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10 Tips For Successful Cat Adoption

- 1. Consider more than one cat.** Cats require exercise, mental stimulation, and social interaction. Two cats can provide this for each other. This is especially recommended for kittens.
- 2. Find a cat whose personality meshes with yours.** Think about your lifestyle and what kind of cat personality would best suit you and your family. Are you looking for a young, active, playful, always on the go cat? Or maybe you want an older, mellow, affectionate lap cat? Is your schedule and household ready for a kitten who may keep you up at night with playful antics and who require lots of attention and training? What kind of cat would your existing pets best interact with? Adoption counselors at the shelter can offer advice to help you match the individual cat's personality with your own.
- 3. Schedule a veterinary visit within the first few days after the adoption.** Make sure to bring along any medical records including vaccination schedules you received from the adoption center. Getting your new cat to a veterinarian early will help make sure there are no underlying illnesses or injuries and allow you to develop a plan to help your new pet live the happiest, healthiest, longest life possible.
- 4. Make sure everyone in the house is prepared for a new cat.** Visiting the shelter or animal control facility should be a family affair. When adopting a new cat to join your existing pets, discuss with the adoption facility or your veterinarian how to make a proper introduction.
- 5. Budget for both short-term and long-term costs.** A cat adopted from a shelter may be a bargain, considering many shelters provide spaying or neutering, initial vaccines, and a microchip. But make sure you're prepared for the routine expenses you'll incur throughout the cat's life such as premium healthy diets, flea and parasite preventatives, annual wellness care, dental care, grooming needs, as well as preparing for unexpected illness, injury or disease. Ask your veterinarian for suggestions regarding pet insurance to help plan for your cat's future healthcare.
- 6. Stock up on supplies before the cat arrives.** Try to create a homelike environment for your new cat right away. You'll need a litter box, litter, food and water bowls, food (we recommend using the same food they are used to eating at least during the first few weeks and then slowly transitioning them to a new food only if necessary), scratching posts, safe and stimulating toys, a cushy bed, a brush for grooming, a toothbrush, and nail clippers. Sometimes using feline pheromone sprays or diffuser products such as Feliway that work similar to the "marking" glands cats use when they rub their head and chins on people and items can help both new and existing cats feel more relaxed and accepting to change. Ask your veterinary staff how to use these most effectively.
- 7. Cat-proof your home.** A new cat will quickly teach you not to leave things lying out. Food left on the kitchen counter will teach your new friend to jump on counters for a possible lunch. Furniture may become scratching posts if a good cat post is not provided. Get rid of loose items your cat might chew on, make sure the cat isn't chewing on electrical cords, and pick up random items like paper clips, tacks, loose change, jewelry, rubber bands, hair ties, string, etc. which cats or kittens may swallow. Ask your vet for training tips to help change or manage unwanted behaviors.
- 8. Go slowly when introducing your cat to new friends and family.** It can take several weeks for a cat to relax in a new environment. It's a great idea to keep the new addition secluded in a single room with all of its food, water, litter and supplies until it's used to the new surroundings. Socialization is important, but remember - take it slow. Let your new cat decide the pace. Again, Feliway pheromone products may come in handy to help the transition.
- 9. Include your new pet in your family's emergency plan.** Add phone numbers for your veterinarian and closest 24-hour animal hospital to your "in-case-of-emergency" call list, and be sure to have a several-day supply of cat food and medications on hand.
- 10. Think twice before giving a cat as a gift.** While it's a nice thought, surprising someone with a cat doesn't allow for a "get-to-know-one-another" period. Remember, adopting a cat isn't like purchasing a household appliance or a piece of jewelry—this is a real living, breathing, and emotional being who requires a lifetime commitment to their care and well-being.