

## How to Prepare for Adopting a Cat from a Humane Society

Adopting a cat from a Humane Society is a rewarding experience that brings joy and companionship into your home. However, it's important to understand that adopting a cat is a long-term commitment that requires preparation. Whether you have no pets at home, other dogs, or even other cats, each situation requires different considerations to ensure your new feline friend has a smooth transition into their forever home. Here's how to prepare at three different levels:

**Create a Safe Space** - Cats are territorial creatures, and when they first come into your home, they may feel a little overwhelmed. Create a small, quiet space for them with a litter box, food, water, and a cozy bed. This will help them feel secure as they adjust to the new environment.

**Supplies You'll Need** - Before bringing your new cat home, make sure you have the essential supplies: A litter box and litter (keep it clean to encourage use), Food and water bowls, A scratching post or pad, Cat toys for mental stimulation A comfortable bed or soft blanket A cat carrier for trips to the vet.

**Patience is Key** - Cats may take a few days to weeks to adjust fully to their new home. During this time, be patient and give them space to explore at their own pace. Allow them to come to you on their terms, and soon you'll begin to form a bond with your new feline friend.

**If You Have Dogs at Home** - Introducing a new cat into a home with dogs requires extra consideration to ensure the safety and comfort of both the dog and the cat. It's crucial to make slow and careful introductions to avoid stress or conflict.

**Prepare Your Dogs** - Before bringing the new cat home, make sure your dogs are comfortable with being around animals they don't already know. If your dogs have a strong prey drive or have never been around cats, they may need some training to ensure a smooth introduction.

**Create Separate Spaces** - Initially, keep your cat and dogs in separate areas of the house. Let the cat have their own space to adjust without the dogs causing stress. You can introduce the two slowly by allowing them to sniff each other under a door or through a gate before making the first face-to-face meeting.

**Leash and Supervision** - During the first few in-person introductions, keep your dog on a leash to maintain control. Let your cat approach your dog if they feel comfortable, and always monitor their interactions closely. Praise and reward both the cat and dog for calm behavior. Over time, you can gradually allow more freedom for both animals.

**Don't Rush the Process** - Cats and dogs need time to adjust to each other. It's crucial to be patient and not rush the process. Over time, your dog and cat may learn to coexist peacefully, or they may even form a bond. It's essential to monitor their behavior and intervene if any signs of aggression arise.

**If You Have Cats at Home** - Bringing a new cat into a home with other cats can be a little trickier. Cats are territorial animals, and they may not immediately accept a new feline companion. Here are a few ways to prepare:

**Prepare for a Gradual Introduction** - The most important part of introducing a new cat to an existing cat is doing so gradually. Keep the new cat in a separate room with their own food, litter box, and bedding for the first few days. Allow your resident cat to get used to the new scent before they meet face-to-face.

**Scent Swapping** - Start by swapping bedding or using a soft cloth to rub both cats and then placing the cloth with the other cat. This allows them to get accustomed to each other's scent before they meet. Scent swapping helps reduce the territorial instincts and makes the introduction feel less threatening.

**Supervised Face-to-Face Meetings** - When both cats seem ready, allow them to see each other through a baby gate or cracked door for a few days. Once they're comfortable with this, arrange for short, supervised face-to-face meetings. Keep a safe distance between them, and gradually decrease that distance over time. Always reward calm behavior with treats.

**Monitor for Aggression or Stress** - Watch for signs of stress or aggression, such as hissing, growling, or swatting. If any of these signs occur, separate the cats and give them more time before trying again. It's normal for cats to feel a little threatened by a new companion, but with time and patience, they can learn to get along.

**Positive Reinforcement** - Positive reinforcement goes a long way when it comes to helping cats adjust to a new companion. Use treats, praise, and attention when your cats are calm and relaxed around each other. Avoid punishing them for any signs of jealousy or aggression, as this will only increase stress and delay the bonding process.

**Final Thoughts** - Adopting a cat from a Humane Society is an exciting and rewarding journey, but it's essential to be prepared, especially when considering your home environment. Whether you're a first-time pet owner, have dogs, or already have cats at home, each situation requires its own set of preparations. By being patient, creating a safe and comfortable environment, and following the right introduction strategies, you can ensure that your new cat has a smooth transition into in to your home. If you adopt from the Northwoods Humane Society and a question or need guidance, contact Lisa Lew or Angie Larson at the shelter.

Dates to Save: July 5 – Cardboard Boat Races – Boulder Lodge – 2 pm – Music, races and food.

August 4 – NHS Tag Day – Volunteers needed – NHS -715-634-5394 Coordinator – David Taite