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GUIDELINES FOR PLACING YOUR CAT OR A STRAY CAT IN A NEW HOME

HOW SHOULD YOU ATTEMPT TO PLACE A CAT?

With Care!

Not all people like animals, or are kind to them. There are many unpleasant uses to which cats are put including:

- Used as "bait"
- Used as food
- Sold to labs for experimentation
- Abandoned on the street or in the country
where they die of disease, starvation, predators or gunshot wounds from those who shoot animals for sport
- Maimed or killed by cars
- Irresponsibly dumped at the pound to be euthanized

The only way to protect your cat from such an end is to ensure his/her future by finding and carefully screening a good home for your cat. The decisions you make on the cat's behalf will not only determine if they will have a happy home, but will also determine whether the cat will live or die. One can always find someone willing to take an cat, but finding a good home is a great deal harder. There are individuals who pretend to seek a

companion cat only to acquire them for research or other cruel purposes. Always carefully screen a new home and its occupants. ***Don't think it can't happen to you.*** Always ask for identification and references. Ask where they work. Legitimate callers will not mind when you explain why you need the information. Don't be afraid to ask questions, to make stipulations, or just to say "no." This brochure is designed as a tool to help you learn how to go about placing your cat, how to evaluate a potential home, and how to make the best possible choice for your cat. The future of this small life begins or ends with you. May you be wise in your choices.

YOUR CHOICES

If your companion is a pure breed cat, contact the original breeder of the cat. Many breeders will take back the cat or assist you in placing him/her. Many breeders have people waiting to adopt.

If your cat is not a pure breed, if you do not know the breeder, or if you feel the breeder is not the best choice for the cats' welfare, then you can attempt to put the cat up for adoption yourself.

If you are not able to put the cat up for adoption yourself, **please do not** take the cat to the pound to be euthanized or drop the cat off on the street or in the wilderness. Please call one of the many rescue groups to help you. They may be able to make referrals to help you place your cat. A veterinarian may also be able to help or may give you phone numbers of others who can help.

MAKING YOUR CAT ADOPTABLE

Take your cat to a veterinarian for a complete check up. A thoroughly vetted cat is a much more attractive adoption

prospect.

Tell your vet about any behavior problems the cat may have so that physical causes can be ruled out. Some behavior problems are caused by easily treatable health problems. For example, house soiling can be caused by worms, diabetes, or urinary tract problems, to name a few.

(NOTE: If you are helping a stray, tell your vet what you are trying to do and they may give you a discount for services.)

- Bring all vaccinations up to date. Have cats tested for FELV & FIV. Make sure that you get a rabies license tag when your cat is vaccinated for rabies.
- Have a stool-sample checked for worms or other parasites and check for other internal parasites and treat external parasites, like earmites, ticks and fleas to name a few.
- **If your cat is not spayed or neutered, DO IT NOW!!** It is much easier to adopt out a spayed/neutered pet. There are major health benefits to spaying/neutering for the cat as well as for society in general.

(NOTE: If money is a problem, talk to your vet, local cat rescue volunteer, or ask at your local cat shelter for low cost spay/neuter programs or certificates.)

Groom your cat.

(NOTE: All of this can be done by a groomer.)

- ✓ Get rid of mats and tangles by brushing thoroughly. You can try a brush mitt to protect your hand if the cat may scratch or bite while grooming.
- ✓ Give your cat a bath. Make sure the water is luke warm and the air is warm when they get out of the water. Dry them thoroughly with a towel so they do not chill. Use a vet recommended shampoo or

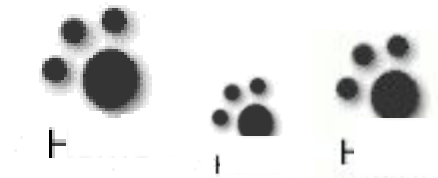
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mild shampoo. Read labels carefully especially when bathing kittens.

- ✓ Get the cat a new collar.. The safest collars for cats are the new breakaway collars..

Correct any behavior problems the cat may have. Be honest with someone inquiring about your cat. If you are trying to place a cat because of behavioral problems, do not expect the new owners to want to keep the cat anymore than you did. If you place a cat with behavioral problems in a home, they may try to return the cat or get rid of it. The new owners may not be as careful as you about how they get rid of the cat if they decide not to keep it. If your cat has behavioral problems that make it unadoptable you have two choices:

- Keep the cat until you have corrected the problem and then adopt it out. Obtain professional help, if necessary.
- Keep the cat permanently. No one will take better care of the cat than you can if you are concerned enough to want the best for the cat.



PLACING AN AD IN THE NEWSPAPER

The trick to an effective ad is creating one that will generate inquiries (while not misrepresenting the cat) and, at the same time, do some preliminary screening for you. Include the following information:

- Breed
- Pet Characteristics
- Color

- Your Requirements for a Home
 - Sex
 - Your First Name
 - Neutered or Spayed
 - Your Telephone Number
 - Approximate Age
- Emphasize your cat's "selling points". Is he/she friendly, housebroken, obedience trained, loves kids and other cats? Tell the good points of your cat, but do not exaggerate.
 - Target the type of home you want your pet adopted into. For example: No dogs or No cats. Fine with children over 10. Quiet, mature family pet. Ideal for senior. Always state "references required". This lets people know that you are a concerned cat owner who wants to do right by his/her cat.
 - **NEVER** include the phrase "free to good home," even if it is true. In fact, do not put any price at all. While it is true that "free" will generate a lot of calls, the quality of the callers is generally poor.
 - We recommend asking for a minimal adoption fee to help cover the expenses you have incurred for advertising, vet care and to give you an indication of the type of home you have found. Someone not willing to pay a small amount for a fully vetted, cared for cat may also cut corners financially in the future with regard to veterinary care or nutrition.
 - You ad should read something like this: Orange tabby for adoption. Young adult spayed female. Friendly, housebroken, great for a one cat home. Indoor only, ref. required. Peg (Phone #).



OTHER ADVERTISING

Flyers Develop a flyer containing a picture of the cat (action shots are more interesting) and more detailed information. Copy these and post them at work and in veterinarian's offices, groomers, pet supply stores, supermarkets, obedience training classes, and community bulletin boards. Follow up with phone calls and personal visits.

Word of mouth Inform all your friends, co-workers, relatives, front desk staff of veterinarian's offices about the cat availability. Give everyone a flyer.

Phone referral - rescue groups List the cat as available with your local rescue and all cat rescue groups to obtain phone call referrals from them.

SCREENING APPLICANTS

- **Get the first and last name and number of the caller first** in case you are accidentally disconnected.
- **Ask who else lives in the home?** Are there children? What are their ages? If the cat is not good with children, be up front with the caller and do not waste time. Children often engage in "rough-play" that may frighten the cat or represent aggressive behavior to the cat. A kitten can also be hurt by a young child. Does everyone in the home like and want the cat? If the person's partner is dead set against it, then the cat will be resented and possibly abused by that person.
- **Find out if they currently have other pets inside or outside the home.** If your cat is not good with dogs or if your cat does not get along with other cats, do not waste their time and yours. Decline the home.
- **Ask why they want this cat.** Look for someone who wants a household companion. If someone wants the cat as a gift for another person, insist that the

person who will be spending the next decade with the cat be involved in the selection. This also gives you an opportunity to evaluate that person as a good owner as well.

- If the family or person has no pets currently, find out if they have had **any pets in the past and what happened to them**. The answer will give you an indication of the type of future your cat will face. People who have never had an cat before should be advised of the considerable expense of taking good care of an cat. They should also be made aware of the responsibility involved in caring for another life who cannot care for itself. Talk about what average feed bills and vet bills can run. Stay away from anyone who has had a significant number of pets in a short period of time. It will be unlikely that your cat would last there very long either.
- **Does the person own the home they live in? Are they renting?** If so does their lease allow for cat? Get the name of the landlord or condo association and make sure that a cat is allowed.
- **Ask them where they will keep the cat.** Be wary of people who say they will keep it in the garage, on the back porch, outside only or in the basement. They are probably not interested in making the cat a household companion.
- **How much time do they have to spend with the cat?** People in situations where the cat will be unsupervised for more than a few hours a day should not adopt a young kitten (one under several months of age). This kitten may develop behavior problems that arise from boredom and lack of timely discipline.
- **Who will primarily be responsible for the cat?** Will the adult in the family be responsible for the daily care of the cat? It's O.K. for the children to participate in the care of the pet, but the ultimate responsibility should rest with the adult!

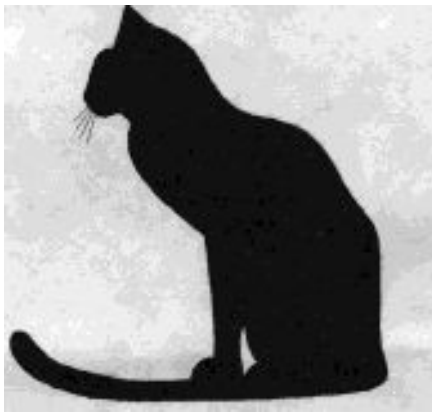
- **If the person or family travels a lot, what will happen to the cat?** Caring for a cat is a 10-15 year commitment. Remind prospects that they may have to board cats during vacations or hire a pet sitter. They must also plan for the cat's needs if contemplating a move.
- **How will they discipline the cat if he/she misbehaves?** How have they disciplined cats in the past? What restrictions will the cat have in the home? Is there anywhere the cat will not be allowed to go and why? What do they plan to feed the cat and where? Make sure that food is not located too close to litter boxes or cleaning supplies.

QUESTIONS FOR THE VET

- Explain that John/Jane Doe have asked to adopt your cat and you want to make sure that the cat will get a good home. Most vets would be happy to cooperate.
- Ask whether their pets get/got regular vaccinations and annual stool checks and year round heartworm preventative for dogs.
- Were the pets spayed/neutered? If the answers are positive, you can be sure the same will be probable for your cat.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFERENCES

- How long have they known John/Jane Doe?
- Do they have any pets now?
- Did they have any pets in the past that you know of?
- Are their pets well cared for?
- Is their yard fenced in?
- If they were placing one of their pets for adoption would they give it to John/Jane Doe?



OBSERVE THE APPLICANT WITH THE CAT IN YOUR HOME

If the preliminary screening and reference calls are positive, call the family and make an appointment for them to see your cat. The cat will be friendliest to strangers in a familiar environment, so it's best for the first visit to occur in your home.

At the interview, watch how they act with the cat. Do they approach the cat in an experienced way? Are they sensitive to the cat's reaction to them and the cat's need to feel safe? Do they supervise children and teach them to be gentle and patient. Do the kids seem to respect the cat?

VISIT THE APPLICANT'S HOME

If you and your cat like the applicant and the applicant likes you and your cat, then set up a time that you can visit their home without the pet to do an initial home screening. Never let an applicant take a pet to their home without first visiting their home! This is the only way that you can truly verify who they are. Let them know that a home visit is a part of the screening process and that you will not allow your

cat to be adopted without a home visit.

PLACING THE CAT IN IT'S NEW HOME

Placing a cat in a home with no other pets

Remind the new family of the following recessive behaviors that the anxiety of going to a new home may cause.

A cat that was previously housebroken may have an accident or two within the first few days. The cat probably does not know where his/her bathroom is because his/her scent is no longer there. Try one of the following methods. Confine the cat to a small space such as a crate or a small area like a bathroom. As the cat uses the correct area for waste continuously, introduce the cat to more and more space until the cat can roam the whole house without soiling the wrong area. Be sure to remove the odor of accident areas completely. Do not try to force the cat or be harsh with the cat. This will make the cat scared and will make things worse.

The average cat takes several days to settle in. Some cats may take longer. Suggest that the new owners keep the same feeding and exercise schedule for the first few days to weeks so the cat can adjust.

Placing the cat in a home with other pets

When placing a new cat in a home where cats already live, go slow! We know you want your **new cat** to become best friends with the **cat already in your household**. But please follow these guidelines to successfully make your cats befriend one another in a matter of time. We recommend keeping the cats in separate rooms for up to two weeks. After two weeks, switch the cats, but leave their toys and litter boxes as they are and let them become used to each other's smells for a few days. Then slowly

introduce them. Do not force them to get near each other. Expect a cat who has previously behaved very well to exhibit some bad behavior due to jealousy of the intruder.

If the adopting animal is a different species (i.e., dog and cat), do not allow the newcomer to usurp anything or place that belonged to the original cat. Remember to spend equal time with both animals to decrease the chance of regressive behavior due to jealousy. Cats and dogs usually can work out their differences on their own. The only thing to worry about is the dangers of a size difference as a large dog can accidentally hurt a small kitten in play.

FOLLOWING UP ON YOUR CATS'S ADOPTION

Make sure the new owner's understand the nature of the commitment they are making to your cat. Tell the new owner's that you will want to keep in touch and visit a few times to make sure everything is going okay. Tell them to call if there are any problems or questions. Emphasize that the cat is to be returned to you if it

does not work out.

Provide the new owners with a list of medications and a feeding schedule. Write down the cat's normal schedule and activities.

Send a favorite toy or blanket with the cat to make them feel more secure in their new surroundings. Provide the new owners with the cat's rabies/ID tag. Give the new family copies of all vet records, vaccinations, certificates or pedigrees.

Have the family sign an informal adoption agreement which includes a waiver of liability. (This protects you if the cat destroys property or injures someone during the adjustment period.) Also, the adopter must agree to return the cat to you if they decide they cannot keep him/her.

Most of all, feel confident that you have placed your cat in the best possible home. By following these guidelines, you can be assured that your cat will be happy with his/her new family and the family will cherish their new member for a lifetime.