

MOVING HOUSE WITH A CAT

Why do cats try to return to their old house?

Cats are very territorial animals and they may have problems accepting a new house as their home. If the old house is nearby cats may return to their old haunts and try to take up residence with the new people living there. If the move is further away cats may just wander off and get lost.

What can I do to help my cat settle in a new home?

- Before leaving the old house cats should be fitted with an identity collar (elasticated) with the owners name and new address. This should be kept on until cats are fully settled in their new home.
- Cats should be transported in a safe well secured container such as a cat basket or cat box so there is no danger of escape.
- On arrival at the new house the cat should be left in its basket until one room has been sorted out and installed with familiar objects. The cat can then be let out but kept confined to this room and a litter tray provided. To help the cat to settle it should be fed with its favourite meal.
- Once the removal men have gone and the house is quiet check that all the doors and windows are closed and allow the cat to explore.
- Cats should be given lots of extra attention, petting and extra food during the period of settling in.
- Once the cat has begun to accept the house then it can be shown the garden. Initially it should be kept on a lead and later accompanied off the lead. When the cat is thoroughly at home it can be allowed out alone.
- Initially the cat should be let out alone only for short periods during the day. It should be hungry so that it will not wander too far and will readily respond to a call when its meal is ready.
- If possible try to avoid having builders working in the house during the initial settling in period. Cats hate this and it will inevitably make readjustment more difficult.

How long will it be before I can safely let my cat outside alone?

This is very variable depending on the disposition of the cat and how much time has been spent on making the cat feel at home; some cats take only a few days to settle down whilst others may take three weeks or more. Outdoor cats with a wide experience of change tend to cope best but even they should be kept in for a week to give them a chance to learn about their new home.

My cat is very nervous. Are there any special precautions I should take?

It may be wise to board particularly nervous cats in a friendly cattery before the packing up of the old house starts and to keep them there until everything is unpacked and positioned in the new house.

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

This happens because the bond with the new home is not sufficiently established. Measures must be taken to establish the new home as the source of food and shelter (in contrast to the old house where these things are denied him). It may take weeks or months before the cat can safely be let out unattended.

- Keep the cat indoors at the new house for about a month. Use the guidelines given above to try increase the bond with the new house. It may help to feed the cat small meals several times a day.
- When the cat is first let out it should be starved for 12 hours so that it is really hungry. It should be left out for only a short time and then called in and fed. For the first two weeks it should only be let out once a day and be called in after no longer than 30 minutes and fed immediately.
- Warn the new occupiers of your old house and discourage them from feeding the cat, talking to the cat or otherwise encouraging it. In some cases active deterrent action can be tried such as turning the cat out and throwing water at it.
- Other neighbours, even those who were previously friendly with the cat, should be asked to behave similarly.
- As a last resort consider boarding the cat for a few weeks in a cattery as far away as possible from either home to try to scramble its memory of its old home and its homing mechanism.
- If all else fails encourage the new owners of your old house or their neighbours to adopt your cat.

My cat never goes outdoors so moving house should be straightforward

Moving house can be just as traumatic for the indoor cat because it involves a complete change of personal territory. Gradual introduction one room at a time with lots of attention will help to reduce the stress of the upheaval.

THOUSANDS of cats are made strays each year through insufficient thought and care

DON'T LET YOUR CAT BE ONE OF THESE!