



Cat Adoption Packet

April 2026

Thank you for choosing to adopt! We're so excited for you and your newly adopted family member, and we hope your life together will be happy, healthy, and full of love. With this packet, we hope to provide you with all the information you need to get your new relationship off on the right paw. By adopting one of our animals, you have joined the HSHC family as well. Please consider us a resource, and feel free to reach out to us with any questions you may have.



Below are some important contacts to keep on hand.

Humane Society of Harford County

410-836-1090

adopt@harfordshelter.org

Animal Emergency Hospital

410-420-7297

Animal Poison Control Center

888-426-4435

PET INFO

Name _____

Microchip # _____

Vet Name and # _____

Bringing Your New Cat Home



Congratulations on adopting your new cat! This is a very exciting time, but for your new cat, it can be confusing. Cats are extremely sensitive to changes in their environment, even more so than dogs. Transitioning them properly into your home is the first, and most important, step.

1. Small Start.

Set up everything your cat will need in a small space in your home like a bathroom or small bedroom, i.e., food, water, litter box, bed, toys, etc. This will allow your cat to get used to the sounds and smells of your home without being fully immersed in it. Allowing full access from the start tends to be overwhelming for a new cat, and forces them to hide until things are quiet, limiting their access to food and litter box.

2. Quality Time

During their small space introduction, go into that space and spend time with your new cat. Do not force physical interaction. Speak to them in a calm, friendly voice. Use toys and treats to engage them. If they approach to be pet, keep it short and sweet.

*If you already have a cat in the home, see step 5.

3. Small Steps

Once they are settled in their new space and are accepting your affection freely, give them access to an additional small portion of the home. Continue to do this, one small space at a time, until they have full access to the home.

4. Full Access

When your new cat has full access to your home, place their food, water, and litter box where you want them permanently. Take your cat to its things. Leave them there and allow them to find their way around the home.

5. Getting Cats Used To Each Other

When you have reached the point where your new cat is comfortable with you in their small space, it is time to start introducing them to the resident cat.

- *Scent Swapping* – Take blankets or beds that belong to each cat and switch them. This gives the cats the opportunity to get used to the other cat's scent without physical interaction.
- *Gate* – After scent swapping, place a baby gate in the doorway of the new cat's small room.
- *Positive Association* – Anytime the cats see each other, be sure to introduce tasty food or treat to make it a happy experience.

6. Together

Now it is time to give the cats time to meet without barriers.

Things To Remember:

- NEVER force the cats together. Allow them to meet/find each other on their own.
- Hissing, growling, even swatting, are completely normal behaviors when cats first meet. They are learning the new dynamic. It can take weeks, even months to fully acclimate. Just take things slowly and let the cats decide when they are comfortable doing things.



HOW TO IDENTIFY AND TREAT A COLD IN CATS



Just like humans, cats can catch colds and spread them to each other.

In cats, colds are referred to as feline upper respiratory infection, and cases can range from mild to severe.

Young kittens and senior or immunocompromised cats are particularly susceptible to URIs and require enhanced care and monitoring.

SIGNS THAT YOUR CAT HAS A URI:

- Sneezing
- Runny nose or nasal congestion
- Red, swollen or runny eyes; squinting
- Coughing; hypersalivation
- Ulcers on the tongue, lips, nose or roof of mouth
- Fever
- Lack of appetite
- Decreased energy



TREATMENT:

- Provide a quiet, relaxed space where your cat can recover. Keep them separated from other pets to reduce stress, which can weaken the immune system, and to avoid spread to other cats in your home.
- Feed canned food, warmed slightly in the microwave, to help stimulate your cat's appetite.
- Gently clean discharge from the nose and eyes with a warm moist cloth.
- Never treat your cat with human cold medications.



SIGNS YOU SHOULD CONTACT A VETERINARIAN:

- Not eating for more than 24 hours
- Green or yellow discharge from the nose
- Difficulty breathing, especially panting or breathing through an open mouth
- Dehydration
- Depressed or unresponsive
- Vomiting or diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours
- Little or no improvement after five days of care



You can protect your cats against some of the most common causes of URI by keeping them current on vaccines. Most URIs are caused by viruses, and just like with people, antibiotics don't cure viral infections. But some bacterial infections can cause URI, and cats with a viral URI can develop a secondary bacterial infection. In those cases, your veterinarian will likely prescribe an oral antibiotic and/or an antibiotic eye ointment.



→ **How serious is your cat's URI?** Check out maddiesfund.org/assets/documents/URI-scoring-chart.pdf.



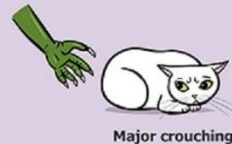
THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

It Doesn't Happen Overnight

The 3/3/3/ rule is a general guideline for the adjustment period of a pet after adoption. Every pet is unique and will adjust differently. Please have patience and allow your new pet time to settle in.

		
3 Days <i>To Decompress</i>	3 Weeks <i>To Learn Your Routine</i>	3 Months <i>To Start to Feel at Home</i>
• Feeling overwhelmed • May feel scared or unsure of what's going on • Not yet comfortable to be "himself" • May not want to eat or drink • Shuts down and/or hides under furniture • Tests the boundaries	• Starts settling in • Feels more comfortable • Realizes this could be his forever home • Figures out his environment • Gets into a routine • Lets his guard down; beginning to show his true personality • Behavior issues may appear	• Finally feels completely comfortable in his home • Begins to build trust and a true bond • Gains a complete sense of security with his new family • Sets into a routine CatBehaviorSolutions.org

Body Language of Feline Anxiety



More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



ENRICH YOUR CAT'S LIFE

THE AVERAGE LIFE SPAN OF AN INDOOR CAT IS LONGER THAN THOSE ALLOWED OUTSIDE.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE AN INDOOR ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES NATURAL BEHAVIOURS SUCH AS CLIMBING, HIDING, CHASING, JUMPING AND POUNCING.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO KEEP YOUR CAT HAPPY, HEALTHY AND SAFE INDOORS:



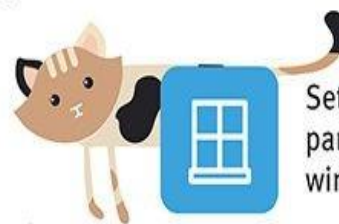
Provide a variety of toys for your cat and rotate them.



Provide a scratching post with high perches.



Set out objects or areas for your cat to explore, such as cardboard boxes or paper bags.



Set up high perches, particularly near windows.



Plant a pot of indoor greens that are safe for your cat to munch on, such as cat grass or alfalfa.



Play with your furry friend! Spend 15 to 30 minutes broken up into short sessions throughout the day.



Hide treats around the house and encourage your cat to find them.



More great tips at spca.bc.ca

WHAT INDOOR CATS MISS...

- BEING HIT BY A CAR
- BEING STOLEN
- BEING ABUSED/TORTURED BY STRANGERS
- RAIN, SNOW, VERY HOT or COLD WEATHER
- FIGHTS WITH CATS, DOGS, SKUNKS, FOXES
COYOTES, BEARS & RACCOONS.
- BEING SOLD TO LABS FOR TESTING
- BEING USED AS BAIT IN DOG FIGHTING
- DISEASE, SICKNESS & INFECTIONS
- UNWANTED PREGNANCY
- ANTIFREEZE POISONING
- FLEAS, TICKS & WORMS
- ROCK SALT BURNS
- RAT POISONING
- ANIMAL TRAPS
- GETTING LOST
- FIREWORKS

Cole & Marmalade



Introducing Dogs and Cats: Steps for Successful Cohabitation

STEP 1: Separate the Animals.

- Across the first few days, keep the animals separate and do not allow direct contact.
- You can rotate which animal has freedom and which is confined to allow each animal plenty of time to investigate the other one's scent.
- When no one is home, the dog or cat should always be securely confined so unsupervised interactions are not possible.
- Be sure both animals are calm, eating and using the litterbox normally before you move onto the next step.

STEP 2: Make Leashed Introductions.

- Allow both animals to be in the same room at the same time, but keep the dog securely leashed.
- Continue with this type of introduction until the dog is calm and ignores the cat, and the cat is calm, eating and using the litter box normally.
- When this happens, you can drop the leash but should leave it attached to the dog's harness for quick restraint, if needed.
- Continue indefinitely until both the dog and cat seem happy and relaxed around each other.
- When no one is home, the dog or cat should still be securely confined to separate areas so unsupervised interactions are not possible.

STEP 3: Allow Unsupervised Interactions.

- Unsupervised time together can occur after the cat and dog have been supervised around each other for a significant period of time (multiple days or even weeks) and you are positive they will not hurt each other.

Training Tip:

If the dog stares at the cat or the door separating the cat, try to distract him and get him to look away with treats, a happy voice or by gently guiding the dog away on a leash. Once the dog is away from the cat, try offering a treat. If he takes it, repeat this process until he is no longer focused on the cat or door.

Warning Signs:

- If the dog remains– overly focused, does not take his eyes off the cat or the door, completely ignores you or lunges suddenly as soon as the cat moves, this likely is not a match.
- If at any time the dog lunges toward, growls, snaps at or shows any aggression toward a calm, quiet, still cat, this match will probably not work out. The same holds true if a cat attacks a calm, quiet dog.
- If the cat stops eating, drinking, using the litter box or visiting with family members, she is not happy. You might want to consider finding a better match or try contacting a professional animal behaviorist for advice.



Not Using the Litter Box

Causes...

First Thing First! Get your cat to the vet when you notice they are not using the litterbox. You want to rule out any potential medical issue before anything else. Some medical issues that could cause your cat to go outside the box are:

- Bladder Infection
- Urinary Tract Infection
- Arthritis
- Blockages
- Intestinal Issues



Environmental Issues. Once you have ruled out medical issues, you can safely say, something is bothering your cat. Cats can't speak to us, so they show us they are stressed in other ways, like not using the litter box. Behavioral/ environmental causes are:

- Stress
- Not enough litter boxes
- Unclean litter box
- Changes in routine
- Location of the litter box
- Outdoor cats in your yard
- Having been declawed

Cats are extremely sensitive to changes in their environment, even more so than dogs. Pay attention to your cat. Think about any changes that may have taken place in your home or life. Pay attention to when your cat goes outside of the box and what possible stressors occurred prior to the accident. This can give you insight on how to help your cat.

Solutions...

The Litter Box Itself

- **Placement** – Put the box in a quiet spot with less traffic. If you have to move the box somewhere else, do it gradually.
- **Cleanliness** – Scoop the litter box at least once a day; more if you have more than one cat.
- **More boxes** – Cats need options. 1 more box than you have cats is the golden rule. 2 cats = 3 boxes.
- **Declawed cats** – Softer litter like pine or aspen shavings is easier on their sensitive paws.
- **Bigger box** – Cats don't want to feel cramped. Get a bigger box or remove the lid to the box.
- **Sensory Experience** – Cats are sensitive to how the litter feels and smells. Stop using liners that feel weird when they scratch. Choose a litter that has less scent.

Stress

- **Routine** – Cats need stability. Create a schedule for feeding, playtime, bedtime, etc.
- **Enrichment** – Give your cat more ways to be a cat. Add scratchers and cat trees for scratching and climbing; wand toys that encourage hunting behaviors like feather fliers; cat grass and catnip for them to snack on; get a laser pointer for them to chase.
- **Affection** – Give your cat extra time with you. More pets; more snuggles; more sitting on your lap; interactive play.

**Taking time to learn what your cat needs will make all the difference. Just be patient, and consistent, and your effort will pay off!*

Other Ways to Help the Shelter...

Volunteer! Our volunteers are indispensable! We truly could not do the work we do without them. The shelter is always looking for help in a variety of areas. Some volunteer opportunities include dog walking, cat socializing, off-site events, doing laundry, etc.

Foster! This is one of our most rewarding programs! Foster families open their hearts and homes to provide temporary care for pets who are too young to be adopted, sick, injured, not socialized, or if space becomes an issue here at the shelter. As a foster parent, you provide tender loving care, and HSHC provides for the pets' medical needs. When the pet is ready to be adopted, you bring the pet back to the shelter.

Donate! There are so many ways you can donate to make a difference in the lives of shelter animals and workers. You can make a monetary donation, a vehicle donation, tribute donations in honor of friends and loved ones, or supplies. Some of the most common items we need are:

- Dry and canned food for dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens
- Dog and cat treats
- Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR)
- Copy Paper
- Laundry Detergent
- Non-latex gloves
- Timothy hay
- Oxbow small animal food
- Petco, PetSmart, and Walmart gift cards
- Paper towels

The Humane Society of Harford County

2208 Connolly Rd. Fallston, MD 21047

410-836-1090

www.harfordshelter.org