

FREQUENTLY ASKED:

How to make car travel less stressful for a cat

As guided by Amy

FOUNDER, NOOSA COUNTRY CAT HOTEL

Positive Associations Start Early

Help your cat build positive associations with the carrier and car before you need to travel. Leave the carrier out in the home with soft bedding and treats inside so it becomes a safe, inviting space. Take short car trips with no specific destination and offer praise and treats.

References

Overall, K. L. (2013). The clinical behavioral medicine approach to feline traveling anxiety. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice*, 43(6), 1263–1277.

Use a Secure, Comfortable Carrier

A sturdy, well-ventilated carrier provides security and helps reduce fear. Line it with comfortable bedding and consider covering the sides and top with a light blanket to block out visual stimuli and create a den-like environment.

References

ISFM (2022). AAFP and ISFM feline friendly handling guidelines. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, 24(5), 1–15.

Minimise Visual and Auditory Stress

Cover the carrier with a light blanket to reduce visual stimulation. Play soft, calming music or white noise to help mask unfamiliar or sudden noises. Keep the car quiet and avoid loud conversations or music.

References

Landsberg, G., & Ackerman, L. (2012). *Behavior problems of the cat* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Manage the Environment

Keep the car at a comfortable temperature and ensure good airflow. Do not place the carrier in direct sunlight or near airbags. A smooth, steady drive is less stressful than sudden stops, starts or sharp turns.

References

American Association of Feline Practitioners (2022). *Environmental needs guidelines*.

Plan Ahead for Longer Trips

For trips longer than a few hours, plan regular breaks in a quiet, safe area. Do not remove your cat from the carrier outside the car. Offer small amounts of water if your cat is comfortable, but avoid food just before and during travel to prevent nausea.

References

Overall, K. L., & Rodan, I. (2015). *BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Behavioural Medicine* (2nd ed.). BSAVA Press.

Know When to Seek Help

If your cat shows signs of extreme anxiety such as panting, vocalising, salivating or trying to escape speak to your veterinarian. They can advise on training strategies or, if appropriate, short term medication to help make travel safer and less stressful.

References

Landsberg, G., et al. (2017). Management of fear, anxiety and stress in cats: AAFP guidelines. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, 19(4), 383–396.



Cats feel safest when they are prepared, secure and in control of their environment. By creating positive associations, using a comfortable carrier and minimising stressors, you can help your cat travel with greater confidence and less anxiety. Patience, preparation and small steps make a big difference.

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