

# MAKE YOUR NEXT VISIT TO THE SACRAMENTO CAT HOSPITAL LESS STRESSFUL FOR YOUR KITTY—AND FOR YOU!

The Sacramento Cat Hospital is a proud participant in the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) Cat Friendly Practice Program. We are here as part of your cat care medical team. By working together, we can make your next veterinary experience as pleasant as possible for both you and your beloved cat.

Too often, we see an anxious, scared kitty yowling in its carrier. The cat, after being chased around the house, is placed in the carrier that was pulled out of storage just minutes before the appointment, then driven to an unknown environment at the veterinary clinic.

Cats are comfortable with set routines and with familiar settings. Strange environments, such as an unfamiliar carrier or the veterinary clinic, can be very stressful. By understanding your cat's behavior, and with some simple steps that can be taken at home, we can make this experience much more positive for your pet and for you.

One key to a less-stressful veterinary visit is to familiarize your cat with its carrier so the carrier is seen as a safe and comfortable part of your kitty's normal environment.

First, choose a carrier that is sturdy with a door in the front and the top. Carriers that require a cat to be pulled or dumped out make it much more stressful once at the clinic. Hard carriers that can be easily taken apart work well, as do sturdy, soft carriers with multiple zippers that allow access from both top and sides.

Well before your visit to the veterinarian, place the carrier in a room where your cat spends a lot of time. It's best if the room can be easily closed off. Place comfortable blankets, catnip toys, and treats in the carrier. It may take days or even weeks for your kitty to become acclimated to the carrier, so plan in advance to allow plenty of time.

On the day of your visit, confine your cat in the room with the carrier. This will make it easier to get your cat into the carrier. If your cat has become comfortable with its carrier, it may already be resting inside, making it easy to simply close the door and leave for the veterinary hospital.

If your kitty is anxious, try cradling them or covering them with a towel and then placing them into the carrier from the

top. Also consider taking apart the carrier (set the door aside) and then coaxing your cat into the bottom of the carrier. Once your kitty is inside, replace the top of the carrier and then the door. You may also want to try spraying a towel with a synthetic feline facial pheromone such as Feliway and placing it in the carrier, or giving your cat a colostrum calming treat such as Composure. This can help calm your cat and make its trip to the veterinary clinic much more pleasant. If used, Feliway or Composure should be administered at least 30 minutes before your appointment time. Both items can be obtained from the Sacramento Cat Hospital; please ask us for product samples.

For certain cats, stronger sedatives may be needed. These items require a veterinary prescription. Please speak with your veterinarian if you feel your kitty needs this.

Once your cat is in the carrier, buckle them safely in the car. Some cats prefer to look out during a car ride, while others are more comfortable covered with a towel. Determine what works best for your pet.

Once you have arrived at the Sacramento Cat Hospital, we will make every attempt to see your kitty in a timely manner. If needed during the examination, we will utilize special handling techniques, treats, or other distraction methods to perform procedures in a safe manner that minimizes stress to your cat.

How your cat is handled once it returns home is just as important as getting prepared for its visit. This is particularly true in multi-cat households. Let your kitty calm down in its carrier in a quiet area. You may want to consider keeping the carrier away from other cats. When all cats appear calm, allow your cat out of the carrier. If there is tension, such as hissing, from other cats, facilitate reintroduction by using familiar blankets or clothes that have your scent, or try Feliway or Composure.

## Less-Stress Checklist

- Purchase a sturdy carrier with openings on the front and the top.
- Place carrier in one of your kitty's favorite rooms a few days or weeks before the appointment.
- Place comfortable bedding, toys, and treats in the carrier.
- The day of your visit, confine your cat in the room with the carrier.
- If used, administer Feliway or Composure at least 30 minutes before your appointment time.
- When kitty is calm, place in carrier. Cradle them or cover with a towel beforehand if needed.
- In the car, secure carrier with a seat belt.
- Cover carrier with a towel if it reduces your kitty's stress.
- Once back home, let your kitty relax in the carrier in a quiet area.
- When all cats in the household are calm, allow kitty out of carrier.

