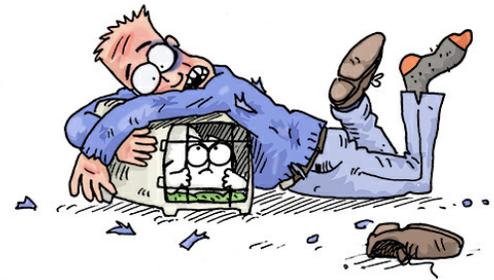




Visiting the Vet

Tips for a Stress free trip.

A trip to the veterinarian can be more stressful for cats than for dogs. Here are some tips to help make your clinic visit more pleasant.



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There are more owned cats than dogs in America, but cats only see a veterinarian half as often. They don't get the care they need and deserve for a number of reasons. One of those reasons is that they are masters of hiding illness and owners do not realize they are ill until disease is advanced, making treatment more difficult and less likely to be successful. But this only makes annual wellness exams all the more important. Yet another reason cats don't get veterinary care is they usually don't like going to the vet! They don't like carriers and they don't like car rides. But it doesn't have to be this way. Cats love hiding in boxes, and there is no reason they can't love a carrier too. But owners often wait until shortly before their appointment and then fetch the carrier from the garage where it's been for months, gathering dirt, unidentified stains, and weird odors, then attempt to stuff the cat into it. Typically, the cat takes one look at the carrier and runs off to hide under the bed. Furthermore, the only time the cat ever rides in the car is on a trip to the veterinarian. It's no wonder cats don't like going to the vet.

But there is a better way. You too can train your cat to enter a carrier peacefully and reduce the stress of a veterinary visit. Here are some tips on how to do that:



Buying a Carrier

- Top-loading carriers make it easier to place your cat inside.
- Carriers with a top and side opening have additional versatility.
- If your carrier has a removable top, your cat may feel more secure remaining inside throughout the exam.

Practice at Home

- Leave the carrier out for several days before the appointment so your cat gets used to it.
- Put treats, toys, blankets and a favorite person's clothes in the carrier for a comfortable and familiar environment.
- Reinforce your cat's positive associations with the carrier using calm praise.
- Never dump your cat out of the carrier - either let her walk out or gently remove her from the carrier.

Car Rides

- Always put your cat in a carrier when traveling in the car - it's safer for you and your cat.
- A synthetic feline pheromone in the carrier may help your cat stay calm during transit.
- Drape a blanket or towel over the carrier to reduce motion sickness.
- Take your cat for a few short car rides to build familiarity.
- Do not feed your cat for several hours before traveling to reduce motion sickness.
- After each successful car trip, reward your pet with positive attention and treats.

At the Clinic

- Practice regular care such as brushing, nail trimming and teeth brushing at home.
- Touch your cat's face, ears, feet and tail at home so she will be used to similar procedures at the clinic.
- Go to the veterinarian for visits that don't involve exams or procedures (such as weighing the cat) to create positive associations.
- Ahead of time, ask the clinic staff if you can take your kitty directly to an exam room upon arrival.
- Speak softly, because if you remain calm, chances are your cat will too.

Calming Strategies

- Reward good behavior with treats and ignore bad behavior - never speak harshly or use punishment.
- Ask a staff member if you can open the carrier so your cat can adjust to the exam room and explore.
- Avoid direct eye contact with your cat.
- Handle your cat with a towel if necessary.
- Speak in soft, soothing tones but avoid whispering.

Videos:

Scanning the QR Codes below should take you to some videos on the Internet on how to accustom your cat to a carrier to make the trip to the veterinarian stress-free.



By Ilana Rodan, DVM, Dipl. ABVP
Feline Practice
Past President, the American
Association of Feline Practitioners



By Steve Dale,
Pet Columnist and Radio Show Host



"A Technical Guide to Taking Your Cat
to the Vet,"
a funny but useful video by Dr. Andy
Roark, a veterinarian who is also a
good comedian. You'll enjoy this.



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