

MORRIS ANIMAL REFUGE

CAT ADOPTION

PACKET



DEAR M.A.R. ADOPTER,

First and foremost, congratulations and THANK YOU! By choosing to adopt from a shelter, you are not only saving the life of one animal, but also freeing up a space for the next animal in need! Adopters like you are integral to our lifesaving mission -- your support allows us to provide care for thousands of animals every year.

Your newly adopted animal is spayed/neutered, treated for fleas, dewormed, microchipped, and up to date on their age-appropriate, core vaccines. They may have also received a wellness exam from our veterinarian to check for any immediate issues. We recommend seeing a veterinarian within 1-2 weeks of adopting your animal as a follow-up to our basic exam and to establish their baselines within your vet's records.

At the Morris Animal Refuge, our goal is to make matches that will last a lifetime. In this packet, you will find guidance and helpful resources to ease your new animal's transition to your home and set you and your furry family member up for success.

In addition to reading through this packet, it is imperative that you register your microchip with Found Animals upon bringing your animal home. This can be done by going to found.org/start. The first 24-48 hours in a new home can be stressful for an animal and it is not uncommon for nervous animals to bolt out of the house or car, even if you're careful! A microchip cannot be used to track your animal, but if someone finds them and brings them to a veterinary clinic or shelter, scanning the microchip will provide access to your contact information so the animal can be quickly returned to you! This is only the case if the microchip is registered and up-to-date with your current contact information!

We want our adopters to feel supported throughout the life of their animal, so please feel free to contact us by phone (215-735-9570) or email (adoptions@morrisanimalrefuge.org) with any questions you may have.

All the best,
The Morris Animal Refuge Team



TIPS FOR ADDITIONAL MEDICAL CARE

Low Cost Wellness Clinics in Philadelphia

PAWS Spay/Neuter and Wellness Clinic

2900 Grays Ferry Ave. Philadelphia, PA 19146
(215) 298-9680 | gfclinic@phillypaws.org
phillypaws.org/locations/spay-neuter-and-wellness-clinic/

PAWS Northeast Adoption Center and Low-Cost Clinic

1810 Grant Ave. Philadelphia, PA 19115
(215) 545-9600 | neclinic@phillypaws.org
phillypaws.org/locations/paws-northeast-adoption-center-low-cost-clinic/

Pennsylvania SPCA

350 E. Erie Ave. Philadelphia, PA 19134
(215) 426-6300 | callcenter@pspca.org
pspca.org/veterinary-care/veterinary-center

The Bridge Clinic

2820 Old Lincoln Highway Suite 1A Trevose, PA 19053
(215) 639-3333 | info@thebridgeclinic.org
thebridgeclinic.org

Women's Animal Center

3839 Richlieu Rd. Bensalem, PA 19020
(215) 750-5252 |
helpline@womenshumanesociety.org
womensanimalcenter.org/our-veterinary-hospital

Providence Animal Center

555 Sandy Bank Rd. Media, PA 19063
(610) 566-1370 | info@providenceac.org
providenceac.org/vet-services/

Emancipet

575 Adams Ave. Unit 2 Philadelphia, PA 19120
(267) 774-4901 | general@emancipet.org
emancipet.org/philadelphia/

Dutton Road Veterinary Clinic

10901 Dutton Rd. Philadelphia, PA 19154
(215) 331-2968
duttonroadvetclinic.com

Payment Plan Options

Care Credit

(800) 677-0718
<https://www.carecredit.com/>

ScratchPay

(855) 727-2395 | support@scratchpay.com
<https://scratchpay.com/>

Flea Control Options

YES!

Frontline

Advantage

Activyl

Revolution (by prescription only)

If you have questions about flea prevention product safety, contact us or your vet!

Make sure to only use products appropriate for your species and their weight, and to follow directions.

NO!

Hartz

Sergeants

Flea Collars

Flea Dips/Flea Baths

These products can cause nausea, vomiting, neurological side effects such as seizures, and death!

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU BRING YOUR NEW CAT HOME



Setting Up a "Safe Room"

For many cats, the best way to introduce them to your home is a little bit at a time. Change is stressful for cats, so they will need some time to adjust and decompress. We recommend setting up a quiet "safe room" for your new cat before letting her explore the rest of the house. This room should have all of your cat's essentials in it (litter box, food, water, toys, etc.) and should be cat-proofed by removing breakable objects, plants, and wires. Bedrooms and offices make great "safe rooms," and even a bathroom can work in a pinch. Avoid laundry rooms, unfinished basements, and garages, where loud sounds can scare the cat and there is a possibility for escape.

What to Expect When You Get Home

When you come home, place the carrier on the floor of the "safe room" and let your cat come out on her own. Don't force or pull her out of the carrier! Leave her carrier open so she can retreat if she feels overwhelmed. If using a cardboard carrier, leave it on its side with a blanket inside. Feel free to hang out in the room and ignore your cat at first. Speak in a calm, voice, or do a quiet activity like reading or knitting while your cat gets adjusted.

Once your cat is exploring more and opening up (this can take a few hours to a few days depending on their personality), offer treats, pets, playtime with a wand toy, or catnip. Slowly begin expanding her space, but make sure she has access to the "safe room" and is supervised at all times during these initial exploratory sessions. As she adjusts and you're sure she can't get in any trouble when you're not home, you can start leaving her unsupervised with free roam of the house.

Cat Parent Shopping Checklist

- ✓ **Toys**
- ✓ **Sturdy carrier, with a removable top and multiple points of entry**
- ✓ **Uncovered litter box and scoop**
- ✓ **Plain, unscented, clumping litter**
- ✓ **Food**
- ✓ **Hiding places (cat beds, cocoons, boxes, baskets, paper bags, etc.)**
- ✓ **Food bowl (wide enough so your cat's whiskers don't touch the sides)**
- ✓ **Water bowl or water fountain**
- ✓ **Tall, stable scratching post**
- ✓ **Horizontal scratchers**
- ✓ **Cat trees (combining windowsills, furniture, and hanging shelves can work just as well!)**

CAT PARENT FAQ



Is my cat trained to use the litter box?

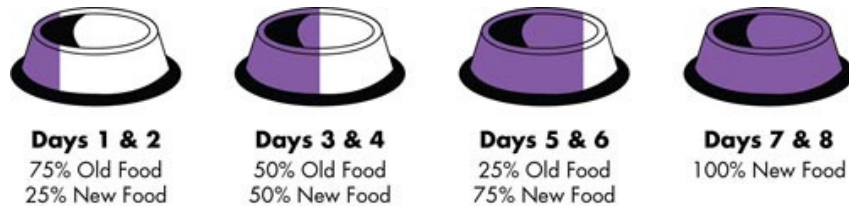
Cats have a natural instinct to bury their waste so they will want to go to the bathroom in a litter box. Please consult "Litter Box 101" in this packet for more information. For questions not addressed in this packet, feel free to reach out to adoptions@morriscatrefuge.org.

Is my cat trained not to scratch furniture?

All cats need to scratch! It is a way for them to stretch, shed loose claw sheaths, and mark their territory. Without an appropriate outlet for scratching, cats will almost definitely resort to scratching in undesirable places. For more on redirecting scratching, please read "Cat Scratch 101." Email us at adoptions@morriscatrefuge.org if you're still having trouble.

What should I feed my cat?

We will send you home with a small bag of the food your cat is already eating. Transition to her new food slowly and monitor her fecal output during this time. Reduce the amount of new food in the mix if you notice loose stool or diarrhea.



We recommend wet food as most, if not all of your cat's diet. Cats get most of their water from prey (think about it -- a mouse is 70% water!), so they don't always drink enough water. Dehydration can lead to urinary blockages and UTI's, which can be expensive to treat.

Do I need to play with my cat?

Absolutely! Cats of all ages need to play! They are skilled hunters, and since they're not working for their food that energy needs an outlet. Commercial cat toys are inexpensive, but objects like wine corks and paper balls work just as well. Interactive "wand toys" are great, too. They are more fun and provide an opportunity for bonding with your cat, even if it's just 15 minutes a day. Not having an outlet can lead to behavioral issues like overstimulation, play aggression, and destructive behavior which are usually easily solved by incorporating appropriate play into your daily routine! (Note: avoid laser pointers, as we are learning that they can be frustrating to cats)

Should my cat go outside?

Indoor cats are usually healthier and have longer lifespans. Indoor cats are less likely to get into accidents, ingest toxins, contract diseases, and get lost or stolen. If you think your cat could benefit from time outside, walking on a harness is a great way to do this while keeping her safe. Please reach out to us for resources on harness training!

Does my cat need to take baths?

It does more harm than good to bathe your cat! When a cat grooms herself, she covers herself in her scent and bathing her will wash that away which is extremely stressful. For the most part, baby wipes can clean off a cat who gets into something they shouldn't or has trouble grooming herself.

Is my cat tested for FIV/FeLV?

In recent years, shelter medicine experts have recommended discontinuing the routine testing of cats for FIV/FeLV. This is due to a number of reasons, such as the low prevalence of the disease, the lack of accuracy of in-shelter testing, and the low risk of transmission between cats. If cats did receive a test at any point, we will report these results to their adopter, but if cats have not been tested it is up to the adopter to consult with their private veterinarian to decide whether or not running a test is indicated.

LITTER BOX 101



Litter Box Basics

Cats cannot be “trained” to use a litter box because their natural instincts tell them to bury their waste. By providing them with a litter box, we are tapping into this instinct and making the box the easiest place in the home to hide their scent - no training required! Below are some basic guidelines to follow when choosing and placing the litter box in your home:

THE LITTER

Choose a plain, unscented litter. Scents can irritate a cat's sensitive nose and discourage them from using the box. Some cats have strong preferences for litter texture, so softer, sandier litter might work best.



THE LITTER BOX

Choose an uncovered box that is double the size of your cat. Covered boxes trap odors that can make the litter box unpleasant to use. A box that is too small can result in your cat missing the box!



THE LOCATION

A place that is quiet, but not secluded is ideal. Bathrooms, offices, or living rooms work well. Laundry rooms, garages, and basements aren't the best choices. They are out of the way and if loud noises spook your cat while in the box, she might find somewhere else to go. The box should also be placed away from her food and water.



NUMBER OF BOXES

As a rule, you should have as many boxes as you have cats, plus one. So one cat means two boxes. Two cats means three boxes. The boxes should be spread out around your home to give your cat convenient options where she cannot be ambushed, especially in multi-pet households.



DAILY CLEANING

Scoop the litter box 1-2 times daily and keep it filled with 2-3 inches of litter. Replace all the litter every 2-4 weeks.



Inappropriate Elimination

We will inform you of any litter box issues we are aware of, but it's often hard to get a full behavioral picture during a cat's stay in a shelter. Follow these five steps if your cat isn't using the box:

1 Don't punish your cat! One of the most common reasons for accidents is stress, so she is telling you that something is wrong! Cats don't have the mental capacity to be spiteful or to understand that eliminating outside of the box is bad. Punishments like rubbing their nose in the mess will confuse them, deteriorate your relationship, and increase their stress, leading to a cycle of even more litter box problems!

2 Head straight to the vet! Especially if you observe your cat going into the box multiple times without using it, straining/whining while trying to eliminate, or a sudden aversion to the box. Cats are great at masking symptoms of illness, so even if nothing else seems wrong, this can quickly turn into a medical emergency if left untreated.

3 Once you rule out medical issues, think about life from your cat's point of view. Have there been any changes to her life (even small ones)? Things like rearranging the furniture can stress out sensitive cats, so it's possible that this was a one-time occurrence due to a temporary stressor.

4 Clean the site of the accident in the following way:

1. If possible, relocate some urine or fecal output to the litter box.
2. Clean the site of the accident with a pet-safe, odor-eliminating, enzymatic cleaner.
3. Feed your cat a plate of treats or her next few meals in this spot (cats don't like to eliminate where they eat).
4. If you have access to Feliway spray or a diffuser, use it in the area (Feliway is a synthetic pheromone that reduces stress and can help with inappropriate elimination).

5 If the accidents continue despite ruling out medical reasons and following Step 4, the cause is likely something about the box itself. Use the "Litter Box Basics" to change one thing at a time about the litter box so you can figure out the magic combination that works for your cat. (Note: If changing the litter, make sure to change it gradually over the course of about a week by mixing the new litter into the old kind).

SUMMARY OF STEPS:

Do not punish



Head to the vet



Think about potential stressors



Neutralize the scent
Feed at the site of the accident

Spray or plug in
Feliway diffuser



Use "Litter Box Basics"
to test different combinations and determine your cat's preferences



Contact [adoptions@
morriscatrefuge.org](mailto:adoptions@morriscatrefuge.org)
or a behaviorist

CAT SCRATCH 101



Scratching Basics

All cats need to scratch! It's not a luxury and they're not destroying your favorite chair to spite you! Scratching helps them shed loose claw sheaths, stretch their muscles, and mark their territory. Without an appropriate outlet, cats will resort to scratching in undesirable places.



Another reason why cats may prefer to scratch furniture is because they love you! Cats are often perceived to be aloof and asocial, but this is a myth. In the wild, cats live in colonies and create a "group scent" which helps them communicate and identify each other. By welcoming a cat into your home, you become her colony. She shares her scent by rubbing up against you and by scratching objects that smell like you. This is why it's important to place scratching posts in socially significant spaces like bedrooms and living rooms!

Redirecting Scratching

1. If your cat scratches somewhere undesirable, don't punish her (e.g. yelling, shaking a can of pennies, or spraying her with water)! Since you can't watch her 24/7, this will only teach her to scratch the furniture when you're not around. It can also teach her to feel nervous around you and lead to stress-related behaviors like litter box avoidance.

2. "Match What They Scratch!" The best way to learn your cat's preferences is to pay attention to where she's already scratching. Ask yourself the following questions when choosing a scratcher:

- What orientation does my cat prefer?
 - Vertical, horizontal, or on an incline?
- What material does my cat prefer?
 - Sisal, wood, carpet, or cardboard?
- Is my scratching post large and stable enough to support my cat?





Steps for Persistent Scratching

- 1 Cover the area with a plastic pet scratch shield, silk fabric, or a furniture cover to remove the reward from scratching the furniture.
- 2 If possible, spray the area with Feliway or plug in a Feliway diffuser nearby.
- 3 Place a scratcher in front of the area and make it enticing by rubbing catnip into it or placing treats on or around it.
- 4 Praise your cat and offer her treats whenever she uses the new scratcher.
- 5 Move the scratcher ~1-2 in. every few days if you want to relocate it. Make sure not to move it too far from her favorite napping/playing areas or other socially significant spaces.
- 6 When the furniture is no longer the focus of her attention, you can remove the furniture covers.

Additional Tips and Tricks

Buy a couch corner scratcher. They attach easily to provide a scratching surface while protecting your furniture, and come in different colors, sizes, and styles to fit your needs and decor.

Trim your cat's claws every 2-4 weeks. This can be done at home (contact us if you have any questions!) or at a professional groomer.

Horizontal scratchers should be long enough for your cat to lay on them. Vertical scratchers should be as tall as the cat is when she stretches, and should have a wide sturdy base to prevent tipping

Ask your vet about plastic nail caps. They require replacement every 6 weeks. Cats can't retract their claws while wearing them, so discontinue use if you notice any signs of discomfort.

Should I declaw my cat if scratching continues?

Absolutely not! Declawing is not just a manicure, but a surgery in which the last bone of each toe is amputated. It can cause many more problems than shredded furniture:

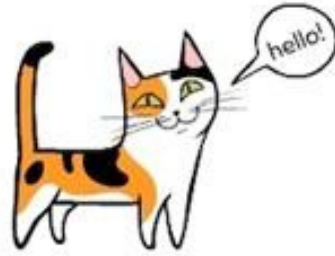
- Pain in the paws can cause litter to feel unpleasant and lead to litter box aversion
- Without claws to defend themselves, cats can resort to biting instead
- Declawing changes the way a cat's foot meets the ground, which can radiate up to the spine and cause irreversible damage as the cat ages
- After the surgery there is a high risk of infection or tissue damage in the feet

As a final resort, it is more humane to return your cat to us, than to declaw her!

CAT LANGUAGE



INTERESTED



FRIENDLY



ATTENTIVE



RELAXED



TRUSTING



FRIENDLY, RELAXED



CONTENT



CONFLICTED, CAUTIOUS



PLAYFUL



EXCITED



"THIS IS MINE"



ANXIOUS



PREDATORY



WORRIED



FRIGHTENED



THREATENED



TERRIFIED



SUPER TERRIFIED



IRRITATED



DISGUSTED



CATS need...



1. SAFE SPACES in Every Room



HIDING SPACES

Hiding is a normal response to being scared or overwhelmed. Don't disturb.



HIGH UP SPACES

with more than one way up and down.



WARM SPACES

sunny spots, heater/blankets



CONVENIENT LITTER BOX

scooped clean, in a quiet location with low foot traffic



2. MULTIPLE. Separate Resources



- **FOOD:** Feed cats in separate locations. (Cats are solitary hunters!)
- **WATER:** Some cats like their food & water in separate areas.
- **LITTER BOXES:** One box per cat plus one extra, in separate & accessible locations, not easily blocked by another cat.



3. PLAY & Predatory Behaviors



INTERACTIVE PLAY

Cats NEED predatory experiences! Simulate the hunting experience by making toys move like prey. Rotate toys to keep things interesting.



FOOD PUZZLES

Puzzle feeders for foraging and tiny frequent meals.



4. POSITIVE & CONSISTENT Social Interactions



CHIRP!

SLOW BLINK



CONSENT + CHOICE

Respect what your cat likes and doesn't like as an individual. * Learn cat body language!

STOP PETTING ME

OK



NO FORCE, NO PUNISHMENT



grabbing



spraying



shouting



scruffing



SOCIALIZE

... kittens to positive handling (between 2-7 weeks)



5. FAMILIAR SCENTS for Trust & Security



FAMILIAR BEDDING

USE SCENTS TO INTRODUCE NEW ANIMALS SAFELY

Would you like to smell your new house mate?



SCRATCHING POSTS



RUB RUB

FACIAL MARKING on things

DO NOT:

- use scented litter
- use scented cleaners
- clean away all familiar scents



6. REWARD BASED TRAINING for Good Welfare

Use what your cat likes (eg, their favorite treats) to teach new skills & provide positive experiences.



CARRIER TRAINING for travel, vet visits, & emergencies



HEALTH EXAMS



DENTAL CARE



TAKING MEDS



TAKING WEIGHT



NAIL TRIMS



BRUSHING/GROOMING

TRICKS + GAMES for fun and bonding

