



Humane Society of Missouri

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Moving to a New Home with Cats

Moving into a new home may be one of the most rewarding, but stressful events in anyone's life. If you have a cat, there are some things you may want to consider in order to reduce her anxiety, minimize problems, and help her settle in.

How do I manage the move to our new home?

Before the move, fit your cat with an identification collar (elasticized with a safety release mechanism) with your name and new address. This collar should be kept on at least until your cat is fully settled in your new home. It is best for all your pets to be permanently identified with a microchip and be sure to let the microchip company know your new address. If a pet does get lost, there's a much higher chance of being reunited if your pet has a microchip and your personal information associated with the microchip is kept up-to-date.



Move your cat to your new home in a safe, well-secured container, such as a cat carrier, to avoid danger of escape.

"On arrival at your new home, leave her in her carrier until a room has been unpacked and set up with familiar objects and furniture."

On arrival at your new home, leave her in her carrier until a room has been unpacked and set up with familiar objects and furniture. Once readied, let her out of her carrier but keep her confined to this room. Leave the carrier open, provide her with a litter box, and offer her favorite food (and water) in her familiar dishes. You may choose to keep her there for several days while you unpack and get things organized. It is easier for her to get used to one room rather than an entire house all at once, and she will be safe there in the chaos of unpacking. As you put items away, becoming more familiar with your new home, keep an eye out for areas where your cat could hide away or get into trouble while exploring (such as an unfinished area where she could get behind cupboards or into a wall space) and make your home as cat-safe as possible. Once you have settled and are ready to invite your cat to explore her new home, check that all the doors and windows are closed before letting her out.

Give your cat lots of extra attention and petting during this adjustment period. Try to avoid having builders or decorators working in the house at this time. Cats hate loud noises and it will inevitably make the adjustment more difficult.

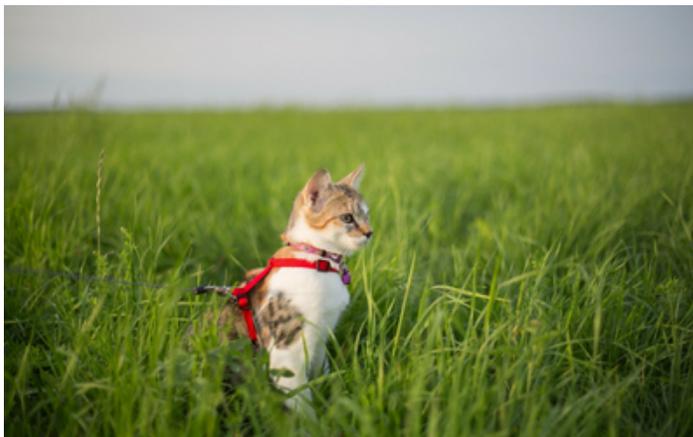
My cat is very nervous. Are there any other options?

There are many cat boarding facilities available, many with special amenities to make your cat's stay as comfortable and stress-free as possible. If your cat is very nervous, it may be wise to board her for a few days before and after the move, leaving her at the facility until you are unpacked and have set up your new home. This will avoid her being caught up in the commotion with the move. Moreover, when she comes home, you will have the time to help her settle in.

How do I introduce my cat outdoors at our new home?

As your cat becomes familiar with your new home, you may consider introducing her to the yard, but remember, cats should be kept indoors for at least 2 weeks before going outdoors. Be sure to accompany her out the first few times, preferably on a harness and leash. Initially your cat should only be let out for short, supervised periods during the day. Do not let her out at night.

When your cat is thoroughly familiar with your yard, you may decide to let her out alone. It is best not to feed her before letting her out, so she will not wander too far and will readily come to your call. It may be helpful to keep a food and water dish just inside the doorway.



Why do cats try to return to their old home?

Cats are very territorial and may be reluctant to accept a new environment as their home. If a previous home is nearby, cats may wander back and try to take up residence with the new people! If the move is further away, they may attempt to return home and get lost along the way. Keep a very close eye on your cat, and again, be sure that she is microchipped, and the microchip company has been informed of your new address.

My cat keeps returning to our old home. What can I do?

This happens because the bond with your new home is not sufficiently established. Your cat has not yet identified your new home as the source of food and shelter. It may take weeks (or months) before your cat can safely be let out unattended, with confidence that she will stay by her new home.

To increase the bond with your new home, it may help to feed her small meals several times a day. The first number of times your cat is let outdoors, fast her for about 8–12 hours, so she is hungry. Let her out for only a short time and then call her back in and feed her. For the first two weeks of going out she should only be let out once a day and be called back in no longer than thirty minutes and fed immediately.

Warn the occupants of your old home and discourage them from feeding your cat, talking to her, or otherwise encouraging her. The neighbors, even those who were previously friendly with her, should be asked to behave similarly.

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