



CAT ADOPTION BOOKLET

Cat care advice and information

About AAPS

The Australian Animal Protection Society



The Australian Animal Protection Society was established in 1972 by a group of people greatly concerned about animal welfare, to help address the need for an Animal Shelter in the South Eastern region of Melbourne in Victoria. AAPS helps thousands of lost, abandoned, orphaned and unwanted animals every year. We provide animals with compassionate care, food and shelter, veterinary treatment, and rehabilitation.

AAPS is a community-based, not-for-profit charity that relies upon the generous donations, volunteers, and community support, as we do not receive regular government funding. Our organisation works to increase community awareness and education on animal welfare and save the life of every animal that can be saved.

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Adoption Center

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Vet Clinic

ph. (03) 9585 7936
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THANK YOU FOR ADOPTING



Thank you for choosing to open your home to a rescue animal. AAPS relies on the support of you as adopters to provide enriching and loving forever homes for the animals that come into our care.

We wish you and your new family member all the best and encourage you to share any updates or happy snaps with the staff at AAPS.

This handbook is designed to provide tips and suggestions to support you and your new cat during the 'settling in' period, as well as the ongoing health for your cat.

If you have any health or behavioural concerns, please contact the AAPS Veterinary Clinic or Adoption Centre for advice.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

YOUR NEW FUR-EVER FRIEND

DESEXING

Your cat has been desexed prior to adoption. As part of your adoption paperwork, you will have received a desexing certificate signed and dated by the AAPS veterinarian. You will need this to obtain concessional council registration. At the time of desexing, all animals receive small sterilisation symbol tattooed in their ear.

VACCINATION

Your cat has received a F3 vaccination and may require a booster vaccination. You will receive a vaccination certificate with details of when the next vaccination is due. Annual booster vaccinations are essential to keep your cat healthy.

MICROCHIPPING

Your cat has been microchipped. It is crucial that your details are kept up to date. This will give you the best chance at reuniting with your cat if they go missing. AAPS will register the microchip in your name. This may take several weeks. You will receive confirmation from the microchip registry when this has been done. Please contact AAPS if confirmation is not received after 4 weeks.

You are responsible for registering your pet with your local council. AAPS will notify your local council that you have recently adopted an animal, however you must follow through with the registration.

CONTINUOUS HEALTH CARE

Upon adopting your new furry friend, you will receive a vet report with any current or potential health concerns, required medications or veterinary treatment, or any other information regarding your new family member's health. It is important to follow the instructions provided and monitor your cat's health continuously. Because pets age so rapidly, major health changes can occur in a very short period of time, so it is incredibly important that you do not miss their annual health check.

CAT SUPPLY CHECKLIST

WHAT DO I NEED?

Refer to the list below to ensure you have all the supplies and equipment you need to settle in your newly adopted cat.

- Dry food
- Wet food
- Food Bowl
- Water Bowl
- Collar and ID tag
- Cat litter
- Litter tray and scooper
- Cat toys
- Warm bedding
- Scratching post
- Cat Carrier
- Grooming brush
- Flea & Worm treatment



Note:

Our adoption center, op shops and vet clinic sell a variety of these products, so please keep us in mind for your pet needs. All proceeds from AAPS animal product purchases help to support animals in need.

FEEDING

The cats at AAPS are fed Royal Canin or Advance dry food. If your cat requires a specific diet, you will be made aware. We only recommend good quality brands that support the health of your cat or kitten. A cat's main diet and nutrition consists of high-quality dry food. Wet cat food should be considered a supplement or extra treat.

Feeding Advice:

- Feed your cat separately from any other pets as they prefer privacy when eating.
- Kittens should be fed three times daily and cats should be fed twice daily.
- Feed your cat only high-quality food, keep treats to a minimum, and don't leave wet food out if your cat doesn't eat their food after 15 minutes.
- Milk should not be given to cats as they are lactose intolerant.
- If you wish to a transition to a new type of dry food, please implement the new food slowly over the course of a few days. Changing their food too soon can cause stomach upsets.

Please contact us if you need advice on food brands, quantities, or routines. Additionally, if you notice changes in your cats eating habits, please reach out with your concerns.

Also, always make sure your cat always has access to clean drinking water.





SETTLING IN

MAKE YOUR CAT COMFORTABLE

An animal shelter can be a stressful and unsettling environment for cats. Furthermore, cats can be quite anxious in new environments and around new faces. Be patient with your new cat during the 'settling in' period while they adjust to the new home. Please follow the following steps to best settle your cat into your home.

1. Choose an appropriate room

This is the most important step for a successful transition. Choose a room such as a laundry, spare bedroom or even your own bedroom and isolate your cat to this room for at least a few days. If they are shy, it may require several weeks. Ensure all necessary items to keep your little friend happy are in this room (food, water, litter tray, toys, bed). This arrangement gives your cat time to adjust to its new environment and feel secure.

2. Monitor your cat

As you are getting to know your cat, keep a close eye on them. If they are hiding or showing reluctance to eat, they will need more time in the isolated environment before you let them out.

3. Record

It is helpful to record the first week or so, regarding how much your cat is urinating,

defecating, and eating. Take note if they lose or gain confidence and any other changes. If you notice anything unusual or you have any concerns, please contact us immediately. We are here to help.

4. Assess

If your cat starts to explore the room, scratch at the door or consistently interacts with you confidently, it may be time to allow them more access to the house. Do this when you have a few hours to keep an eye on them and let them explore at their own pace. Make sure the cat knows where the food, water, litter etc is and give your cat space to retreat to if it becomes a little anxious.

5. Maintain

If all seems well and your cat is happy and confident with access to more of the house, you can maintain this access permanently. It is natural for your cat to feel overwhelmed and unsure of new environments, so be patient and listen to the behaviours of your cat.

INDOOR/OUTDOOR LIVING

We strongly recommend that your cat remains completely indoors. Indoor lifestyles support the health and safety of your pet. We do not let our dogs wander the streets because this would be unsafe, and cats should be viewed the same.

There are options if you wish to give your cat a taste of the outdoors, but we strongly discourage the opportunity of free roaming.

Reasons to keep your cats inside:

- Your cat is likely to live longer
- Prevent cat fights which can lead to injuries and spread of disease

- Safety from cars/traffic
- Safety from traps or poisons that people may leave out. There are many plants toxic to cats, and they may come into contact with these if they roam freely.
- Safety from getting lost or stolen.
- Protected from cruelty to cats.
- Will not annoy your neighbours or be fed by strangers
- Protects local wildlife.

Outdoor Options

Some cats want to go outside once they have experienced a taste of the freedom that outdoors provides. If your cat seems to like the outdoors, there are two options we can recommend:

1. Build/buy an outdoor enclosure:
These should be fully contained with netting.
2. Harness:
Supervised outings with a harness and lead. You can buy some great harnesses for cats, but make sure your cat is comfortable wearing these.

Note:

White cats with pink skin, or cats with light skin around their nose, ears, and eyes pose a higher risk for developing skin cancer and so being outdoors in direct sunlight is strongly discouraged.



TRAINING & ENRICHMENT

TRAINING

Cats will take time to learn the new rules of the house, so be patient and be consistent. Try starting out with a few rules in place, but do not expect immediate compliance. Training is an excellent way to begin the bonding process with your cat.

We recommend positive reinforcement-based training to teach them a few skills that will keep their little mind busy and allow you to have a sense of communication with your cat. Please maintain consistency within your house and ensure all people in the house stick to the same routine and rules. Do not punish bad behaviours.

Litter Training

Most cats are litter trained in their previous homes or at the AAPS shelter, however toileting issues may occur. We use recycled paper litter, and we recommend you continue to use this. Make sure the litter location is obvious, the tray is cleaned at least once daily and praise them for using the litter tray. It is strongly advised that no harsh cleaning chemicals are used to clean the litter tray, water and soap is fine.

As a rule, in a multi-cat household, always have one litter tray per cat, plus one extra.

ENRICHMENT

Enrichment is a fantastic way of providing your new cat with mental stimulation. This not only helps keep them entertained, but also helps to tire them out. View the following different types of enrichment to get you started...



Hiding spaces: Cats love having hiding spaces throughout the home. Good hiding spaces include an igloo bed, in cupboards or closets, cat trees often have hiding spaces, etc.

Cat companionship enrichment: Having another cat companion is a great form of social enrichment and promotes exercise and mental stimulation and will provide you cat company and entertainment when you are out of the house.



Prey-stimulating toys: Mouse-shaped toys or feather sticks or strings are effective and help encourage natural hunting behaviours.

Automatic toys: Lasers and motion toys are great for periods when you are not home, to keep your cat preoccupied throughout the day.



Puzzle toys/feeder: These require your cats to use their brains to figure out how to reach an item or food. They're great for cognitive stimulation and your cat's mental health.



Cat scratches: Scratching is a natural behaviour for cats to express and it can help them shed their old claw sheaths and have a stretch. Your cat will enjoy quality scratching materials such as cat trees, scratching posts or disposable scratching pads.

Outdoor Access: Confined outdoor enclosures or supervised walks with a harness and lead are a great way to expose your cat to new sounds, smells and sights, promoting mental stimulation.



Boxes: Cat's love to hide and play in cardboard boxes. Multiple studies have show that the provision of boxes significantly reduces stress levels in cats and allows you cat to evade unwanted interactions.

Multiple short sessions of play: Cats generally enjoy multiple short interactions rather than one big play session. Two 10–15-minute play sessions a day with your cat can help them feel more relaxed.



Cat grass: Cat grass, Catnip and Cat mint are great plants for cats and is available at most plant nurseries. They are great for aiding digestion and can help remove hairballs.

INTRODUCING HOUSEMATES

CHILDREN

Children can unintentionally stress or hurt a small furry friend, and in turn your cat might not know how to behave around children. Bad experiences with children can lead to fear and aggression, but with proper introductions and care, these issues can be avoided.

Teach your children how to recognize when the cat or kitten is unhappy. Hair pulling, jumping, throwing, hitting, and screaming around animals can cause severe anxiety, so make sure your children understand how to behave around their new furry playmate.

For the safety of everyone, we recommend:

- Always supervise children when interacting with the cat.
- Use toys on strings to avoid your children getting scratched.
- While your cat is initially adjusting to their new home, keep the children at a comfortable distance, as not to overwhelm your cat.
- Ensure that children are calmly sitting on the floor if they want to pat/play.



- Make sure your children do not interrupt you cat when sleeping or eating.
- Teach children to be calm, quiet, and gentle with the cat.

OTHER CATS

Cats can be quite territorial animals and need time to get used to each other. Slow introductions can prevent fear and aggression problems from developing.



When introducing two cats, we recommend:

- While your new cat is in an isolated environment for the first week or so, allow your resident cat to smell under the door.
- Feed your cats on either side of the closed door to help them associate something enjoyable with their smell.
- Switch sleeping blankets or beds between cats to accustom them to each other's scent.
- When you allow your new cat out of its isolated room, confine your resident cat to the new cat's room. This switch allows the animals to experience each other's scents without a face-to-face meeting, and ensures your new cat is not overwhelmed whilst exploring the entire home.

- Introduce your cats gradually, so neither becomes afraid or aggressive.
- If you notice any signs of these behaviours, separate them, and start over with the introduction process.
- Please call the AAPS with any concerns or if you are in need of advice, we are here to help!

DOGS

Going slow is the key to a harmonious relationship between the cat and the dog. When introducing your cat to a resident dog, we recommend:



- Before introducing the dog and cat, make sure your dog is calm. It may be a good idea to take the dog for a big walk before introduction.
- When ready to introduce, keep your dog on a lead so you have control of the situation and let your cat come into the room you are sitting in with the dog as it wishes.
- Reward the dog for ignoring or good behaviour around the cat.
- Only let the dog off the lead when he/she is calm and relaxed in the cats' presence after multiple interactions.
- Make sure the cat has a up and out escape where the dog can't reach and its own retreat the dog cannot enter, baby gates are good for separating dogs and cats.

 **Note:**

Cats are famously independent, which can potentially make them a bit anti-social and unpredictable. So, if you are introducing a new cat to your home and to other pets, be patient, understanding and approach with care- with a bit of time, everyone should get on just fine.

- When your new cat first explores the house, lock the dog in a room or outside and let the cat wander the house and be able to smell the dogs smell, then lock the cat back in its set up area and let the dog explore the house and smell the cat's scent.
- Repeat this process a few times a day for a few days. Make sure you are still giving your dog plenty of attention during this time.



CAT HEALTH ADVICE



 Your newly adopted cat comes with a two-week veterinary health cover. If you notice any signs of illness or unusual behaviour, please call the AAPS veterinary clinic.

The friendly AAPS vet staff are committed to providing services of the highest standard and the best of care for all animals. Rest assured, your beloved pet will be in good hands with our friendly and professional staff.

If you have any concerns or questions about the health and wellbeing of your cat, please contact the AAPS Veterinarians immediately.

COMMON SIGNS OF ILLNESS

- Lethargy
- Blood in urine, stools, or vomit
- Changes in breathing
- Eyes weeping/redness
- Toileting inappropriately
- Vomiting, Diarrhoea or constipation
- Nasal congestion/sneezing
- Unexpected weight loss/gain
- Changes in appetite or drinking habits
- Behavioural changes
- Moderate to profuse bleeding
- Skin irritation or hair loss

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

If your cat demonstrates any of the following signs/symptoms, take them straight to the emergency vet.

- Trauma (e.g. getting hit by a car)
- Seizure
- Inability to walk
- Exposure to a poisonous substance
- High or low body temperatures
- Difficulty breathing
- Unconsciousness or unresponsiveness
- Moderate to profuse bleeding
- Severe pain

TOXIC PLANTS & FOOD

Please seek immediate veterinary care if your cat happens to encounter or consume any of the following.

TOXIC PLANTS

- Lilies
- Daffodil
- Asparagus Fern
- Philodendrons
- Sago palms
- Aglaonema
- Aloe Vera
- Tulip
- Oleander
- Arrowhead vine
- Autumn Crocus
- Hydrangea

TOXIC FOODS

- Milk/Dairy
- Chocolate
- Caffeine Alcohol
- Onion and garlic
- Grapes and raisins.
- Cooked bones
- Moldy foods

POSSIBLE HEALTH ISSUES

CAT FLU

Cat Flu is a contagious respiratory disease in cats and kittens caused by several infectious agents. Cat Flu generally lasts two weeks and is seen regularly in unvaccinated cats. Please keep up to date on all vaccines to prevent Cat Flu.

Symptoms include:

- Sneezing and coughing
- Discharge from nose or eyes
- Fever
- Not eating
- Red or watery eyes

FELINE ENTERITIS

Feline Enteritis is a highly contagious viral disease that can be prevented with vaccinations. The virus causes damage to the lining of the intestine and leads to very severe gastroenteritis. Kittens and adult cats develop sudden vomiting and bloody diarrhoea, and it isn't uncommon for some cats to die rapidly. This is why staying up to date with vaccinations is highly important.

INTESTINAL WORMS

Cats can frequently become infested with intestinal worms such as roundworms, hookworms, and tapeworm. Your cat should be wormed regularly throughout its life to reduce the risk to your cat and yourself. Advice on suitable products is available from the AAPS veterinarians.

FLEAS

Fleas are an external parasite and can be easily treated. Flea bites can cause a very marked allergic reaction in much the same way as mosquitoes can affect us humans. The infestation can cause your cat to excessively scratch or bite at the spot of irritation.

There are a range of products available for the treatment and prevention of flea infestation and this should be discussed with the veterinary team.



FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (FIV)

Commonly referred to as Feline AIDs, FIV is a viral disease of cats similar to HIV in humans. It is generally spread via cat fights (another reason to keep your cat inside!). It only occurs in cats and cannot be transmitted to other animals or humans. FIV depletes the amount of white blood cells in cats and thus makes the cat less able to fight infection. It is a slow acting virus, meaning most FIV+ cats can enjoy a normal lifespan with no apparent health problems resulting from the virus.

Seek veterinary care if your cat is showing any of the following FIV symptoms:

- Poor coat condition
- Reoccurring Fever
- Lack of appetite
- Inflammation in the mouth and gums
- Chronic or recurrent infections in the eyes, skin, upper respiratory tract, or bladder
- Seizures

To learn more about the virus or learn how to care for a FIV positive cat, please ask AAPS for more information.



Note:

Australia has one of the highest rates of FIV infection in the world. Protect your beloved family member by asking your vet for the FIV vaccination.

DENTAL DISEASE

Owners should pay attention to the state of their cat's teeth. Tartar often builds up on the teeth, which can result in gingivitis and dental disease. These conditions can have a very marked impact on the long-term health of your cat. Risk of disease can be significantly reduced by providing appropriate food. If your newly adopted cat suffers from or is at risk of developing dental disease, you will be made aware and given instructions on how to properly care for your cat. If you have concerns of your own, please ask your veterinarian for advice.

OBESITY

Obesity is an increasing problem in pets, especially when they are bound to just indoor activity, but the main cause of obesity is overfeeding our pets.

Obesity can increase the risks for:

- Many types of cancer, diabetes mellitus, heart disease and hypertension
- Osteoarthritis
- Urinary bladder stones
- Reduced lifespans

Once you have identified that your cat is overweight or obese, it is important to adjust feedings specifically for weight loss – using a specific nutritional product, portion, and meal frequency.

Consult your veterinarian for advice and be consistent with the new routine.



CAT BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES

FELINE AGGRESSION

Feline aggression can occur, but it is usually mild and can be successfully addressed. There are different types of feline aggression, caused by different stimuli and situations.



- **Play aggression**
This is a normal part of a cat's social development. Owners should be mindful with their new cat, not to tease and torment them, encouraging this aggressive behaviour. Direct the cat's playful attention to toys instead of hands/fingers.
- **Fear aggression**
Occurs when cats are insufficiently socialised or subjected to unregulated discipline. It may be triggered by noises, human approach, or eye contact. Cats exhibiting fear aggression usually react through hissing, teeth bared, ears back and lowered body posture. This requires time and reassurance to reduce fear and associated aggression.
- **Predatory aggression**
This usually involves stalking or attacking a moving target and is generally directed at birds. It is an instinctive behaviour, but it is rare to see true predatory aggression. More so you are likely to observe play predatory

aggression. Placing a bell on your cats' collar may assist in protecting birds from this behaviour.

- Territorial aggression
Frequently seen when a new animal enters another cat's territory. We advise slow introductions to new housemate and make sure each animal has their own bed, bowls, toys etc.
- Irritable or pain-induce aggression
Aggressive behaviours may be the result of an underlying health issue such as arthritis, dental disease, or a cat bite abscess. It may also be a reaction to pulling of the hair or tail or rough handling.

Aggressive behaviours can be easily addressed once it is determined why your cat is exhibiting these behaviours. Consulting your vet for advice and monitoring your cats' behaviours and triggers will allow you to better help your cat.

General principles for managing all types of feline aggression:

- Any type of physical punishment can increase a cat's fear or anxiety and worsen aggression.
- Use a product such as **Feliway** that comforts and reassures cats and reduces signs of stress.
- Medications may help, but only in combination with behavioural and/or environmental modification.
- Separate cats that act aggressively toward each other and reintroduce slowly with positive reinforcement
- Food treats are excellent positive enforcers of non-aggressive behaviour.
- Seek advice from your veterinarian.

INAPPROPRIATE SOILING

Inappropriate soiling can be abnormal urinating, defecating or both. The sooner any toileting issues are addressed, the greater likelihood of solving the problem. Be patient with your cat as you address the issue.

Several health issues that may cause this behavioural issue include:

- Urinary tract infections
- Diabetes
- Renal disease
- Constipation or diarrhoea
- Senility



If there appears no medical reason for the problem, some possible environmental factors include:

- Litterbox avoidance: this can be due to smelly, unclean or wrong type of litter.
- Location avoidance, shared litter or feeling insecure in the located area.
- Anxiety: This can be caused by environmental changes such as new furniture or other household changes, sharing the litter box with other cats, the absence or loss of their owner or a change in family dynamics.
- Need for privacy: cats may avoid their litter if they are nervous or fearful in the location or they do not have enough privacy to do their business.

AUSTRALIAN ANIMAL PROTECTION SOCIETY

AAPS is a community-based, not-for-profit registered Charity dedicated to the welfare of animals. We rely entirely upon volunteers and community support together with our Opportunity Shops, to provide essential financial support for the Shelter. We work very closely with ALL animal welfare and rescue organisations in our endeavour to provide protection, assistance, and welfare for all animals.

Visit aaps.org.au for more information on caring for your dog and what to do if it is lost. There is also a large range of pet products available at our Adoption Centre and Veterinary Clinic. For specific behavioural problems, please contact the office or vet clinic.



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