



## **MOVING TO A NEW HOME**

Moving into a new residence may be the most stressful event in anyone's life. It is important that we prepare our pets prior to moving into a new home to minimize the anxiety and problems that can result.

### ***Why do cats try to return to their old home?***

Cats are very territorial and may have problems accepting a new house as their home. If the old house is nearby, cats may return to their old haunts and try to take up residence with the new people living there. If the move is further away, cats may just wander off in an attempt to return home and get lost.

### ***What can I do to help my cat adjust to our new home?***

- Before leaving the old house cats should be fitted with an identification collar (elasticized) with the owner's name and new address. This collar should be kept on until cats are fully settled in their new home.
- Cats should be transported in a safe, well-secured container such as a cat carrier so there is no danger of escape.
- On arrival at the new house, the cat should be left in its carrier until one room has been unpacked and familiar objects and furniture placed. The cat can then be let out but kept confined to this room with a litter box provided. To help the cat to settle, it should be fed its favorite meal.
- Once the moving personnel have gone and the house is quiet, check that all the doors and windows are closed and allow the cat to explore the new house.
- Cats should be given lots of extra attention, petting and food during the adjustment period.
- Once the cat has begun to accept the house, it can be shown the garden or back yard. Initially, it should be kept on a leash and later accompanied off the lead. When the cat is thoroughly at home it can be allowed out alone.
- Initially the cat should be let out alone only for short periods during the day. It should be hungry so that it will not wander too far and will readily respond to a call when its meal is ready.

- If possible, try to avoid having builders working in the house during the initial adjustment period. Cats hate loud noises and it will inevitably make the adjustment more difficult.

### ***How long will it be before I can safely let my cat outside alone?***

This is variable depending on the disposition of the cat and how much time has been spent on making the cat feel at home; some cats take only a few days to settle down while others may take three weeks or more. Outdoor cats with a wide experience of change tend to cope best but even they should be kept in for a week to give them a chance to learn about their new home.

### ***My cat is very nervous. Are there any special precautions I should take?***

It may be wise to board particularly nervous cats before you begin packing and to keep them there until everything is unpacked and positioned in the new house.

### ***My cat keeps returning to our old house. What can I do?***

This happens because the bond with the new home is not sufficiently established. Measures must be taken to establish the new home as the source of food and shelter (in contrast to the old house where these things are denied him). It may take weeks or months before the cat can safely be let out unattended.

- Keep the cat indoors at the new house for about a month. Use the guidelines given above to try increasing the bond with the new house. It may help to feed the cat small meals several times a day.
- When the cat is first let outdoors, it should be fasted for 12 hours so that it is really hungry. It should be left out for only a short time and then called in and fed. For the first two weeks it should only be let out once a day and be called in after no longer than 30 minutes and fed immediately.
- Warn the occupants of your old house and discourage them from feeding the cat, talking to the cat or otherwise encouraging it. In some cases, active deterrent action can be tried such as turning the cat out and spraying water at it.
- Other neighbors, even those who were previously friendly with the cat, should be asked to behave similarly.
- As a last resort, consider boarding the cat for a few weeks to minimize the cat's desire and instinct to return to its previous home.

***My cat never goes outdoors so moving should be straightforward.***

Moving can be just as traumatic for an indoor cat because it involves a complete change of personal territory. Gradual introduction to one room at a time with lots of attention will help reduce the stress of changing residences.

**THOUSANDS of cats are made strays each year through insufficient thought and care**

**DON'T LET YOUR CAT BE ONE OF THESE!**