

Going Home

Congratulations on bringing home your UCHS cat.

Change of any sort is very stressful for cats. UCHS cats have been either lost or given up for adoption, been sent to the vets for shots and/or surgery, and put in a cage surrounded by other cats – OR been put out with all those other cats.

So, when you go home it is very important to cause as little stress as possible.

BEFORE BRINGING YOUR CAT HOME

Set aside a small room for your new cat with her food and water bowls and litter box

Have at least one comfortable sleeping area, one hiding area such as a box or tent bed, a water bowl and a food bowl (cats do not like to eat close to their litter box so do not place them near each other)

COMING HOME

- Transporting a cat can be very stressful. Cats feel comfortable surrounded by their own scent. This is why we put a blanket containing their scent from the shelter into the carrier.
- As soon as you get your new companion home, take him or her in its carrier directly to the small room where the cat can spend a few days or up to a week. Place the hiding box in the corner of the room. Ensure that the door to the room is shut. Place the carrier beside the hiding box. Open the door to the carrier, and let the cat come out on her own .DO NOT FORCE THE CAT OUT OF THE CARRIER AS SHE MAY BE FRIGHTENED AND STRESSED.
- Allow the cat to explore the room . Do not force the cat to do anything or be with you. Let the cat come to you on it's own.
- Although you are excited about the cat coming home, it is important to be as patient as possible. This is the best gift that you could give your cat right now. Give your cat the time and space to get used to it's new surroundings and people.
- Go to the room as often as you can. Bring gifts such as healthy treats or toys every visit.
- Sit on the floor and out the treats around you. Let the cat come to you. Everyone in the family should be doing this. Young children should be supervised.
- Wait for the cat to come to you. DO NOT try to grab or hold the cat.
- Talk in a high pitched, quiet voice. This is reassuring to the cat.
- If she comes to you, pat her gently under the chin.
- Every cat is different. Some may climb in your lap right away, while others may stay in hiding and watch you from afar until they feel safe. Take your cues from the cat. Let her make the decision as to how much contact is comfortable. It may take hours, days or weeks.

INTRODUCING THE CAT TO THE REST OF THE HOUSE

When your cat begins to show greeting behavior (walking up to you, rubbing against you, meowing), go to the other side of the room and call her. If she comes to you, it is time for a walk around the house.

Some Pointers

- Make sure that all windows and doors are securely shut
- Block off any small space that your cat can get into out of reach, such as behind stoves or fridges, air vents

- Be very interactive with the cat, playing with her as you go
- Check your cat for any signs of fear, such as hiding, puffed up tail, rapid breathing. If so, put her back in her room
- Watch for any signs of escape behavior
- If your cat seems comfortable and relaxed, she is ready to be out freely

TIPS TO KEEP YOUR CAT HEALTHY & SAFE

- Provide cat toys that are safe and stimulating, such as furry or feathery toys or toys that are filled with catnip.
- Catnip can make some cats hyperactive or aggressive.
- Provide a scratching post with high perches
- Spend time every day interacting with her. Play games of chase or play with toys.
- Plant a pot of indoor greens such as cat grass, birdseed, or alfalfa
- Hide treats around the house for your cat to find

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO YOUR OLD CAT

Cats can have great relationships with other cats, but they must be introduced slowly to minimize the risk of having them start off on the wrong foot.

Domestic cats have evolved from their wild territorial and solitary ancestors. Their need for territory is necessary to catch enough prey to survive. Modern domestic cats are more social and can live in groups, but it is important to understand their territorial behavior.

Relationship problems are a common reason for cats to be surrendered at the shelter. The **gradual** introduction process is vital to ensuring success.

Scent Swapping

Cats communicate with each other by scent. So you must start by introducing the cats to each other by "swapping" scent.

- Later that day take place your new cat's towel near your resident cat's favorite place and encourage him to come close
- If your cat starts to hiss or spit or avoid the towel place it on a spot away from his food bowl or bed. Every day move it a little closer. To the cat's food bowl. Do the same thing to your new cat with the resident cat's blanket.
- Swap food bowls between the cats. They will start to associate each others scent with positive things, that is food.
- Swap direct scent between cats by petting one cat with a cloth around the cheeks and pet the other cat with it in the same way This is important because this is where cats have glands that emit a friendly hormone. Once the cats are relaxed with this it is time to proceed to visual contact.

Visual Contact

- Ideally the room in which the new cat is kept would have a screen door or a baby gate to physically separate the cats. If this is not possible, open the door just wide enough for the cats to see each other, sniff each other, and to rub noses, but not wide enough for either cat to get through.
- Encourage the cats to play close together on either side of the door with treats or a feather. Do not use catnip as it can make cats aggressive.
- If the cats are showing aggression, more than a hiss or a quick swat you may need to make the opening smaller.
- Gradually move the cats food bowls closer to each other on either side of the door
- Only once they are comfortable with each other, rubbing against the door, sniffing noses or playing underneath the door should you allow a complete introduction. There should be no hissing or growling.
- Keep a spray water bottle or a set of keys close by to distract them in case of a problem. By now they should be fine. Do not try to force them together. Give them the freedom to take it at their own pace. They may ignore each other for quite a while. Eventually they may be close enough to groom each other, sleep together and play together. Or they may seem to ignore each other. Even if they don't interact, they are making each others lives more interesting.

FOOD

We will send you home with the food for your new cat that we use in the shelter. We feed Nutro Max Cat kibble. Your cat is already stressed from his move, so it is wise not to change his diet too soon.

If and when you do change his diet it is wise to give him the best cat food that you can. This will prevent many health problems later on, and will probably save you money in the end.

Changing a cat's diet must happen gradually to prevent diarrhea. Begin by mixing his present food with his new food half and half. Increase the amount of new food gradually until he is completely moved over to the new food.

Each and every cat is different, and remarkable in their own way. Take the time to know what your cat wants and needs, and he will give you back more than you ever imagined.