

PET TALES

Get a move on

Keeping cats safely, comfortably confined reduces the amount of stress during move

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Correspondent

Cats like places more than they like people, right? Wrong. Your cat would rather be with you, no matter where you move to. But if you handle the days before and after moving day improperly, you're at a real risk of losing your cat. That's why it's important to take some time to do it right.

Cats are highly territorial and will seek out familiar places when stressed, which is why they attempt to return to their old homes. While you'll never manage a stress-free move for either you or your cat, you can make the best of the situation by keeping your pet secure before, during and after the move, and then by allowing your pet to gradually adapt to his new surroundings.

The best way to move your cat is to confine him to a "safe room" before and after the move, and to transport him from one house to another in a secure carrier. The ideal safe room is a spare bedroom or bathroom where your cat isn't going to be disturbed, and where he can be outfitted with food and water, a litter box, a scratching post and toys.

Don't feel bad about confining your pet. He'll be more relaxed in a small space where he won't be subjected to the stress of seeing people tromping around his house with the family belongings. Confining your cat also prevents him from slipping outside, which is a danger at both the old and new home. A frightened cat may be hard to locate on the day of the move if you don't make sure he's somewhere you can put your hands on him.

When you get to your new home, leave the carrier, with its door removed, in the safe room. Close the door to the room and leave him be while you unpack. Coaxing him out of the carrier with treats and praise is fine, but let him choose when and how much of the safe room he wants to explore. Never drag him out — you'll upset your cat, and you might get scratched or bitten.

A couple of days after you've unpacked and things have settled down, open the door to the safe room so your cat can explore the rest of the house. Even if you plan to let him outside, keep him in for a couple of weeks. He needs to stay inside to start forming a bond with his new surroundings. Better still, make the most of the opportunity offered by a move and convert your pet to indoor-only status. Your new neighbors will appreciate it, and your cat will live a longer, safer life.

It's relatively easy to manage a conversion to indoor cat in a new home. He'd carry on like crazy in your old home if locked in, but in new surroundings he'll accept the change with little fuss. Part of the reason cats don't like to convert to indoor-only is because they've marked the outside as part of their territory and have a natural desire to revisit and re-mark it.

A newly moved cat will learn to accept the territory he has been offered, and if

the outdoors isn't part of it, he won't miss it as much.

Above all, don't rush your cat through a move. Confinement during the transition is also good for avoiding behavior problems that might pop up with the stress of moving.

By limiting your cat's options to the litter box and scratching post in his small safe room, he will quickly redevelop the good habits he had in your old home. ■



Keep your cat contained before and after your moving day.

Pet of the Week

To adopt a pet from Lee County Animal Services, call 432-2083.

During December, Lee County Animal Services joins some 2,000 U.S. pet shelters and adoption centers for Home 4 the Holidays 2007, a national event to raise awareness of the joys of owning shelter-adopted pets. The goal is to get some 350,000 dogs, cats, puppies, kittens and other companion pets into loving, adoptive homes. The local goal is 300 pets. Each pet adopted this month goes to its new homes with a special gift in addition to the services normally provided with each adoption. Adoption fees are reduced to \$50 for dogs

(normally \$65) and \$40 for cats (normally \$50). The fee includes spay/neuter surgery, vaccinations appropriate for each animal's age, flea treatment, worming, heartworm test for dogs six months or older, feline aids and leukemia test for cats, a county license for pets three months or older, collar, training DVD, nationally registered microchip pet ID, and a gift pack of toys and treats. The total adoption package is valued at more than \$400. Here are some of the many animals ready for forever homes:



>>Ellie Mae (381028) is a 3-year-old German shepherd. She's smaller than average, making her an ideal house pet.



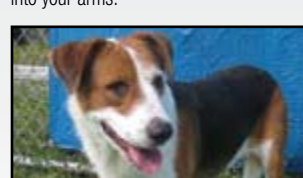
>>Daisy (338122) is a three-year-old silky terrier who was surrendered by her owner due to a divorce. She sits on command and can jump from the ground into your arms.



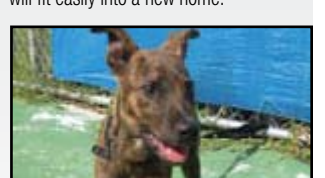
>>Rosie (380961) is an older cocker spaniel who wound up at the shelter when her owner died. She is a happy, loving girl whose maturity will make her a pet that will fit easily into a new home.



>>Bandit (267024) is a sweet, five-year-old border collie whose owner turned him in because the landlord didn't allow dogs. He loves kids.



>>Cello (380030) is a two-year-old, stray hound mix who is gentle and loving.



>>Little Piccolo (381846) is a two-month-old mix breed puppy. He is a happy boy who loves attention.



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