and nearer to you where you sit. Sit & wait. If the cat stays hiding leave after a few minutes
- After a few days stay longer & continue to ignore the cat
- Once they come out to eat gradually move the bowl nearer to where you are sitting every couple of days until it is right next to you on the floor. During this process the cat may venture out and then dash back to a hiding place several times before being brave enough to eat. Try not to look at the cat, make a sound or move a muscle!
- At several other times during the day for short periods of 5 minutes, sit on the floor in the room away from the cat. Don't

- talk, focus on something else such as reading a magazine or a book (something quiet). Ignore the cat, don't look at them
- Don't force them out of their hiding place or reach into it to try and stroke them
- If you have visitors leave the cat alone in its room. Don't bring them in to meet the cat
- Don't get anxious. It takes time to build a relationship...

**HAVE NO EXPECTATIONS....IT WILL TAKE AS LONG AS IT TAKES! BE PATIENT, LET YOUR CAT DECIDE THE PACE IT WILL BE WORTH IT IN THE END**

### **The next stage**

When your cat is comfortable coming out & eating when you're in the room there's still work to be done!.

- Put your hand on the floor next to the food bowl. The cat might run away, leave the finger there but don't move it. If you're very lucky the cat may come and rub against it
- When they are comfortable eating with it there move it onto the edge of the bowl.
- The next time, as they are eating, slowly lift your finger & hold it out for them to smell and touch with their nose. This is a big step. Don't be tempted to do more. Put your finger back down on the bowl and leave when they finish eating
- When they are comfortable sniffing your finger move it slightly & touch them gently on the side of their cheek
- This can gradually lead to gentle, short strokes on the cheek and eventually as your cat enjoys your touch they might put their paws on your legs and even settle there. Stay calm and try not to make sudden moves. Go slowly.

### **Playing**

When your cat is comfortable coming out & eating when you are in the room, you can try playing with them with a wand toy or a ping pong ball.

### **Picking the cat up**

Don't rush this! Don't try it until you have achieved all of the above. If you continue to interact with your cat in the safe room you can work on getting them comfortable with being picked up. But again this is a very gradual process.

- Once your cat is really comfortable with being stroked you can try gently touching their body in different places. The best time to try this is when they're eating. They will probably stop eating. If they do take your hands away and then try again when they come back. At first this will be for only a second but you can build this up to the point where you can actually put your hands around the cat's middle for a couple of seconds. When they are OK with you holding them around their middle for a few seconds you can pick them up for a second just off the floor & put them back down in the same place to continue eating. They might run away and come back again but keep repeating. Gradually you will be able to lift them up for longer and eventually take them to their carrier. This is good training for vet visits.

**Letting your cat into the rest of the house.....but not the balcony! (despite what you might think cats do fall off balconies and get hurt. If you want them to go out on the balcony make sure they are in a secure enclosure. Don't put your cat's litter tray on the balcony.**

- Take the cat in their carrier into another part of the house and leave it there closed for about 5 minutes. Then take it back into the cat's safe room, close the door and let the cat out of the carrier.
- Repeat this for a few days
- Then, when your house is quiet, & you have made sure all outside doors and windows are closed open the door to their room and let them decide if they want to come out or not. After about half an hour if they haven't come out close the door
- Repeat. Gradually the cat might look around the door or dash out and back to the safety of their room. When you have got to this stage you are well on the way to integrating your cat with your home

**The cat will always look on their room as their safe place & when they are frightened they will run back there. Allow them to do this**

If you need help with any stage along the way or are not sure how to proceed from this point **please contact us.**

**If you are patient, consistent, gentle and understanding you will form a strong bond with your cat and it will feel safe and loved in your home. And you will be well rewarded with an amazing loyal friend...**