

# FROM A SHELTER CAT'S POINT OF VIEW...



So, you've filled out an application to take one of us home! Before you're approved, here's what you need to know about us cats and how this adoption thing works from our point of view....

First, **all cats are creatures of habit**. We like our daily routines and we like knowing what to expect from those we live with. Even though this "shelter" is not our idea of the perfect life, it has become our routine during the time we've been here. Some of us spend only a few weeks here, and others of us spend three or four months calling this place home!

If the cat you choose is a stray, remember that we strays are used to living on our own, finding whatever we can to eat and sleeping wherever we can. Then, we moved into the shelter and have had to adjust to a whole different environment, sort of like moving to a different planet. Now, if you're approved and take us out of the shelter, we have to make another **huge adjustment**.

Even though moving to your house will be a big step up from the stray life, **change is hard for us**. Here's what you can do to make this big change more comfortable for us, and also for you:

- ❖ Go slow! Your home is much bigger than I'm used to, so start me out in one room, like a spare bedroom, utility room or even a bathroom. Give me a few days or even a week to get my bearings. Every house has its own smells and sounds, and I need time to get used to them.
- ❖ I might feel most comfortable hiding during the first few days, so give me a safe place to call my own. A cardboard box with a blanket inside will work great as a bed and a hiding place. Don't worry, when I feel safe, I'll come out and begin to explore.
- ❖ Give me plenty of food and water, of course. But remember, I'm a creature of habit. I like what I'm used to. So please feed me the same food I've been eating at the shelter. Later on, when I'm settled in, you can slowly change my food to something different.
- ❖ The litter box is also a very important part of my routine. I'm used to having my litter box scooped once or twice a day, then emptied and washed once about every two weeks.
- ❖ I don't like having my food bowls sitting close to my litter box. You probably don't want to eat dinner next to your toilet, and neither do I!
- ❖ Come in and visit me while I'm adjusting. I need time to get to know you as my new "human" family. Spend time with me playing with cat toys. I'll also need gentle stroking, being held and being talked to, as this helps me learn to trust you.

Are there other cats in your house? If so, then I've got more stress to work through. Sure, I've been living with other cats at the shelter, but not *your* cats. Being the new cat in the house isn't easy. Here's what you can do to help me adjust:

- ✓ Keeping me in a separate room, like we talked about before, is the best way to help me and your existing cat get to know each other. Does that sound totally wrong to you? Remember, this advice is from my point of view, not yours. Believe me, your existing cat will be able to smell me and I'll smell him/her, even though we can't see each other. And we have to get used to each other's scent if we're ever going to be friends.

- ✓ You can let your existing cat sniff the carrier you brought me home in. He may hiss and attack it or he might just be curious and excited about smelling my scent.
- ✓ Spend time with your existing cat and reassure him that you still love him, even though there's another cat in the house. Don't worry, I'll use this time to begin my own adjustment to your house; I won't feel left out.
- ✓ As you begin to visit me several times a day, your existing cat may hiss at you! Not to worry, he just smells my scent on you. Keep up his normal routine of food and play and treats. Remember, my presence is a big change for him, so he's going to be under stress too.
- ✓ You can help us adjust to each other before we meet nose-to-nose by sharing our scents. Rub a hand towel against my cheeks, then give the towel to your existing cat to investigate. Do the same for me. We learn a lot about each other by exchanging scents.
- ✓ After I've had time to adjust to staying in one room of your house, you can start introducing me to your existing cat by letting us get a look at each other. Sure, there's bound to be some hissing, so it's best to go slow here too. Give us a few minutes each day to see each other with your supervision. Keep us separated physically. A plastic baby gate might work or open the door to my room about one inch, just enough so we can see each other but not have full body contact. This part of our introduction will take patience on your part, as we may need to eye each other for a week or so before going any further.
- ✓ If you leave the house, just close the door to my room so there's no chance your existing cat can come in. And it's important during this introduction period that we not be allowed to fight!
- ✓ Finally, when the hissing and growling are done, and your existing cat is occupied somewhere else, you can open the door! Don't make a big thing out of it, just let me out to walk around. We'll find each other. Stay on the sidelines but keep an eye on our first meeting.
- ✓ If we start to fight, make a loud noise by clapping your hands or banging a pot with a spoon—just something to get our attention away from each other. A little spray of water would also do the trick. When things cool down, check each of us out and make sure no real damage has been done.
- ✓ If the fight looks more serious, it's best not to reach in between us, but you can drop a towel over one of us, then move us into a separate room. Give us a few minutes to cool down before trying another face-to-face.
- ✓ Given enough time and patience, we'll learn to share the same turf, and that's what this is all about. We cats like to be "king of the jungle". If all goes well, we'll start to groom each other and may share the best sleeping spots in the house.
- ✓ Me and my new friend will always want at least one litterbox per cat in the household, so no one has to wait to use the potty. If I have to wait, I might just decide to choose my own spot to potty, and I bet you won't be happy about that!
- ✓ Same goes for food dishes. We cats don't like to share. We'll want separate dishes so we don't have to compete for food.

If you follow my advice and give me the time, patience and attention I need to make a smooth adjustment to your house, I'll reward you with love and attention for the rest of my life. You and I (and all other cats in the house) will become best buddies!