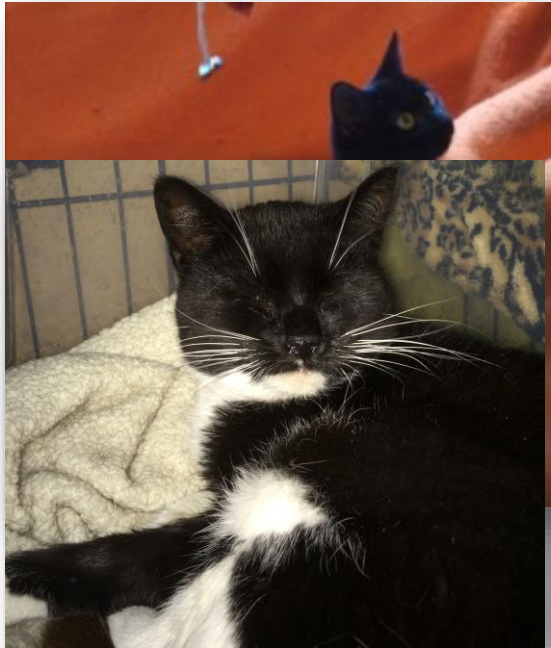


# Garston Animal Rescue

## Settling in a Timid Cat

### Be Prepared.



### Caring for your Timid Cat

When the cat first comes to your home, consider having your TV and radio at a far lower volume than usual. Maybe play something to induce a greater sense of calm, such as Classic FM.

Allow the cat to learn to trust you at her own pace.

When talking to the cat, speak in a quiet reassuring voice, so he/she gets to know your voice as quickly as possible. Blink at him/her in an exaggerated

manner. (Staring at a cat makes the cat feel threatened).

Mealtimes are often a good time to build trust. While eating distracts her attempt to gently stroke her or even brush her on her back. As she associates you with her food she will learn to trust and bond with you. Feed treats and special food from your hand so she learns to trust you.

Play with your cat using a wand type toy so that your cat can interact with you but at a safe distance.

Buy some catmint. This can be sprinkled wherever you want in the house. Most cats love it and will roll in it ecstatically. Always hide spare catmint or you'll find your entire room is covered in it! Source from herbalist or a pet shop, which does not sell animals.

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From time to time put around your home a few drops of essential Oil of Lavender as it is said to have calming properties. Try your local health food shop.

Introduce your cat gradually to the rest of the house. Allow her to explore this at night and on her own at first, as she's likely to be more confident in the middle of the night when the house is sleeping. (Remember to check all windows and outside doors are closed.) Begin by adding one room at a time, for example allow her to explore the hall, then add on another room until eventually she has become familiar with the whole house. Once she has done this at night she will be more likely to explore during the day. However, your timid cat is likely to panic when taken out of familiar surroundings so if she panics for whatever reason just calmly coax her back into her familiar room, first quietly shutting all outside doors so she cannot run outside.

Even when your timid cat appears confident in her new home always allow her access to her base room and her den, as she will seek this out whenever she feels worried or insecure.

### Timid Kittens

Hold a kitten for longer than she prefers in the interests of making her realise you are a friend. This early enforced contact is essential, otherwise if she is allowed to grow up not coming to you then you'll have problems handling her in the future when you need to take her to the vet trips or give her medication. A good toy to help build the bond between you and your kitten is the wand type, so she can learn to trust you at what she feels is a safe distance from you. Also hold out pieces of tasty food so that in time she climbs on you.

**Timid cats should be kept in the house for a minimum of 4 months.** This is because it gives the new cat a chance to trust you and to get to know your voice. So if she did disappear by mistake, then the more she knows your voice and the more she trusts you, the greater the chance of getting her back. If she did disappear please let us know. We also recommend that when you start letting her out, that this should coincide with the onset of warmer weather, and never the approach of autumn or winter, because at least if she disappeared in spring or summer there's a better chance of survival.

If your timid cat is still very nervous of you after four months then it is too early to let her out. It is better to be safe rather than take a chance and lose her. If after four months she is very relaxed, happy and confident with you, you can start to let her out, but only while you're going to be outside with her yourself for a long time. But she must only be allowed out under close supervision, and at a time when you know you have no immediate commitments. When you

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come in, bring her in too. The ideal time to allow her out is when you've plenty of time and plan on being out for a good while, eg, reading, gardening, etc. Note, if she starts to panic then do not let her out just yet as she could easily run away out of sheer fright. Do not let her out until she has been spayed. She can be spayed from around 4 months depending on veterinary advice.

### **Trips to the vet**

We recommend that the cat carrier is kept out in the room for a few days prior to the vet appointment to get her used to it. Always double-check that the carrier is completely secure when closed, and never feel tempted to open it up on the way to the vet or in the vet's waiting room. Cats when frightened have a swift personality change and will panic beyond recognition. Always use a proper cat carrier and not a cardboard carrier. Cardboard carriers are useless should it rain or the cat wets in it out of nervousness resulting in collapsed box.

### **Medication**

You may find she is reluctant to take pills, so we'd suggest you ask your Vet for 'Panacur' wormer granules because they can be sprinkled on to food, and they are tasteless and odourless. You need to put this on 'wet' food rather than dried food, which the granules would just drop through.

### **Holidays**

We recommend that people seek out a pet sitter or get a trusted cat-loving neighbour to pop in. Most cats are distressed at being put in a strange cattery. They do not know you are coming back for them – and for a nervous cat it is obviously far worse. We do not recommend cats going to stay with friends/relatives during your absence because if they escape then they are in a strange place and can become lost in an unfamiliar area. Many of the telephone calls we get about lost cats are about those lost in precisely these circumstances, and we are horrified at the thought of a cat lost and badly frightened in an area that she does not even know. The other advantage of a trusted friend or neighbour popping in is your home will be more secure.

Consider rescuing a very friendly kitten as a companion for your cat. This may provide much-needed reassurance for your cat who will hopefully pick up the positive vibes from the kitten. At any rate, your cat will feel a lot more settled when he/she has someone of her own species to talk to. Ask us for our Integration Advice Sheet.

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If all else fails, consult your Vet who could possibly refer you to a behaviourist. Try the two books entitled 'Have Fun With Your Cat' and 'It's a Cat's Life!' both by Erica Peachey, available at Alder Vets.

And finally, as with all animals, keep your washer, drier and cooker firmly closed. Cats do like to jump in small places and fall asleep not realising how dangerous this habit is. Always check your cat has not jumped in each time you switch them on.