



## **INTRODUCING A CAT TO A NEW HOME**

When introducing a cat (or cats) to a new home, we recommend the following:

### **Lock and block any existing cat flap**

If you already have a cat flap fitted, obviously keep that locked. (In addition to keeping the cat flap locked, put something like a heavy box in front of it - so that the cat does not get frustrated trying to barge through a locked flap).

### **Do not let cat outside for at least 2 weeks**

For at least two weeks do not let the cat out. You must confine it to the house regardless of how much it may protest. The purpose of these first two weeks is to encourage the cat to feel comfortable, safe and relaxed in its new internal surroundings (and with its new owner if that is the case), before it has to meet the challenge of exploring outside. During this period, it will get used to the feeding area, the toileting area, sleeping areas and other areas where it can relax and feel safe.

Preferably give the cat access to all or most of the house - so it can explore and discover areas where it feels comfortable and safe. If you are receptive to the idea, let the cat have access to your bedroom at night so that your presence reassures it.

### **Have plenty of litter trays available**

Keep several litter trays (perhaps three or four) in different locations, with one of them near the cat flap or exit door. In the future you can probably reduce this down to one or two litter trays (or none if the cat toilets outside). Also, refer to our article on CAT LITTER by clicking the following link:

[http://www.homelovingcats.com/default/assets/File/cat\\_litter\\_HLC\\_Articles\\_template.pdf](http://www.homelovingcats.com/default/assets/File/cat_litter_HLC_Articles_template.pdf)

### **Fit identity collar and microchip**

This is essential!

Before introducing cat to the outside (even whilst wearing a harness), get the cat micro-chipped at your vets. If you are uncertain whether the cat is already micro-chipped, ask your vet to scan the cat. If it is already micro-chipped, it is important to change the ownership details to reflect the fact that you now own the cat. Your vet will be able to assist with this process.

Also, fit a safety collar with identity medallion (your telephone number is sufficient). This is recommended for at least the first couple of months whilst your cat is being introduced to the outside. This is essential because whilst the microchip is the ultimate identifier, lost cats are not always taken to the vet to be



scanned and they may be re-homed with new owners who are unaware of (your) previous ownership.

Please note, that a safety collar is designed to snap open if it catches on anything (such as a tree branch) so that the cat will not be strangled. Do not fit a collar which is not designed to snap open in this way. Most key cutting services sell inscribed medallions at low cost.

### **Introduce cat to outside whilst on a harness**

After two weeks, the cat can be introduced to the outside but only whilst wearing a harness [refer to later note regarding collar and microchip]. (Harnesses are available from "Pets at Home" and other pet stores, or online, for around five pounds each). Taking a cat for walks on a harness and lead is not as far-fetched as you might think. We ourselves take cats for walks from time to time – as it can be very useful when the cat lives in a busy built up area where it cannot be allowed out because of the danger from traffic. Most cats take to a lead very well indeed; it's only the fact that we don't often see cats on a lead that there is a general perception (incorrect), that cats will probably not take to a lead.

With the harness in place on the cat, open the door and allow it to walk outside. You may find that it doesn't want to go outside! In this case, you will need to pick the cat up, and place it gently on the ground about 5 yards from the door. Keep the lead taut so that the cat cannot take off at high speed in a particular direction. If the cat appears to be stressed, bend down and stroke and reassure it. If this reassurance doesn't work, and the cat is totally freaked out, pick the cat up and take it back into the house. (The process can be repeated a few hours later). Hopefully the cat will eventually begin to explore and sniff the surroundings, and enjoy the fresh air. Gently lead it away from awkward places (behind bushes etc) otherwise the lead will become tangled up. You may find that the cat eventually makes its way back to the door, in which case, open the door and let it back into the house – reassure it, stroke it, and perhaps give it an edible treat. That has been a success! By repeating this process several times a day, over a period of several days, the cat will get to know the "route" back into the house.

### **Accompany cat outside without harness**

After at least one week of the above routine, when you feel confident, whilst you are outside, release the cat's lead from the harness so that it goes back into the kitchen "leadless". After several days of this, and when you judge the time to be "right", accompany the cat outside without the lead. Hopefully it will now be used to the immediate outside environment, and happily leave and enter your house quite naturally.

Well done! Your cat can now go outside unaccompanied and begin to explore the world!