

All About Pets

The national pet care information service



TRAVELLING WITH YOUR CAT



THE BLUE CROSS

Britain's pet charity

For a cat travelling generally means being plucked from familiar territory, put into a container and subjected to an array of strange sights, sounds and smells. A frightened animal is likely to panic and so care has to be taken to make sure it arrives safe and well at its destination.





What is needed to prepare for a journey?

Make sure your cat is fitted with a collar of the snap fastening type and a tag with your address and telephone number. A microchip implant is even more useful because it is a permanent form of identification. For long journeys, have your cat checked by your vet to ensure it is healthy before it travels. Never leave your cat alone in the car. Also be aware of the dangers of heat stroke – the temperature inside a stationary vehicle can rise to deadly levels. Some cats are a little anxious when first travelling, but eventually the noise and motion of the car will calm them and most fall asleep. If your cat suffers from motion sickness do not feed it within an hour of the start of the journey.

What is the best sort of carrying box?

Cheap cardboard carrying boxes are not suitable for a long journey because they are not secure enough, while wire or wicker baskets expose your cat to cold draughts. The best type of carrying basket is made of plastic or fiberglass. It is strong, well ventilated, lasts for years and is easy to clean. The box should be large enough to allow your cat to stand up, turn around and see out easily.

What is needed for the journey?

Line the bottom of the carrying box with absorbent material, such as newspaper, in case your cat needs to urinate or water is spilt. Cover this with a familiar smelling blanket so that your cat can rest in comfort. A dish of water, dried food and a favourite toy may sometimes be useful on a lengthy journey. If your cat has not been in the carrying box before, introduce it well before the journey.

Car travel

The carrying box should be put inside the car on the floor or strapped securely on to a seat, not in the boot. Do not put it in the rear of a hatchback or estate car because your cat may overheat if ventilation is poor.

Air travel

Contact the airline well in advance to find out their rules for transporting cats. Make sure you arrive early for the flight as cargo is usually loaded first. The travelling box should be marked as containing a live animal with your contact details clearly displayed. Tape another piece of paper with these details to the inside of the box for extra safety. If your cat is going abroad contact your vet well before travelling to find out what vaccinations and health certificates it will need. It may take several months to complete necessary vaccinations, tests and paperwork before your cat is allowed to travel.

Is it a good idea to sedate my cat for the journey?

If your cat is a nervous traveller it may be a good idea to ask your vet for a sedative before going on a long car journey. Your vet will want to examine your cat first and may prescribe a drug that you can administer yourself. Do not sedate your cat before a flight because if it is drowsy it will not be able to adjust its posture for sudden movements and can be thrown around the box on a bumpy flight.

Moving home

Cats are highly territorial animals and are often as closely attached to their surroundings as they are to their owners. So, not surprisingly, many cats try to return to their old haunts after their owners move. Some simple precautions can help to reduce the risk of your cat becoming permanently lost.



What preparations are needed before the move?

Make sure that your cat is microchipped and fitted with a collar and name tag with your new address and telephone number. If your cat has not been neutered consider having this done – the operation will help to reduce the risk of your cat straying, but the surgery must be performed at least one month before the move.

What should I do during the move?

Your cat should be safely secured inside a travelling container and travel with you rather than being put in the removal van. If your new home is not finished or there is noisy building work going on, consider boarding your cat until this has been completed.

What should I do when we arrive?

Keep your cat inside its travelling container until the unpacking of your possessions is nearly completed and familiar objects have been set up around the house. Spraying some of the objects in the new house with a pheromone (natural cat scent) may make your cat more relaxed. Only allow your cat out of its carrier if all the windows and doors are tightly secured and allow it access to one room at a time. Give your cat a meal and a warm and comfortable place to sleep.

When can my cat be allowed outside?

If yours is an indoor cat, introduce it to the new home gradually room by room. An outdoor cat should be kept inside for several days until it has familiarised itself with the interior of your new home. If you have a garden put your cat on a lead when you first allow it outside. On the first few days, do not feed your cat for about 12 hours before letting it out – if it is hungry it's more likely to come back inside when you call. Let it out once a day initially and call it in for food after about 10 to 15 minutes.

Further information

For further information and advice on caring for your pet or horse visit www.allaboutpets.org.uk, the national pet care information service. Alternatively, you can write to us at the address below to request a list of available leaflets.

All About Pets is provided by The Blue Cross, Britain's pet charity. We rely entirely on your support to enable us to continue our vital work. Any contribution would be most welcome. Thank you.

This leaflet was produced in association with Vetstream Ltd

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Registered charity no: 224392

Photography: John Henderson • Indusfoto