

“What is included with an adoption?”

“How should I introduce my new cat to my dog?”

“How can I help my new cat feel safe?”

“Who can I call if I need help with my new cat?”

KC PET PROJECT

KC Pet Project Cat Adoption Guide

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KC Pet Project
KC Campus for Animal Care
7077 Elmwood Ave, Kansas City, MO 64132
816-683-1383
kcpetproject.org

Top 5 Things You Need To Know!

- 1. Here's what's included in your pet's adoption!** – Your adoption fee includes several important things you need to know about:
 - Spay/neuter
 - FVRCP vaccination
 - Rabies vaccination, if 4 months of age or older
 - Dewormer
 - FELV test
 - Microchip
 - A Medical Summary of vaccinations and all other medical care provided
 - An opportunity to sign up for a 30-day FREE Gift of Pet Insurance
 - Access to behavior help with KC Pet Project Behavior Staff
 - Access to medical care through the KC Pet Project Veterinary Clinic for 14-days following adoption.
- 2. Here's what to watch for regarding your pet's health!** - While your pet may be healthy today, he/she may have been exposed to contagious illness while in the shelter. Adopters should watch for signs of illness within the first 14-days after adoption and contact the KC Campus for Animal Care clinic at **816-683-1353** if there are medical concerns. Sneezing, coughing, watery eyes, loss of appetite, and lethargy could indicate your pet needs medical attention. See [Disease Advisory & Your Pet's Health](#) on page 6 for more information about potential illness, what signs to look for, and risks to other pets in the home.
- 3. Here's what you need to know about your pet's behavior!** - Some animals enter the shelter as a stray with no known behavior history or understanding about what their life was like before they came to the shelter. Others come in surrendered by their previous owner who is able to provide some details about the animal's past. Your Adoption Counselor can share the information we have on record, if anything. Regardless, it is important to understand that behavior is changing and influenced by environment, including the people and other animals in it. We cannot make any guarantees about how an animal will behave in its new home. You should plan to supervise your new pet when being introduced to people and other pets in the home. See [Behavior Disclaimer](#) on page 9 for more information.
- 4. Your pet needs a Safe Room!** – Most cats need time to adjust to the new home, therefore it is unwise to simply let your new cat loose when you get home. Instead, adopters should limit the cat to just one quiet room during the first week in your home. We call this the Safe Room! Here they should have access to a litter box, food, water, and visits from you! Gradually as they become more comfortable, you can give them access to more parts of the home and eventually other pets, if any. See [Quick Start Guide to Your New Cat](#) on page 11 for suggestions on using a Safe Room, litter box placement, how to handle introductions to other pets in the home, and more.
- 5. Your pet is microchipped!** – As part of your adoption, your pet received a microchip. The microchip helps increase the likelihood that your pet will be reunited with you if you are ever separated. Keeping up-to-date contact information on file with the microchip company is essential to getting your pet back home. Too often KC Pet Project receives lost animals only to discover the contact information for the pet's owner is no longer valid. See [Your Pet's Microchip](#) on page 10 for more detailed information about how the microchip works and what to do to keep your contact information accurate.

What You Should Go Home With Today

Please make sure your adoption counselor provides you with these items to take home:

- This packet of information!
- Medical Summary of your new pet's medical history while at the shelter/adoption center
- Information about your pet's microchip. (NOTE: Some pets do not have a tag)
- Rabies tag and certificate (if 4 months of age or older)
- Information about how to enroll in 30 days of FREE pet insurance
- Medication (if pet is actively being treated for a medical condition)*
- City License (required for residents of Kansas City, MO only) - *There is a \$12 fee.**
- Any supplies you need to purchase to be ready for your new pet, such as a pet carrier, litter box, food, toys, etc.

** These items only apply in certain conditions.*

About KC Pet Project

KC Pet Project is a 501c3, nonprofit charitable organization operating the Kansas City, Missouri Animal Shelter. We care for more than 11,000 animals a year, making us the 3rd Largest Open-Admission No-Kill Shelter in the country. We focus on lifesaving programs promoting pet retention, identification, lost pet reunions, and pet ownership education throughout the community. KC Pet Project is creating a No Kill Kansas City – *we're passionate about lifesaving!*

KCPP Mission

To end the killing of healthy and treatable pets in Kansas City, Missouri by using the most progressive and lifesaving programs and promoting effective animal control policies.

KCPP Purpose

The purpose of the Kansas City Pet Project is to facilitate the placement of homeless pets into suitable homes; to establish and maintain an animal shelter for Kansas City, MO; to maintain associated procedures which promote: the health and welfare of pets in our care, prevention of unplanned litters, pet retention and reunification of lost pets to their owners; to increase public safety by addressing issues related to irresponsible pet owners and dangerous animals. We are keenly focused on optimal lifesaving and creating a No Kill Community in the Kansas City Metro.

Disease Advisory & Your Pet's Health

Exposure to Illness

KC Pet Project is an open-admission animal shelter, and as such, please be advised that animals in our care may be exposed to a variety of illnesses. Although we vaccinate all animals against disease upon intake, we simply cannot guarantee the health of any pet adopted from our shelter. Please monitor your new pet closely and if you see any symptoms of illness, contact our office immediately or take the pet to a veterinarian as soon as possible.

What Do I Do if My Pet Shows Signs of Illness?

You have two options if your newly adopted animal shows signs of illness **within 14 days** after adoption:

1. You can take your pet to your veterinarian - understanding you will be responsible for fees. KC Pet Project will not pay or reimburse you for veterinary bills.
2. You may make an appointment to bring your pet to our shelter so our Shelter Veterinarian can conduct an examination and make recommendations in terms of necessary treatments or options. Call **816-683-1353** to schedule an appointment during regular business hours. **We do not offer emergency or after-hours care.**

NOTE: Please understand that we cannot pay your veterinary bills. If you choose to take your pet to a private veterinarian or emergency/specialty clinic, you are solely responsible for payment of all incurred expenses.

What Are the Symptoms to Watch For?

Illnesses your pet may have been exposed to may present as upper respiratory symptoms such as **sneezing, coughing, runny eyes, runny nose, fever,**

lethargy, and dehydration. If you notice any of these symptoms please call our shelter so we can help you make the best decision for your pet. There are many diseases that can start with these symptoms, including Distemper, which can be fatal.

Are My Other Pets at Risk of Illness?

Potentially, yes. There are a variety of contagious illnesses animals may be exposed to in the shelter setting. For example, it is quite common for animals in a shelter to come down with an upper respiratory infection (sneezing, runny eyes, congestion, etc.). Even if your new pet looks healthy today, there are still some risks associated.

Please make sure that your pets at home are current on all vaccinations and are healthy. Do not immediately expose any unvaccinated pet to a newly adopted shelter pet. It is recommended that adopters separate their new pet from other pets in the home for 14 days while monitoring for symptoms of contagious illness.

Wellness Exam for Your New Pet

While your pet has been checked out by a veterinarian, shelter veterinary staff care for hundreds of animals each day. As part of your Adoption Contract, you are asked to take your new pet to a private vet for a Wellness Exam. This is intended to 1) have your pet intimately examined in the way only a private veterinarian can do, and 2) help you start a plan for routine vet care for your pet.

Please contact your personal veterinarian within 72 hours to schedule the required wellness appointment. This can be two to three weeks out from adoption to reduce stress. If you do not have a veterinarian, we can suggest several veterinary clinics in the metro area that provide free or low-cost wellness exams for newly adopted pets from KC Pet Project. See ***Clinics Offering Free Wellness Exams for KC Pet Project Adopters*** on page 7.

Clinics Offering Free Wellness Exams to KC Pet Project Adopters

As part of your adoption agreement, your pet **must be seen by a private veterinarian within 72 hours after adoption** for a wellness exam. For your convenience, below is a list of clinics that are generously offering a **FREE** Wellness Exam for new KC Pet Project adopters. Please contact the vet clinic to discuss terms of the offer and what service(s) are included. This list is subject to change without notice.

MISSOURI

Northland:

Amity Woods Animal Hospital

9300 NW 87th Terrace
Kansas City, MO 64153
816-880-6650

Shoal Creek Animal Hospital and Lodge

8850 N Flintlock Road
Kansas City, MO 64157
816-476-4046

Northland Animal Hospital

8351 NW Barrybrooke Dr
Kansas City, MO 64151
816-746-1333

Foxwood Animal Hospital

4704 NE Vivion
Kansas City, MO 64119
816-453-2154

Eagle Animal Hospital

(with boarding and mobile vet)
4825 NW Gateway
Riverside, MO 64150
816-741-2345

Mid-to-South:

Kansas City Vet Care

7240 Wornall Rd.
Kansas City, MO 64114
816-333-4330

Rockhill Pet Clinic

(with boarding)
800 E 63rd St. #3388
Kansas City, MO 64110
816-333-0973

KANSAS

Overland Park:

SouthPaw Animal Clinic

11818 Quivira Rd.
Overland Park, KS 66210
913-956-4959

Mariposa Veterinary Wellness Center

13900 Santa Fe Trail Drive
Lenexa, KS 66215
913-825-3330

Fairway/Prairie Village:

VCA Fairway Animal Hospital

6000 Mission Rd.
Fairway, KS 66205
913-432-7611

Prairie Village Animal Hospital

4045 Somerset Dr.
Prairie Village, KS 66206
913-642-7060

Olathe:

Blackbob Pet Hospital

15200 S Blackbob Rd.
Olathe, KS 66062
913-829-7387

Westwood/KCK:

FMA Animal Hospital

4755 Rainbow Blvd.
Westwood, KS 66205
913-262-1600

Westwood Animal Hospital

4820 Rainbow Blvd.
Westwood, KS 66205
913-362-2512

Sign Up for 30 days of FREE Pet Insurance!

One of the benefits of your adoption is that you are eligible to sign up for 30 days of FREE ShelterCare Pet Insurance from 24PetWatch. You have 7 days from the time of adoption to take advantage of this opportunity.

3 Ways to Sign Up!



A confirmation code will be sent to you via email within 72 hrs of your adoption. Please call 24PetWatch for assistance if you do not receive an email. Check the “Junk Folder” in your email account before calling.

What Is Covered by 24PetWatch ShelterCare Pet Insurance?

24PetWatch ShelterCare Pet Insurance coverage includes the following (subject to change without notice):

- Foreign Body Ingestion Removal
- Motor Vehicle Accident
- Wounds/Lacerations
- Bone Fractures
- Defined Poison Ingestion
- Ear or eye infections
- Intestinal Parasites
- Upper Respiratory Tract Infections
- Urinary Tract Infections
- Mange/Mites/Ringworms
- Canine Parvovirus/Feline Panleukopenia
- Heartworm Disease

The policy covers a maximum of \$1,500 with a \$100 one-time deductible. For complete details on your gift policy, including limitations and exclusions, check the coverage information with your enrollment. Pre-existing conditions are typically not covered. If you do have to take your pet to the veterinarian for illness or injury, bring your policy documents with you and show them to your veterinarian BEFORE you commit to any treatments. KC Pet Project is not responsible for decisions about policy coverage. Please direct questions to 24PetWatch.

Are There Hidden Costs?

There is no cost to sign up for the 30-day gift insurance policy. You don't need to provide credit card information to sign up. Your gift will automatically cancel itself after 30 days. If you would like to continue insurance coverage after 30 days, you can request additional coverage and 24 Pet Watch will offer rate quotes at that time.

Behavior Disclaimer

Your Pet's Behavior History

Many of the animals that come into the shelter came in as a stray, leaving us with little or no behavior history about how the animal behaved outside of the shelter environment. In other cases, the animal may be an "owner surrender," meaning that the animal's previous owner brought the animal to the shelter and may have provided information about the pet's prior behavior while in their care. When behavior history information is available, KC Pet Project will share it with adopters. Because it was not directly observed by KC Pet Project staff, we cannot guarantee the validity of behavior information reported by a previous owner. We also cannot guarantee how the animals were handled and cared for and what influence that might have had on their reported behavior.

No Guarantees

Your pet's behavior is not static, but instead changes depending on the environment, as well as the influence that people, other animals, and events might have on your animal. Therefore, how the animal behaves in the adoption center may not be an accurate reflection of how the animal will behave in your home.

Make a Plan for Your Pet

Because we cannot guarantee how an animal will behave in the future, adopters are advised to make a plan for how to safely integrate the new pet into the home. That plan should include supervision around children and other pets, and a safe place to keep the pet when it cannot be supervised. Adopters should also make a plan to help the animal cope with the stress of settling in to your home. Animals have an elevated stress hormone during the first week in a new home, sometimes longer. Animals are much more likely to either want to retreat and hide or be defensive during the

first week. It is important to go slow with your new pet. Give him/her space when needed, and use lots of positive reinforcement such as high-value (extra special) food rewards to make a good first impression of you and your family. Check out the [Quick Start Guide to Your New Cat](#) on page 11 for more tips. Or, call KC Pet Project at **816-683-1383** and ask to speak to a member of the Training & Behavior Dept.

Behavior Help & Returning a Pet to KC Pet Project

Transition Period

We hope that the transition from the adoption center to your loving home will be a smooth one, however it is important to know that the first few weeks in a new home can be both exciting and stressful for the pet and family. Sometimes your new pet may display problematic behavior during this transition period. Often times these behaviors can be resolved with patience and a few adjustments to manage the behavior and reduce stress. KC Pet Project has Behavior Staff to help give you guidance during the transition if you have questions or concerns.

What if I Can't Keep Them?!?

Depending on the severity of the concerns, sometimes new pet owners begin to question if the pet they chose is the right fit for their home. Before you attempt to return a pet to the shelter, please follow these steps:

1. Contact KC Pet Project's Behavior Staff at **816-683-1383**. Leave a message for the training department and a trainer will call you back to assist you. We ***do*** expect adopters to make ***reasonable*** attempts to work with their new pet before initiating a return. Please remember that it may take a

little time for you to see the benefit of training, so be patient. There are no magic wands in training.

2. Try to rehome the pet on your own. We encourage you to check out <https://rehome.adoptapet.com/> Rehoming your pet should be easy and stress free both for you and your pet. The experts at Adopt-a-Pet.com, the largest non-profit pet adoption website, with support from The Petco Foundation, have created a simple, reliable, free program to help you place your pet from your loving home directly to another.
3. If you have tried those options, you may contact the Main Shelter at **816-683-1363** to make an appointment to return the animal. The shelter receives a high volume of phone calls so you may receive our voicemail but calls will be returned within the same day.
4. **ALL RETURNS MUST GO TO THE KCCAC.** The Campus is located at 7077 Elmwood Ave, Kansas City, MO 64132. Even if your pet was adopted from a Petco or Zona Rosa location, animals **MUST** be returned to the KCCAC. Our satellite locations are not intake facilities, and once a pet adoption is completed the animal's cage space is filled with another pet awaiting adoption.

Do keep in mind that the shelter environment is very stressful for animals so the decision to return a pet to the shelter should not be made lightly. If you know a friend or family member that can provide a safe and loving home for your pet, you may be able to prevent your pet from going back to the shelter.

Can I Get a Refund?

Adopters who return an animal within the first 30 days of adoption **may** be eligible for the selection of a new pet, pending manager approval. A 50% refund of the adoption fee ("extra" purchases will not be refunded) will be offered only if the animal is returned for a chronic medical problem as

diagnosed by the adopter's private veterinarian. Failure to comply with the terms of the adoption agreement may disqualify you for a refund and/or exchange.

Your Pet's Microchip

24PetWatch Microchips

Your pet is microchipped as a standard part of the adoption process. This service is provided to help ensure the likelihood your pet will be returned to you should you ever get separated. It is not a GPS service, so unfortunately it doesn't allow you to track your lost pet. But it will allow any shelter and most vet clinics to reunite you with your pet using a scanner that detects your new pet's chip.

Each chip has a unique number sequence that matches up to your contact information. In most cases, the shelter uses the contact information you provided on your Adoption Survey to register your chip automatically via our database. If your pet has a 24PetWatch microchip, this contact information can be edited at no cost for up to a year. Should you move, change your phone number, or want to add other ways to be contacted, after the first year, there is a nominal annual fee to do so, or a one-time life-time fee option. Visit 24petwatch.com or call 1-866-597-2424 to edit your account.

Other Microchips

Occasionally we may have a pet come to the shelter already chipped. If your pet has a chip from any company other than 24PetWatch, you will need to contact the appropriate chip company to register the chip yourself. There may be fees associated. Here's how to contact other common microchip companies:

- **Home Again:** 1-888-466-3242
- **Avid:** 1-800-336-2843
- **AKC:** 1-800-252-7894
- **Found Animals:**
microchipregistry.foundanimals.org
- **Crystal Tag/Pet Link:** 1-877-738-5465

Quick Start Guide to Your New Cat

Adopting a new pet can be an exciting learning experience for both you and your new your new family member! Let this guide be a concise source of information to help you both ease your cat into its new home, and a tool to help understand how to maintain a good, healthy relationship for you both!

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Once You Get Home

Coming to a new territory can be one of the scariest things for a cat. If they had a choice, most cats would remain in their same territory their entire life unless they were forced to leave. Remember, every noise, smell, and living thing is new and stressful to your adopted pet, especially a change in their routine! Some animals may come from loving families before ending up in our care, but others may have never seen carpet or a sofa in their lives before ending up in their new home. It is up to ***you*** to guide your pet through this adjustment period, and ensure that both of you take the right steps forward into a happy, long life together!

Settling In

On average, it takes a cat about 2 weeks to adjust to a new environment. *Don't rush it!* A good introduction to new territory is vital to a happy, well-functioning cat in your home. Domestic cats have a life expectancy of around 17 years, with some living far beyond that, so there's no reason to push them in that first month. A common mistake is to take your new friend home, set its kennel down in the living room, open it up, and... surprise! Now the cat is hiding under the couch, hissing or burrowing to get as far away from you as possible. This is a common mistake – people are often very excited to see their new pet interact with their family, but what you need for kitty is a nice quiet room to start as a safe place.

Starting a Routine

Starting a routine with your cat right away can help them settle in. Animals at the shelter are used to the scheduled events of feeding, cleaning, etc, and establishing a new one can help make the transition less stressful. The less surprises the better for your new friend. Routines will also help create a bond between you and your cat.

Expect Mistakes

Everything about your cat's life has just changed. Even the most well-behaved and trained cat does not know how to ask about the rules of your house, or ask you for what they want. It is up to you to guide your cat with housetraining and manners. Be patient, and make an honest effort to ease your cat into its new house one step at a time.

The Safe Room & Meeting Your Family

Safe Room: The Starting Point

One of the first things to identify when you get home is where your cat will be spending its first few weeks. This room will be “home base” for your cat to adjust to its home and learn about the smells and sounds of its new territory. This room should contain food, water, bedding, and most importantly, the cat's litter box. By confining your cat to this territory in the beginning, it learns from the start that it has a safe place to go to the bathroom, sleep, and relax. From this new spot, you can help ease your cat into the sounds and smells of its new home. If cats are not allowed this adjustment area, the result can be inappropriate urination, undue aggression, or fearfulness in their new environment that can become habit.

Cat Seeds, or, How Long Will This Take?

As we mentioned, the average adjustment time for a cat in a new environment is about 2 weeks. Some cats may adjust to their home in the first day, while others may take several months before they're fully comfortable. An analogy that we sometimes use for our adopters is to ask them to imagine that instead of adopting a cat today, they've actually purchased some “cat seeds.” By planting these “seeds” in good, comfortable, and well-maintained land, as well as careful attention, soon their seeds will blossom into the wonderful kitty they originally

picked out at the shelter! Remember, adopting a pet is a lifetime commitment, make sure you're especially committed to growing the fantastic cat of your choice from the beginning! Don't be in too big of a hurry; you have a lifetime to enjoy together.

Meeting Your Family

Introducing your new cat to the family can be exciting, but sometimes for the cat it can be a stressful event. Remember, be patient! While in their safe room, have different members of the family take turns providing the food and water to the cat. This helps your new friend start to associate the new people they're seeing with positive events. Lots of cats do not want to be picked up or brushed in their first days at home, and this can be difficult to understand for some adopters (especially children!). Treats, wet food, and playing are especially useful tools in creating a bond between you and your cat.

The Importance of Play

Cats are one of the top predators of the natural world, and as a result, have the compulsion to hunt...day in and day out! In fact, 10 to 15 times a day, cats repeat the cycle of hunting, eating, grooming, and sleeping. To keep a cat happy (and lower the chances of destructive habits), be sure to play with your cat daily. By choosing toys that mimic their natural prey animals, such as feather wands and mice toys, and using them to play with your cat, you can simulate hunting activities for your cat. Hunting is a vital part of your cat's overall behavior and playing should be seen as important as walking a dog. As a good rule, we like to say, "Hands are for petting, and toys are for playing." What this means is that you should avoid rough play with your cat using your hands, especially kittens, as this can grow into inappropriate play aggression over time.

Meeting Resident Cats

Scent Swapping

One of the most stressful events for a cat can be meeting another cat. This goes for the new cat as well as the cat already living in the home ("the resident cat")! Carefully and slowly introducing a cat to another cat's territory is vital, and your safe room will be very helpful in the introduction process. After a few days of being home, you can begin to start introducing them to each other's scent. A simple way of doing this is to take bedding from the resident cat and bedding from the new cat and swap them, giving each cat the other cat's bedding. Another method is to take a sock or small rag and gently stroke the home cat's face/body with it, and then use the same cloth on the new cat. This helps them get acquainted with each other before actually having to see each other. You can also feed your pets on the opposite side of the new cat's door. This helps create a positive association to that smell, and soon, a positive look at the new cat.

NOTE: If your new cat is recovering from a contagious illness such as an upper respiratory infection, as often occurs in the shelter setting, wait to begin scent swapping till the new cat no longer shows symptoms of illness and has completed their medication.

Sharing Territory

Felines are one of the most territorial mammals in the animal kingdom and because of that, it can take some time for two separate cats to start to relax when sharing a territory. To help the new cat gain some confidence, after a week in the safe room, allow it some time to roam supervised in the living room, hallway, or even just the areas surrounding its safe room while the resident cat is confined to another area of the home. By playing hunting games and giving the cat tasty treats or wet food in these areas, the new cat starts to feel as though it can be a successful hunter in another cat's territory,

and ultimately more comfortable in the environment.

Meeting for the First Time

The next step is to allow the cats to see each other with the use of a barrier at first, such as through a baby gate or in a pet carrier. Allow the cats to see each other, then immediately reward both cats to create a positive association. Continue to reward each time the cats see each other. Be sure to use tasty, high value rewards such as tiny bits of meat or wet food. After several repetitions, separate the cats. Repeat 5 to 10 times per day for 2 to 3 days. If both parties are relaxed, gradually increase the amount of time the cats look at each other before a reward is presented.

Begin to play with the cats in front of each other using interactive toys such as a toy on a string or rod. If both cats are comfortable they can move on to supervised interaction without a barrier.

The first time the cats are able to meet without a barrier, chose a room that the new cat has had time to explore previously. Often times the living room is a great choice as it tends to a more open room with many levels of territory (couches, shelves, cat trees, etc.). Bring the new cat into the room while the resident cat is out and comfortable. Never force the cats to interact with each other. Let them take their own time to investigate each other. You can use toys and food rewards to continue to make the interaction positive. If one or both cats hiss, remember this is a very normal reaction, so don't panic. If you feel one or both cats is getting too stressed, you can separate them for the day and begin again the next day. The goal is to slowly expand the time they tolerate being together in the same room. After a week-or-so of these exercises you can begin to experiment with letting the cats free-roam in the house. Remember it is not uncommon for it to take many months before the cats completely adjust to one another.

NOTE: Increasing territory in the house through cat trees and other furniture is a great way to help reduce stress in multi-cat households. In some cases, owners might purchase pheromone-based calming products such as Feliway or Sentry to also reduce overall anxiety in the home.

Meeting your Dog

Starting Out Slowly

Introducing your new cat to the family dog can be a stressful event for everyone involved. Patience is key! Go through the steps slowly to make sure your pets can live together happily inside your home.

Starting From the Safe Room

Much like meeting a new cat, or coming to any new area, the cat will need to start out and be comfortable in its safe room before any introductions start. If possible, your dog and cat should have **no physical interaction** in the first week or two that it is home. This stage is crucial for the cat to develop a sense of security in its environment, and meeting a dog can undermine that process. As the cat is adjusting, you can begin **scent swapping** as discussed in the previous section. In addition to scent swapping, you can also talk to the dog in calm, relaxing tone when the smell is presented, rewarding the dog with a treat for calmness. By the time they are ready to meet one another face-to-face, the dog should already have some positive associations with the cat and its smell.

Preparing the House

Before the cat is allowed to roam the house with the family dog, you should check out each area of the house where the cat and dog might be together to see if they're ideal for a cat. Look to see if there are lots of avenues of escape, or at least areas for

your cat to jump away from the dog if it becomes too stressed. Cat trees, high couches, and shelves are ideal for this. Also consider blocking off certain areas of your house using baby gates or other barriers to allow your cat some time to explore different areas of the house, one at a time, before meeting the dog. In an ideal situation, your cat has gotten a chance to explore the living room, or other areas they will be interacting with dogs, **before** they actually have to meet them face to face. A good exercise is to take the cat out of its safe room and into a quiet living area for it to explore for short periods of time. Before ending these little visits out of the room, it's encouraged to give wet food or a treat to your cat while in the area to solidify a feeling of comfort and safeness for the cat.

Meeting for the First Time

When it is time for the two to finally meet, it should be in an area that the cat has already gotten the chance to be in a few times. This introduction should be assisted by two people, one to monitor the dog, and the other to monitor the cat. If there are multiple dogs in the home, they should be introduced to the cat one-at-a-time. Go ahead and leash your dog, and have him waiting in a "sit," if able, on one side of the room. The cat can then be brought in, very low-key, and placed either on the floor or on an elevated surface opposite the dog. During this time, we don't want to force the two to interact, we simply want them to be able to coexist in the same room without too many issues. A good tip is to give a steady and consistent supply of treats to both parties in this case, and keep the time together to just a few minutes at first and work up to longer periods of time. With positive associations every time the animals are in the same room with each other, we can start to increase the time together to 30 minutes, an hour, or beyond. **It is not unusual for a cat to take more than a month to adjust to living alongside a dog.** By limiting their interactions, making positive associations, remaining patient, and by having good control of

the territory your dog/cat can go into, you can build a solid, well-functioning family dynamic in your home.

Below is another example of a careful plan for introducing your new cat to your dog, as recommended by Pat Miller in her article, *Living Together like Cats and Dogs*.

1. Have cat in a carrier, place it on the far side of one room
2. Enter opposite side of room, with dog on leash
3. At a distance, have the person handling the dog give high-value treats every time the dog sees the cat. Give a lot of small treats to make a great first impression. Try something moist and extra special like meat or cheese.
4. At the same time have the person handling the cat give high-value treats every time the cat sees the dog. Give a lot of small treats. Try something moist and extra special like meat.
5. Gradually decrease the distance and repeat giving treats.
6. Continue this process until the dog and cat are in close proximity, both restrained.
7. Return to the starting location, this time with the cat released from the carrier, but the dog is still on leash.
8. Continue giving frequent food rewards as the cat moves around the room, till the dog shows no signs of being excited or intense in the cat's presence.
9. When comfortable, drop the leash and allow the dog to interact, but with close supervision to ensure the dog doesn't chase the cat.

*This process can be broken down over several sessions, if needed. If dog is aroused or cat seems very stressed, stop, take a break, and start back at the beginning, going slower.

Transforming the Territory

Now that we've discussed introducing members of the family to your new cat, we can talk about something equally important... **territory!** A cat's territory is the most important feature of their life. To a cat, home needs to make them feel safe, enable appropriate behavior, and keep them happy and confident. Many owners don't realize how much the placement of their furniture or the commotion of a busy hallway impacts their cat's behavior. Here are a few tips to help "catify" your home so that everyone coexists happily and healthy!

The Cat Highway

As you bring a new cat into your house, try and take a look at things from their perspective. If you had to go to the bathroom, would you want to run past the scary dog's face, through the loud toddler's grasp, through a dark alley way, behind a curtain, or down the hallway that everyone is fighting through on their way in from school? Cats often look for the safest, and easiest path to get to their destination, and you can help them by providing easy access to food areas, litter boxes, or simply an easy path to get back to their safe area.

Vertical Territory

One of the easiest ways of giving more safe territory for you cat is to provide them with vertical territory. Vertical or elevated territory is any piece of the house where the cat can be higher than the rest of the inhabitants, and provides them with a place where they feel comfortable observing all the happenings of the home. Often times this comes in the form of cat trees, elevated shelves the cats are allowed on, or walkways from places like the couch or the counter. This will also help quell your cat's desires to climb in undesired places, such as your curtains or stovetop. **Vertical territory is very important for multi animal households.** Adding a

few shelves or climbing areas can almost double the size of a cat's territory, which is fantastic for reducing stress caused by meeting other animals.

Scratching Surfaces

All cats, whether trained or not, need to have surfaces to scratch on. Scratching removes the dull husk from the cat's claws and is an important part of how a cat relates with his territory. Be sure to provide your cat with ample amounts of scratching posts, toys, or cardboard scratchers for them to scratch in a healthy way. To attract your cat to these places (instead of your expensive furniture!) try playing with your cat next to them, marking them with catnip, attaching a toy to it, or even showing your cat how *you* scratch on it with your own hands. Most cats prefer vertical scratchers over horizontal. This can take some trial and error, but soon your cat will not only use their scratching posts, they'll love them!

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ON DECLAWING: Declawing is one of the MOST detrimental events to a cats behavior. Statistically, declawed cats are twice as likely to exhibit litterbox issues, and double that again for issues involving aggression and fear. Entice your cat to use scratching posts through treats and toys. If this does not work, consider a product like Soft Paws nail caps, or starting a routine of regularly trimming your cat's nails.

The Litter Box

Proper placement and maintenance of the litter boxes is very important to a happy healthy cat (and family)! Litter "training" is something that cats are innately born with the instinct to do, but as an adopter, you should do all that you can to help them be successful in your new home. Below are tips to ensure success:

- The ideal number of litter boxes is one per cat, plus one. Litter boxes should be placed in at least 2 different locations, and

preferably more if it is a multi-cat household. Locations should be private but have easy access. Litter boxes are best left away from noisy appliances.

- Most cats prefer a fine-grained, unscented litter.
- Boxes should be scooped daily.
- Clumping litter should be changed at least weekly, and more often if multiple cats use it. Clay litter should be changed approximately every day. To clean the litter box, wash with warm water and dry well before adding new litter.
- Prevent blocking litter box exits or entries, and have at least two ways for cats to enter and exit the box.
- Never trap or corner your cat in its litter box – this can create a negative association with that area.
- Many cats prefer a depth of about 2 inches of litter, however, each cat varies.
- Cats prefer boxes that are at least 50% longer than their bodies. **Most commercial litter boxes are too small for large cats.** Large plastic tubs, sweater boxes, cement mixing tubs, and small dog litter pans all make great litter boxes for large cats.

If your cat is experiencing problems eliminating outside of the box, it often signals a medical or behavioral concern. The quicker the problem is corrected, the more likely the cat is to return to using the boxes regularly. Call your veterinarian to schedule an appointment to rule out any medical concerns such as a Urinary Tract Infection or Bladder Stones. If that result is inconclusive, please reach out to KC Per Project staff to help with possible behavior concerns. In many cases inappropriate urination is a result of not being properly integrated into the household.

Training and Enrichment for Your Cat

Contrary to popular belief, cats can be trained to preform behaviors you want, just like other pets. Whether it's learning where to scratch, which shelves are off limits, or even tricks for company and friends, training your new cat can be a healthy and rewarding experience for you both!

Positive Reinforcement

Always reward your cat for preforming the behavior that you want; rewarded behavior get repeated. The more you reward the behavior you like, the more likely you are to get that behavior again! Rewards can be a treat, a special toy, or even just an extra amount of loving.

Healthy Play

Playing with your cat is vital for its health. A good playtime stimulates the natural hunting instincts that drive a lot of your cat's behavior. Interactive toys and hunting games allow cats to stalk and catch, which are important activities to your cat's mental and physical health. Use toys like feather wands to entice your cat to act like a predator. It is important to use toys and **not** your hands and arms as toys, doing such can create a problem with your cat thinking it's okay to bite and scratch for fun. If this occurs, be sure to swap out your arm for a suitable toy immediately.

Social Companionship

While typically thought of as loners, cats are actually social animals. They need companionship and mental stimulation. Help your cat feel included in your family with gentle petting, play time in "family" areas, grooming, and regular feeding events. In a multi-cat household, set up several stations throughout the home with litter boxes, food, and water. With essential resources available in plenty, such as litter boxes and food and water, cats will be much more at home as a group instead of feeling like they need to compete with each other for resources.

Make Home More Natural

Cats love predictability, but an overly rigid or boring house can lead to them acting out. Make small changes for your cat that provide a bit of novelty. This can be rotating toys so that the cat does not feel like they've already "killed" that piece of prey. It is also great enrichment to hide food objects in different places or in new objects to allow your cat to hunt. Boxes, carriers, and paper bags are also great new things for cats to explore, letting them feel more like an outdoor cat who is on the prowl.

Keeping Them Away

Often times there are places in the house that you do not want your cat. Some common techniques include placing double sided tape across the surface, foil, or reversed carpet runners to deter scratching or walking on the area. **This is only half of the process.** The next step is to show your cat where there *are* appropriate places to scratch, walk, and sleep. Help attract your cat by rewarding them when they're acting how you'd like in different areas with treats, toys, petting, or praise

Feline Nutrition

Good nutrition is a major factor in your cat's lifelong health. By navigating the countless food options on the market, and providing the right lifestyle options, you can expect a long, happy life with your pet!

Choosing the Right Food

Cats are obligate carnivores, meaning that they require four times the amount of protein as compared to a dog or human. They also have a short GI tract and much less digestive enzymes than dogs. This makes it difficult for them to break down carbohydrates. Many commercial dry foods are loaded with grains and other filler proteins difficult for cats to digest. Seek out food that has meat as the main source of protein. Brown rice is also easier

for cats to digest than many carbohydrates. A typical amount of food to be fed is $\frac{1}{4}$ a cup a day twice a day, or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Consult the feeding guidelines provided by the manufacturer to adjust as needed.

Drinking Water, Fountains, and Canned Food

In the wild, some cats neglect to drink water at all, finding almost all of their moisture in consuming prey animals. As a result, sometimes owners feel as though they have to constantly convince their cat just to have a drink of water. An easy way of ensuring your cat gets the moisture they need is by providing wet/canned food daily. Most canned food is 60 to 80% water, and is dominated by meat based proteins. It is also a good idea to offer your cat a pet drinking fountain. Some cats refuse to drink still water, especially next to food because of a natural instinct to find fresh water. This is why your cat may not drink from its bowl, but might rush to your sink as soon as you wash your hands or get a glass of water!

Feeding Tips and Preventing Feline Obesity

Cats in the wild typically eat 10 to 20 small meals throughout the day and night, foraging at all hours. Simulating this feeding behavior for domestic cats provide exercise, and helps prevent obesity, a common major medical concern for domestic cats. To stimulate normal eating and foraging behavior:

- Provide cats with puzzle feeders, interactive toys, or make homemade puzzle feeders by cutting holes into cardboard boxes or bottles and hiding treats inside for your cat to paw out.
- Toss kibbles and let your cat chase after food, as they would chase prey.

- Hide small amounts of food in places around the house for your cat to hunt down.
- Feed multiple times a day. If you are unable, try to feed at least twice a day.

Common Health Issues

Unfortunately, cats instinctively hide signs of disease and sickness, and early signs may be missed. Owners need to take their cat to the veterinarian annually, even if it is an inside-only cat.

Vaccinations and Testing

All cats leaving KC Pet Project have been vaccinated against Rabies, Panleukopenia, and common upper respiratory viruses. We recommend adopters maintain these vaccinations every year. All cats are also tested for FIV and Feline Leukemia.

Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

What is it?

URI is similar to a common cold in humans. It is especially common in cats that have been exposed to other cats, such as in an animal shelter. As a result, virtually every cat in an animal shelter has been exposed to the viruses that cause URI.

What causes it?

URI is typically caused by two main viruses, Feline Herpes Virus and Feline Calici virus. It is suspected that 2/3 of the total cat population carries at least one of these viruses.

What are the signs?

URI symptoms include sneezing, runny nose, red or runny eyes, sores on the tongue/lips/nose, fever, lack of appetite, and decreased energy.

How contagious is it?

URIs are contagious to other cats only, and are generally not contagious to humans or other species, such as dogs. Most cats have been vaccinated or exposed from routine vet visits, however vaccines are not 100% protective. It is a good idea to isolate cats showing symptoms, and to wash hands after handling. This is another good reason to have your new cat isolated in their safe room for at least 10 days.

When should I contact a veterinarian?

We recommend seeing a vet within the first week of adoption for a check-up. With rest and good care, many cats recover from a URI in two weeks. Sometimes cats need additional help so if you see the following signs, contact your veterinarian.

- Not eating for more than 48 hours
- Green or yellow discharge from the eyes
- Difficult or labored breathing/open mouth breathing
- Depressed or lethargic
- Vomiting or diarrhea lasting more than 24 hours
- Little to no improvement after a week of home care

Resources

We hope you found this guide concise but helpful. For more information on topics outlined in this guide, check out these websites or contact KC Pet Project Staff at [816-683-1383](tel:816-683-1383) for assistance.

Jackson Galaxy

<http://jacksongalaxy.com/learn>

ASPCA | Cat Behavior

www.asPCA.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/cat-behavior