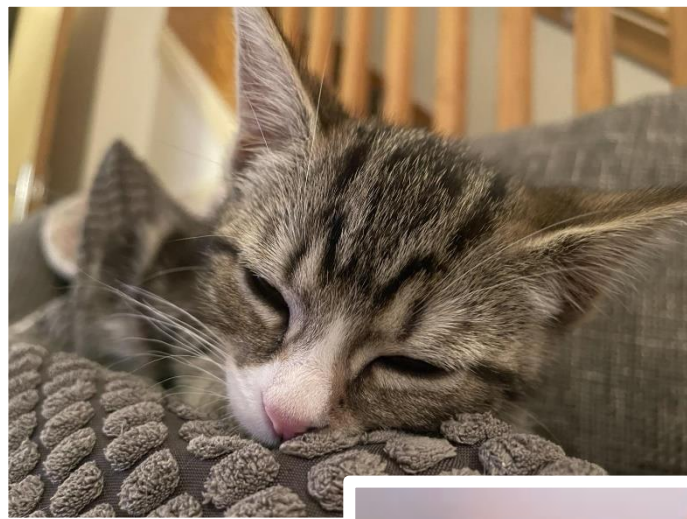


# ADOPTER HANDBOOK



<https://avidsangelscatrescue.co.uk>

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**COMPASSION IN ACTION**



# **ADOPTER HANDBOOK**

At Avid's Angels Cat Rescue, we believe that every cat deserves a loving and caring forever home. Our mission is to rescue, rehabilitate and rehome cats in need. We have a team of dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure that every cat that comes into our care receives the love and attention they deserve.

Adopting a cat is a commitment that brings immeasurable joy and fulfilment. This handbook aims to equip you with the knowledge and resources necessary to ensure a successful and fulfilling adoption journey. Prepare yourself for a lifetime of love, companionship, and endless purrs from your new feline family member.

***Congratulations on your adoption!***

**Welcome to our Adopter Handbook!**

By opening your heart and home to a rescue cat, you are playing a vital role in saving and improving the lives of cats in need.

This handbook is designed to help you navigate the exciting journey of adopting a cat and provide you with the knowledge and tools necessary to create a loving and fulfilling relationship with your new furry companion.

Whether you're a first-time cat owner or an experienced pet parent, this handbook will serve as a comprehensive resource to ensure a smooth transition for both you and your new feline friend.

***Thank you!***

**From the Avid's Angels Cat Rescue Team**

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### **Please Note**

This Adopter Handbook is specifically designed for those who have adopted from Avid's Angels Cat Rescue (AACR). It aims to provide comprehensive information and guidance on cat adoption, ensuring their wellbeing, and successful placement of cats in forever homes. Remember to seek assistance from our experienced volunteers when needed. Your dedication and compassion make a significant difference in the lives of these cats in need.

# 1) WHY ADOPTING A CAT IS A WONDERFUL DECISION

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*Welcoming a cat into your life can be a truly rewarding experience. Cats are known for their independence, playfulness, and affectionate nature, making them excellent companions. In this chapter, we will explore the numerous benefits of cat adoption and why it is a wonderful decision.*

## 1.1 Companionship and emotional support

Cats have a special way of providing companionship and emotional support to their owners. Their presence can bring comfort, reduce stress, and alleviate feelings of loneliness. Whether you're seeking a snuggle buddy or a listening ear, cats are excellent at offering unconditional love and support.

## 1.2 Saving a life

By adopting a cat, you are giving a loving home to an animal in need. Shelters and rescue organisations are often overcrowded, and many cats are in search of their forever homes. By choosing adoption, you are directly contributing to reducing pet overpopulation and providing a second chance to a deserving feline friend.

## 1.3 Health benefits

Studies have shown that owning a cat can have positive effects on your health. The gentle purring of a cat has a calming effect and can help lower blood pressure and reduce stress levels. Additionally, interacting with cats can boost your mood, promote relaxation, and even strengthen your immune system.

## 1.4 Entertainment and playfulness

Cats are naturally curious and playful creatures. They provide endless entertainment with their acrobatic antics, amusing behaviours, and love for interactive play. Watching your cat explore, chase toys, and engage in playtime can bring joy and laughter to your daily life.

## 1.5 Low maintenance and space requirements

Compared to some other pets, cats are relatively low maintenance. They are independent animals that can adapt well to various living spaces. Cats are known for their self-grooming habits, and they often require less attention than some other pets, making them a suitable choice for busy individuals or families.

## 1.6 Teaching responsibility and compassion

For families with children, adopting a cat can be an excellent opportunity to teach responsibility and compassion. Caring for a cat involves feeding, grooming, and providing a safe environment, which instils a sense of responsibility in children. It also teaches empathy and the importance of nurturing and caring for another living being.

## 1.7 Lifelong companionship

Cats can form deep bonds with their owners, providing a source of companionship that can last for many years. Their long lifespan allows for a lasting relationship, and the love and loyalty they offer can bring immense joy throughout your life.

## 2) PREPARING FOR ADOPTION

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*Before bringing a cat into your home, it is important to assess your lifestyle and make necessary preparations to create a safe and comfortable environment for your new feline friend.*

*In this chapter, we will explore the key factors to consider when preparing for cat adoption.*

### 2.1 Evaluating your lifestyle and commitment

Cats have individual needs and personalities, and it is essential to ensure that your lifestyle aligns with their requirements. Consider factors such as your daily schedule, work commitments, and social activities. Cats generally require daily interaction, playtime, and companionship. Assess your ability to provide the necessary time and attention to meet their needs and provide a nurturing environment.

### 2.2 Creating a safe and cat-friendly environment

Cats are naturally curious and agile creatures, so it is crucial to create a safe environment for them to explore.

*Take the following steps to cat-proof your home:*

- Secure all potential hazards, such as toxic plants, chemicals, electrical cords, and small objects that can be swallowed.
- Install sturdy screens on windows to prevent accidental falls.
- Create designated spaces for scratching, climbing, and resting, such as scratching posts, cat trees, and cosy beds.
- Provide hiding spots and vertical spaces to fulfil their natural instincts.

### 2.3 Gathering essential supplies

To ensure a smooth transition for your new cat, gather the necessary supplies before bringing them home.

*Some essential items include:*

- Litter tray and litter
- Food and water bowls
- High-quality cat food appropriate for their age and health
- Cat toys for mental stimulation and play
- Collar with identification tags and microchip for identification purposes
- Scratching posts or pads
- Cat bed or blankets for comfort
- Grooming tools, such as a brush or comb

Consider your cat's specific needs and preferences when selecting these supplies. Having everything prepared in advance will help create a stress-free environment for your new furry friend.



## 3) WELCOMING YOUR NEW CAT

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*Bringing a new cat into your home is an exciting and important milestone.*

*To ensure a smooth transition and a positive experience for both you and your cat, this chapter will guide you through the necessary steps to create a welcoming environment and help your new feline friend feel comfortable in their new home.*

### 3.1 Welcoming your newly-adopted cat

When you bring your new cat home, s/he may be frightened or unsure about what's happening, so it's important not to overwhelm him/her.

It's essential to give the cat a warm welcome and show him/her that they are safe and loved. Speak to him/her softly and calmly and allow the cat to explore its new surroundings gradually. Start by confining him/her to a 'safe space' initially, gradually allowing him/her to explore the rest of your home.

Provide hiding places, comfortable bedding and a familiar scent to help ease their transition and feel safe.

### 3.2 Creating a 'safe space' for the adjustment period

Designate a specific area in your home as a 'safe space' for your new cat – a spare room is ideal initially as this helps to provide a controlled and comfortable environment for the cat to settle in. This area should be easily accessible, quiet and provide the necessary amenities such as food and water bowls, litter tray, comfortable bedding, toys and scratching posts to keep your new cat healthy and happy. Having a separate space helps the cat to adjust and provides a sense of security.

Another reason that we recommend a small room is because cats will typically hide in new environments. It's not uncommon for a new cat to hide underneath a bed or in a dark, quiet place for the first couple of days. Isolating your new cat when you first take him/her home allows you to know what room s/he is in and helps you to monitor eating, drinking and litter habits more closely.





### 3.3 Introducing other pets and family members

If you have other family members or existing pets, introductions should be done gradually and under controlled circumstances. Allow them to interact with the new cat in a calm and supervised manner. Give each individual time to adjust and get comfortable with one another's scents before allowing direct interactions. Be patient and provide positive reinforcement during the introduction process.

#### 3.3.1 Cat introductions

If you have personal pets who are cats, you'll need to introduce them to your new cat. Even if you know the cat you have adopted is good with other cats, you'll want to do the introductions gradually. So, before bringing your new cat home, create a separate 'safe space' for him/her. Your other cats should have their own separate territory.

Over a one to two-week period, let the cats smell each other through a closed door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the areas will help them get used to each other's smells.

The next step is to allow them to see each other through a baby gate or a door that is propped open a couple of inches. If the cats are interested in each other and seem comfortable, allow them to meet. Open the door to the rooms between the cats and observe them closely.

If any cat shows signs of significant stress or aggression, separate them again and introduce them more slowly. Monitor their behaviour and intervene if any signs of aggression or stress arise. Supervise initial meetings and gradually increase the duration and proximity of their interactions over time.

#### 3.3.2 Dog introductions

If you have a personal pet who's a dog, you'll need to make the introduction to your new cat carefully and safely.

Start by keeping them separated at first. As mentioned above, before you bring your new cat home, create a separate 'safe space' for him/her and equip it with food, water, a scratching post, a litter tray and comfortable resting places.

Over a one to two-week period, let the dog and cat smell each other through the door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the dog's area and the cat's area will help them get used to each other's smells.

After a week or two, do the face-to-face introduction. Keeping your dog on lead, allow your new cat out in the same area. (If you have more than one dog, introduce one at a time.)

Do not allow the dog to charge or run directly up to the cat. Try to distract the dog as best you can so that the cat has the chance to approach without fear.

Watch the body language of each animal closely and don't continue the interaction if either pet becomes over-stimulated or aggressive. The idea is to keep the interactions positive, safe and controlled. Never leave your dog unsupervised around the new cat.

### 3.4 Managing multi-cat dynamics

If adopting multiple cats, observe their interactions and ensure they have enough resources, such as litter trays, food bowls and resting spots.

Watch for any signs of tension or bullying and address any issues promptly.

Provide equal attention and individualised care for each cat.

### 3.5 Children and cats

Since we don't always know a cat's history or tolerance level for different types of people and activities, please teach your children how to act responsibly and respectfully around your new cat.

We will do our best to place you with an appropriate animal for your home situation, but you should still supervise all interactions between children and your new cat.

*Key things to remind your children:*

- Always leave the cat alone when s/he is eating or sleeping. Some cats may nip or bite if bothered while eating or startled while sleeping.
- Don't tease the cat.
- Don't chase the cat around the house as it may scare him/her.
- Pick up the cat only when an adult is there to help. Cats can become scared when picked up, and they sometimes scratch with their sharp nails, even though they don't mean to cause harm.
- Be careful when opening and closing doors so as not to accidentally let the cat outside.

### 3.6 Establishing routines and boundaries

When you first take your new cat home, take care not to overwhelm him/her with too many new experiences all at once. Moving to a new environment is stressful for many cats, so keep introductions to people and animals to a minimum during the first couple of weeks after you bring your new cat home. It also helps to establish a daily routine of regularly scheduled feedings and play times.

Play time provides stimulation, encourages socialisation and releases excess energy, so try to provide your new cat with at least one or two play sessions per day. The length of the play sessions will vary, depending on the cat's age and health. Try a variety of toys (balls, squeaky toys, feather toys, etc.) to see which ones your cat prefers. Cat toys don't have to be fancy or expensive. Cats often enjoy playing with something as simple as a paper bag (remove the handles for safety) or a box with holes cut in the sides.

Providing enrichment activities, such as toys, puzzles and scratching posts, will keep him/her mentally stimulated and physically active. Rotate toys regularly to prevent boredom.



### **3.7 Socialising and bonding**

Every cat is unique, and the time it takes for them to adjust and bond with their new family can vary. Spend quality time with your cat, engaging in gentle play, providing affection, and offering treats as positive reinforcement. This will help them feel comfortable and loved. Respect their boundaries and allow them to approach you on their terms. Building trust takes time, but it will help to create a strong foundation for their future. Patience, consistency and understanding are key in building a strong bond and helping them feel secure.

#### **3.7.1 Socialising shy or fearful cats**

If your new cat is shy or fearful, gradually expose him/her to positive experiences and social interactions. Use treats, gentle handling and calm environments to help build their confidence. Give them the option to retreat to safe spaces when needed.

### **3.8 Gradual exploration of the home**

After your new cat has become comfortable in their confined space, gradually introduce them to the rest of your home. Open the door of their 'safe space' and allow them to explore gradually and provide them with plenty of positive reinforcement and treats. Provide gentle interaction, patience and reassurance. Gradually introduce them to new experiences, people and other pets, ensuring their comfort and wellbeing throughout the process. Supervise their exploration to ensure their safety and provide reassurance if they show signs of hesitation or anxiety.

During the first couple of weeks, minimise the people and pet introductions to your new cat, so that they are only meeting immediate family and your personal pets.

Don't leave your new cat unattended in your home with your personal pets until you are comfortable that all the animals can interact safely.



## 4) HEALTH, NUTRITION AND GROOMING

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*Providing proper care and meeting the needs of your cat is essential for their overall wellbeing and happiness.*

*In this chapter, we will delve into important aspects of cat care, including nutrition, grooming, exercise, and maintaining their emotional health.*

### 4.1 Scheduling vet visits and vaccinations

Regular vet visits are essential for preventive care and early detection of potential health issues.

*Here's what you need to know about scheduling and preparing for these visits:*

- **Initial visit**

When you first bring your cat home, schedule an initial visit with a vet. This visit allows the vet to conduct a thorough examination, assess your cat's overall health, and discuss essential preventive measures.

- **Routine check-ups**

After the initial visit, schedule regular check-ups according to your vet's recommendation. These routine visits typically occur annually, but may vary based on your cat's age and health condition. Regular check-ups help monitor your cat's health, detect any underlying issues, and ensure they are up-to-date with necessary vaccinations.

- **Vaccination schedule**

Your vet will provide a vaccination schedule tailored to your cat's needs. Vaccinations protect your cat from various contagious and potentially life-threatening diseases. Ensure that your cat receives core vaccinations, such as those for rabies and feline distemper, as well as any additional vaccines recommended based on their lifestyle and potential exposure risks.

- **Preparing for veterinary visits**

Before each vet, make a list of any concerns or questions you have about your cat's health. Take your cat's medical history, including vaccination records, to provide a comprehensive overview of their healthcare. It's also helpful to bring a familiar blanket or toy to help your cat feel more comfortable during the visit.



### 4.1.1 Vaccinations

Vaccinations play a vital role in safeguarding your cat's health and preventing the spread of diseases. Here's what you should know about vaccinations for your cat:

- **Core vaccinations**

Core vaccinations are essential for all cats and protect against common and potentially severe diseases. These usually include vaccinations for rabies, feline parvovirus, and feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia (FVRCP). Follow your vet's recommended schedule for core vaccinations.

- **Non-core vaccinations**

Non-core vaccinations may be recommended based on your cat's lifestyle and potential exposure risks. These include vaccinations for diseases such as feline leukaemia virus (FeLV), feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), and bordetella. Discuss with your veterinarian which non-core vaccinations are appropriate for your cat.

- **Kitten vaccinations**

Kittens require a series of vaccinations to establish immunity. The initial vaccination series typically starts around 6 to 8 weeks of age and continues every 3 to 4 weeks until they are 16 weeks old. Follow your vet's guidance on the appropriate vaccination schedule for your kitten.

- **Vaccine side effects**

Vaccinations are generally safe, but some cats may experience mild side effects, such as temporary lethargy or soreness at the injection site. Severe reactions are rare but possible. Contact your vet if you notice any concerning symptoms following vaccination.

- **Vaccine boosters**

Some vaccinations require periodic booster shots to maintain immunity. Follow your vet's recommendation for booster shots to ensure continued protection for your cat.

Remember, vaccinations not only protect your cat but also contribute to the overall health of the feline population by preventing the spread of contagious diseases.



### 4.2 Providing a nutritious and balanced diet

A balanced and nutritious diet is vital for your cat's health. Consult with your veterinarian to determine the appropriate type and amount of food for your cat based on their age, weight, and any specific dietary requirements. Provide fresh water at all times and establish a feeding schedule that suits their needs. Avoid overfeeding and monitor their weight to prevent obesity, which can lead to various health issues.

You can give your cat treats (unless s/he has known allergies, of course); giving treats helps you and your new cat to bond with each other.

Keep in mind that some human foods and house plants (which cats like to chew on) are poisonous for cats, so remove any plants or food from areas that your new cat can access.

## 4.3 Regular exercise and mental stimulation

### 4.3.1 Benefits of exercise

Regular exercise offers numerous benefits for your cat's physical and mental health.

*Here are some key advantages of providing your cat with regular exercise:*

- **Weight management**

Exercise helps prevent obesity and maintain a healthy weight for your cat. Obesity can lead to various health issues, including diabetes, arthritis, and cardiovascular problems.

- **Muscle tone and strength**

Engaging in physical activity helps your cat develop strong muscles and maintain good muscle tone. It improves their agility, balance, and overall physical capabilities.

- **Energy release**

Cats have natural instincts to hunt and play. Regular exercise allows them to release pent-up energy, reducing the likelihood of behavioural problems caused by boredom or excess energy.

- **Mental stimulation**

Exercise provides mental stimulation by allowing your cat to engage their natural hunting and play behaviours. It keeps their minds sharp, wards off boredom, and promotes a healthy and happy disposition.

### 4.3.2 Types of exercise

There are various ways to incorporate exercise into your cat's routine.

*Here are a few ideas:*

- **Interactive play**

Engage your cat in interactive play sessions using toys such as feather wands, laser pointers, or interactive treat puzzles. This allows them to chase, pounce, and engage their natural hunting instincts.

- **Environmental enrichment**

Create an environment that encourages physical activity. Provide cat trees, scratching posts, climbing shelves, or tunnels for your cat to explore and enjoy.

- **Rotating toys**

Keep your cat's interest piqued by rotating their toys regularly. Introduce new toys periodically to provide novelty and prevent boredom.

- **Playdates**

If your cat is sociable and enjoys the company of other felines, consider arranging playdates with a friendly cat or supervised interactions.

- **Outdoor enclosures**

If you have a safe and secure outdoor enclosure (catio), allow your cat supervised access to enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of the outdoors while remaining protected.



### 4.3.3 Mental stimulation

In addition to physical exercise, mental stimulation is crucial for your cat's wellbeing.

*Here are some ways to provide mental enrichment:*

- **Puzzle toys**

Use puzzle toys or treat-dispensing toys that require problem-solving skills to access treats or food. This stimulates your cat's mental abilities and keeps them entertained.

- **Training sessions**

Cats can be trained to perform simple tricks or commands using positive reinforcement techniques. Training sessions provide mental stimulation and strengthen the bond between you and your cat.

- **Interactive feeding**

Instead of placing food in a regular bowl, consider using interactive feeding toys or hiding small portions of food around the house for your cat to discover. This engages their natural foraging instincts and adds mental stimulation to mealtime.

- **Environmental changes**

Occasionally rearrange furniture or provide new hiding spots or elevated areas for your cat to explore. This change in environment can spark curiosity and mental engagement.



### 4.4 Grooming and hygiene practices

#### 4.4.1 Coat care

Proper coat care is crucial for maintaining a healthy and beautiful coat for your cat.

*Here are some grooming practices to keep in mind:*

- **Brushing**

Regular brushing helps remove loose hair, prevents matting, and reduces the formation of hairballs. The frequency of brushing depends on your cat's coat length and type. Long-haired cats may require daily brushing, while short-haired cats can be brushed a few times a week.

- **Bathing**

Cats are generally self-groomers and rarely require bathing. However, certain situations may warrant a bath, such as if your cat gets into something dirty or sticky. Use a cat-specific shampoo and follow proper bathing techniques to ensure your cat's comfort and safety.

- **Mat prevention**

Regular brushing helps prevent mats from forming in your cat's coat. If you encounter mats, gently work them out with a wide-toothed comb or seek professional grooming assistance if they are severe or difficult to remove.

- **Fur hygiene**

Regularly check your cat's fur for any signs of pests, such as fleas or ticks. Use cat-safe pest control products recommended by your vet if necessary. Keep the fur around the anus and genitals clean by gently wiping with a damp cloth if needed.

#### 4.4.2 Nail trimming

Trimming your cat's nails is important for their comfort and to prevent scratching-related issues.

*Here are some tips for nail trimming:*

- **Acclimatisation**

Start by getting your cat accustomed to having their paws touched and gently manipulated. Offer treats and positive reinforcement during this process to create a positive association.

- **Proper tools**

Use cat-specific nail clippers or a nail grinder. Ensure they are clean and sharp to make the process smoother and reduce the risk of splitting or crushing the nails.

- **Trimming technique**

Take caution when trimming the nails, avoiding the quick (the sensitive area with blood vessels and nerves). Trim only the pointed tip of each nail, or consider seeking guidance from a vet or professional groomer if you're uncertain.

- **Frequency**

The frequency of nail trimming varies depending on your cat's lifestyle and activity level. Indoor cats may require more frequent trimming compared to outdoor cats who naturally wear down their nails.



#### 4.4.3 Dental care

Maintaining good dental hygiene is essential for your cat's oral health and overall well-being.

*Here's how you can promote dental care:*

- **Brushing**

Introduce regular tooth brushing early in your cat's life using a cat-specific toothbrush and toothpaste. Start with gentle brushing on the outer surfaces of the teeth and gradually progress to include the inner surfaces.

- **Dental treats and toys**

Provide dental treats or toys designed to promote oral health. These products can help reduce plaque build-up and freshen your cat's breath.

- **Veterinary dental examinations**

Schedule regular dental check-ups with your vet to assess your cat's dental health, perform professional cleanings when necessary, and address any dental issues.



#### 4.4.4 Ear and eye cleaning

Regular cleaning of your cat's ears and eyes helps prevent infections and maintain their wellbeing.

*Here are some guidelines:*

- **Ear cleaning**

Use a cat-specific ear cleaner and a cotton ball or pad to gently clean the visible parts of your cat's ears. Avoid inserting anything deep into the ear canal, as it can cause damage.

- **Eye cleaning**

Use a soft, damp cloth or a cat-specific eye cleaner to wipe away any discharge or debris from the corners of your cat's eyes. Be gentle and avoid direct contact with the eye.

#### 4.5 Litter tray maintenance

Set up litter trays in a quiet and easily accessible area. Use unscented litter and choose a litter tray that suits your cat's size and preferences. Scoop the litter trays daily and perform a thorough clean regularly. When you clean the litter tray, use a mild soap (such as dishwashing soap), not strong-smelling detergents or ammonia.

If your new cat requires litter tray training, provide a separate litter tray and gradually guide them to use it. Use positive reinforcement and praise when they use the litter tray correctly.

Provide an adequate number of litter trays in multiple locations, especially in households with multiple cats, to prevent litter tray aversion or competition. Keep in mind that a cat may miss the litter box if s/he has a medical issue like diarrhoea or s/he may avoid the box if s/he has a urinary tract infection, which causes pain when urinating.

If your new cat has an accident, don't discipline or punish him/her. It will only teach him/her to fear and mistrust you. Clean up all accidents with an enzymatic cleaner. Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution are two products containing natural enzymes that tackle tough stains and odours and remove them permanently.



## 5) UNDERSTANDING CAT BEHAVIOUR

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*Understanding cat behaviour is key to building a strong bond with your feline companion and effectively managing their behaviour.*

*In this chapter, we will explore common cat behaviours, communication cues, and strategies for addressing behavioural issues.*

### 5.1 Body language and communication

Cats communicate through various body language cues. Understanding these cues can help you interpret their emotions and needs. By observing their body language, you can respond appropriately and provide a comfortable environment.

*Here are some common cat body language signals:*

- **Tail position**

*Upright and straight:* indicates a friendly, content, and confident cat.

*Low and tucked between the legs:* sign of fear, anxiety, or submission.

*Puffed up tail:* suggests aggression or extreme fear.

- **Ears**

*Forward and upright:* shows attentiveness and curiosity.

*Slightly back or flattened against the head:* indicates fear, anxiety, or aggression.

- **Eyes**

*Dilated pupils:* could mean excitement, fear, or aggression.

*Half-closed or blinking slowly:* indicates relaxation and trust.

*Staring with unblinking eyes:* may be a sign of aggression or an attempt to assert dominance.

- **Body posture**

*Relaxed, with a loose body:* suggests a calm and content cat.

*Arched back, bristled fur, and sideways posture:* indicates fear, aggression, or defensiveness.

*Crouched posture with tucked legs:* indicates submission or fear.

- **Vocalisations**

*Purring:* usually signifies contentment and relaxation.

*Meowing:* can indicate various needs such as hunger, attention, or discomfort.

*Hissing, growling, or yowling:* signs of fear, anger, or aggression.

- **Facial expressions**

*Slow blinking or squinting:* often a friendly gesture indicating trust and relaxation.

*Stiff facial muscles, wide eyes, and open mouth:* indicates fear, aggression, or stress.



## 5.2 Promoting positive reinforcement training

Help your cat to develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement, which builds a bond of trust between you and your cat. The basic idea is to reward desirable behaviours and ignore unwanted behaviours. Use rewards, such as treats or praise, to encourage desired behaviours. Patience, consistency, and reward-based training techniques will help shape your cat's behaviour in a positive and loving manner.

Avoid punishment or negative reinforcement, as it can lead to fear and aggression. If the cat is doing something undesirable, endeavour to distract him/her before the behaviour occurs. It is also important for everyone in the home to stick to the rules established for your new cat, which will help him/her to learn faster.

Train your cat to respond to important cues, such as their name or a recall command, to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Teach basic commands, such as 'sit' or 'come', using positive reinforcement methods. Reward desired behaviours with treats, praise and play.

Training your cat strengthens the bond between you and enhances their mental stimulation.



## 5.3 Addressing common behavioural issues

### 5.3.1 Litter tray problems

Litter tray problems, such as inappropriate urination or defecation, can be frustrating.

*Here's how to address and prevent litter tray issues:*

- **Cleanliness**

Ensure the litter tray is cleaned regularly, as cats are clean animals and may avoid using a dirty tray. Scoop the litter daily and completely change the litter at least once a week.

- **Number and placement**

Provide an adequate number of litter trays in your home, especially in multi-cat households. The general rule is one litter tray per cat, plus an extra. Place the litter trays in quiet, easily accessible locations away from loud noises or high-traffic areas.

- **Litter preference**

Cats may have preferences for certain types of litter. Experiment with different litter types (clumping, non-clumping, scented, unscented) to find the one your cat prefers.

- **Medical issues**

In some cases, litter tray problems can be a sign of underlying medical issues. If your cat's litter tray behaviour suddenly changes, consult with your vet to rule out any health concerns.

### 5.3.2. Scratching furniture

Scratching is a natural behaviour for cats, serving to mark territory, stretch their muscles, and maintain healthy claws. Scratching can lead to damage to furniture.

*Here's how to redirect their scratching behaviour:*

- **Provide alternatives**

Offer a variety of scratching posts and boards made of different materials (sisal, cardboard, carpet) to determine your cat's preference. Place them near the furniture your cat tends to scratch and encourage their use with positive reinforcement and treats.

- **Deterrents**

Make the furniture less appealing for scratching by using deterrents like double-sided tape, aluminium foil, or pet-safe sprays with unpleasant scents. Be sure to provide attractive alternatives nearby.

- **Nail trimming**

Regular nail trimming helps reduce the damage caused by scratching. Trim your cat's nails or use nail caps to prevent scratching-related issues.



### 5.3.3 Aggression

Cat aggression can occur due to various reasons, including fear, territorial behaviour, or redirected aggression.

*Here are some tips for managing and addressing aggression:*

- **Identify triggers**

Observe and identify the triggers that lead to aggression in your cat. This can help you avoid or minimise those triggers and better manage their behaviour.

- **Safe spaces**

Provide your cat with safe spaces, such as cat trees or elevated shelves, where they can retreat and feel secure when they're feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

- **Behaviour modification**

Consult with a professional animal behaviourist or vet who can assess your cat's aggression and provide guidance on behaviour modification techniques, including positive reinforcement training.

- **Environmental enrichment**

Increase mental and physical stimulation in your cat's environment through interactive play, puzzle toys, and environmental changes. This can help alleviate boredom and reduce aggressive behaviours.

### 5.3.4 Excessive meowing

Excessive meowing can be a nuisance, especially if it occurs at night or during inappropriate times.

*Here's how to address this behaviour:*

- **Attention and interaction**

Ensure your cat receives plenty of attention, playtime, and interactive sessions throughout the day to fulfil their social and mental needs. Engage them in activities that keep them stimulated and entertained.

- **Environmental enrichment**

Provide environmental enrichment, such as scratching posts, toys, and vertical spaces, to keep your cat mentally and physically engaged.

- **Ignore attention-seeking meowing**

If your cat meows for attention, avoid reinforcing the behaviour by ignoring them until they are calm and quiet. Reward quiet behaviour with praise or treats.

- **Medical evaluation**

Excessive meowing can sometimes be a sign of an underlying medical issue. If the behaviour persists despite your efforts, consult with your vet to rule out any health problems.



## 6) PLAYTIME, TOYS, AND QUALITY TIME

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*Play is not only a source of entertainment for cats but also a vital component in strengthening the bond between you and your feline friend.*

*In this chapter, we will explore the significance of play, the importance of choosing appropriate toys, and the benefits of spending quality time with your cat through play.*

### 6.1 The importance of play

Play is a natural behaviour for cats, and it serves multiple purposes. It helps them expend energy, maintain physical fitness, and engage their hunting instincts. Playtime also provides mental stimulation, preventing boredom and promoting a healthy mind. Furthermore, interactive play enhances the bond between you and your cat, fostering trust, and building a deeper connection.

#### 6.1.1 Physical exercise and energy release

Play provides cats with the opportunity to engage in physical exercise and release pent-up energy. It helps them maintain a healthy weight, build strong muscles, and improve their agility and co-ordination. Regular play sessions can prevent obesity-related health issues and keep your cat physically fit.

#### 6.1.2 Mental stimulation and enrichment

Playtime offers mental stimulation and enrichment for your cat. It allows them to engage their natural hunting instincts, problem-solving skills, and curiosity. Interactive play sessions with toys or games help keep their minds sharp, prevent boredom, and provide a sense of fulfilment.

#### 6.1.3 Stress relief and behaviour management

Play is an excellent way for cats to relieve stress and anxiety. It can help reduce unwanted behaviours caused by boredom or excess energy, such as scratching furniture, aggression, or excessive meowing. By providing a constructive outlet for their energy, playtime promotes a calm and balanced temperament.



## 6.2 Choosing appropriate toys and play techniques

### 6.2.1. Toy selection

Choosing the right toys is essential for safe and enjoyable play sessions with your cat. Consider the following factors when selecting toys:

- **Interactive toys**

Opt for interactive toys that allow you to engage with your cat during playtime. Toys such as feather wands, laser pointers, or treat puzzles can mimic the movements of prey and stimulate your cat's hunting instincts.

- **Puzzle toys**

Puzzle toys, such as treat-dispensing toys or puzzle feeders, provide mental stimulation for your cat. These toys require problem-solving skills to access treats or food, keeping their minds active and engaged.

- **Variety**

Provide a variety of toys to keep your cat's interest piqued. Experiment with different textures, sizes, and sounds to find what your cat enjoys most. Some cats prefer toys they can bat around, while others may prefer toys they can carry or pounce on.

- **Safety**

Ensure that the toys you choose are safe for your cat. Avoid toys with small parts that could be easily swallowed or pose a choking hazard. Check toys regularly for wear and tear, and replace them when necessary.



## 6.2.2 Engaging in quality playtime

Make playtime a regular part of your daily routine to strengthen the bond with your cat. Here are some tips for engaging in quality playtime:

- **Find the right time**

Cats have their preferred times of day for play. Observe when your cat is most active and schedule play sessions accordingly. Some cats may be more active during the early morning or evening hours.

- **Create a playful environment**

Designate a specific play area where you and your cat can engage in playtime without distractions. Clear the area of any hazards or breakable objects, ensuring a safe and enjoyable space.

- **Follow your cat's lead**

Observe your cat's play style and adjust your interactions accordingly. Some cats enjoy chasing toys, while others prefer batting or wrestling. Tailor your play sessions to their preferences to maximize their enjoyment.

- **Use positive reinforcement**

Reward your cat with praise, treats, or gentle petting when they exhibit desired behaviours during play. This positive reinforcement encourages them to continue engaging in appropriate play and strengthens the bond between you.

- **Rotate toys**

Introduce new toys periodically and rotate them to keep playtime exciting. Cats can quickly lose interest in toys that are always available. By offering a variety and periodically changing them, you can keep your cat engaged and curious during playtime.



## 6.2.3 Play Techniques

Understanding your cat's play preferences and employing appropriate play techniques can enhance the bond between you and your cat.

*Consider the following techniques:*

- **Mimic prey**

Move the toy in ways that mimic the movements of prey, such as darting, hiding, or sudden changes in direction. This will engage your cat's hunting instincts and make playtime more exciting.

- **Observe your cat's body language**

Pay attention to your cat's body language during play. If they seem overwhelmed or become too aggressive, take a break and allow them to calm down. Respect their boundaries and adjust the intensity of play accordingly.

- **Gradual wind-down**

As playtime comes to an end, gradually wind down the activity by slowing down the toy's movements. This allows your cat to transition from an active state to a more relaxed state.



### 6.2.4 Playtime alternatives

If you are unable to engage in interactive play with your cat, there are alternative ways to provide mental and physical stimulation:

- **Solo play toys**

Invest in toys that are designed for solo play, such as self-rolling balls or automated toys that mimic prey movements. These toys can keep your cat entertained even when you are not available to play.

- **Vertical space and climbing opportunities**

Cats enjoy climbing and perching on elevated surfaces. Provide vertical space, such as cat trees or shelves, where your cat can explore, climb, and observe their environment.

- **Visual stimulation**

Create visual stimulation for your cat by placing bird feeders or an aquarium near their favourite resting spots. This can provide entertainment and mental stimulation, even when you're not actively engaging in play.

### 6.3. Spending quality time with your cat

#### 6.3.1 One-on-one interaction

Spending quality time with your cat strengthens the bond between you and promotes a sense of trust and companionship. Engage in one-on-one interactions with your cat through activities such as grooming sessions, gentle petting, or simply sitting together and providing reassurance.

#### 6.3.2 Set aside dedicated time

Make it a habit to set aside dedicated time each day for quality interaction with your cat. This can include play sessions, training exercises, or even quiet cuddling time. Consistency is key to building a strong bond and meeting your cat's social and emotional needs.

#### 6.3.3 Environmental enrichment

Create an environment that offers stimulation and enrichment for your cat. Provide scratching posts, climbing structures, hiding spots, and puzzle toys to keep them mentally engaged and physically active. This will enhance their overall well-being and provide opportunities for interactive play.



## 7) KEEPING YOUR CAT SAFE

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*Creating a safe environment and being prepared for emergencies are crucial for your cat's wellbeing.*

*In this chapter, we will discuss important safety considerations, how to prevent common hazards, and how to handle emergencies that may arise.*

### 7.1 Identifying potential hazards in your home

When it comes to emergency preparedness, it is essential to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your cat. Identifying potential hazards in your home is a crucial step in minimizing risks during emergencies.

*Here are some key areas to consider:*

- **Secure hazardous materials**

Take stock of any hazardous materials in your home, such as cleaning products, chemicals, or medications. Store them in secure cabinets or high shelves to prevent your cat from accessing them during an emergency.

- **Electrical cords and appliances**

Cats are curious creatures and may be drawn to chewing on electrical cords or playing with appliances. Keep cords out of reach or use cord protectors to deter chewing. Unplug appliances when not in use to prevent accidental injuries.

- **Window and balcony safety**

Ensure that windows and balconies have sturdy screens or secure barriers to prevent your cat from falling or escaping. Regularly inspect screens for any damage or gaps that could be potential hazards.

- **Open flames and heating devices**

Cats are naturally attracted to warmth but may accidentally knock over candles or get too close to heating devices. Keep candles in secure holders and never leave them unattended. Use pet-friendly heating alternatives and ensure they are safely installed.

- **Secure loose items**

Secure loose items such as bookshelves, heavy furniture, or hanging decorations that could potentially topple during an emergency, causing harm to your cat. Anchor them securely to prevent accidents.



## 7.2 Creating an emergency kit

Being prepared with a well-stocked emergency kit is crucial for ensuring your cat's safety during unexpected situations.

*Here are essential items to include in your cat's emergency kit:*

- **Food and water**

Pack a sufficient supply of your cat's regular food in a waterproof container. Include disposable bowls and bottled water to ensure they stay hydrated.

- **Medications and medical records**

Keep a copy of your cat's medical records, including vaccination history and any prescriptions. Include a supply of any necessary medications your cat may need during an emergency.

- **Comfort items**

Include familiar items such as blankets, toys, and a towel or bed to provide comfort and reduce stress for your cat during emergency situations.

- **Litter and litter tray**

Pack enough cat litter and a portable litter box or disposable litter trays to maintain proper hygiene for your cat.

- **Identification and documentation**

Make sure your cat has a collar with an identification tag that includes your contact information. Additionally, include recent photos and a written description of your cat in case they get lost during an emergency.

- **Carrier or crate**

Have a sturdy carrier or crate on hand for easy transportation. Practice acclimatising your cat to the carrier ahead of time to minimise stress during emergencies.



## 8) HEALTH AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

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*Cats, like any other animals, can experience various common illnesses. It's essential to monitor your cat's health closely and be aware of the signs and symptoms of common illnesses. If you notice any concerning symptoms, it's best to consult a veterinarian for a proper diagnosis and treatment.*

### 8.1 Signs of illness and what to do next

On a daily basis, be aware of your cat's appetite and energy level. If s/he is not eating well or seems listless, something may be wrong medically.

You might want to record your observations to make it easier to notice any health issues.

*Any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of illness:*

- **Eye discharge**

Excessive or abnormal eye discharge, such as watery eyes, crusty discharge, redness, or swelling around the eyes, may indicate an eye infection or other underlying issues. Contact your vet for an examination to determine the cause and appropriate treatment for your cat's eye condition.

- **Sneezing and nasal discharge**

If your cat is frequently sneezing or has a runny nose with discharge, it may be a sign of an upper respiratory infection. This is especially common in cats that have been in close contact with other cats. Contact your vet for an evaluation, as they may recommend specific treatments or medications to alleviate the symptoms.

- **Changes in behaviour**

Cats often display changes in behaviour when they're unwell. This may include increased aggression, hiding more than usual, excessive grooming, or a reluctance to be touched. Pay attention to these changes and seek veterinary advice if they persist or worsen.

- **Loss of appetite**

Cats are typically good eaters, so a sudden loss of appetite can be a cause for concern. If your cat shows disinterest in food or has a significant decrease in appetite for more than a day, it may indicate an underlying health issue. Contact your vet to discuss the situation and determine the best course of action.

- **Lethargy**

Cats are naturally curious and active creatures. If your cat becomes unusually lethargic, lacks energy, or shows a significant decrease in activity level, it may be a sign of illness. Monitor your cat closely and consult your vet if the lethargy persists or if there are other accompanying symptoms.

- **Dehydration**

Cats can become dehydrated if they're not drinking enough water or experiencing illness. Signs of dehydration include dry gums, sunken eyes, loss of skin elasticity, lethargy, and decreased appetite. If you suspect your cat is dehydrated, contact your vet for guidance. They may recommend increasing water intake or providing fluids under veterinary supervision.

- **Vomiting**

Occasional vomiting may not be unusual for cats, but frequent or persistent vomiting can be a sign of an underlying health problem. If your cat vomits repeatedly within a short period or shows other symptoms such as diarrhoea, dehydration, or lethargy, contact your vet for guidance.

- **Changes in urination**

Changes in your cat's urination patterns can be indicative of various health issues. If your cat is urinating more frequently, has difficulty urinating, shows signs of pain during urination, or has blood in the urine, it may indicate a urinary tract infection, bladder stones, or other urinary problems. Contact your vet for an examination and appropriate treatment.

- **Pain or strain while urinating**

If your cat shows signs of discomfort, pain, or strain while urinating, it may indicate a urinary tract infection, bladder stones, or urinary blockage. These conditions can be serious and require immediate veterinary care.

- **Diarrhoea**

Diarrhoea can occur due to various reasons, including dietary changes, food intolerance, infections, or gastrointestinal disorders. If your cat experiences persistent diarrhoea, especially if it is accompanied by other symptoms such as vomiting, dehydration, or lethargy, it's important to seek veterinary attention.

- **Frequent ear scratching**

If your cat is constantly scratching at their ears or rubbing their head against objects, it may be a sign of ear mites, ear infections, or other ear-related problems. A vet can examine your cat's ears and recommend suitable treatment options.

- **Swollen, irritated ears**

Swollen and irritated ears can indicate ear infections or allergies in cats. If you notice your cat excessively scratching their ears, shaking their head, or displaying signs of discomfort, it's essential to have their ears examined by a vet.

- **Hair Loss**

Hair loss or bald patches can be caused by various underlying conditions, including allergies, skin infections, hormonal imbalances, or parasites. If you notice excessive hair loss in your cat, it's important to consult your vet for a thorough examination and appropriate treatment.



### What to do next:

- 1. Contact your vet:** If you notice any of the signs mentioned above or suspect that your cat may be unwell, it's important to contact your vet promptly. They can evaluate your cat's condition and provide professional guidance based on their expertise.
- 2. Provide detailed information:** When you speak to your vet, provide them with detailed information about your cat's symptoms, including their duration, severity, and any changes in behaviour or routine. This information will assist the vet in making an accurate diagnosis.
- 3. Follow veterinary advice:** After assessing your cat, your vet may recommend diagnostic tests or further examinations to determine the underlying cause of the symptoms. Follow their advice carefully and administer any prescribed medications as instructed.
- 4. Monitor your cat's progress:** Keep a close eye on your cat's health during and after treatment. Note any changes in symptoms, appetite, behaviour, or energy levels. If the symptoms persist, worsen, or new symptoms develop, inform your vet for further evaluation.

Remember, early detection and intervention are key to ensuring the wellbeing of your cat. Regular veterinary check-ups, a healthy diet, and a safe environment can also contribute to maintaining your cat's overall health and preventing potential illnesses.

### 8.2 Criteria for emergencies

During emergencies, it's crucial to know when your cat requires veterinary care.

If your cat displays any of the following symptoms, seek veterinary assistance **immediately**:

- Not breathing or laboured breathing
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry gums, weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied

If you observe any of these signs or have concerns about your cat's health, contact your vet or an emergency veterinary clinic immediately for guidance.



## 9) ADOPTION SUCCESS AND ONGOING CARE

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*Adopting a cat is the beginning of a beautiful journey filled with love, companionship, and responsibility.*

*In this final chapter, we will explore strategies for ensuring adoption success, nurturing your bond with your cat, and providing ongoing care for their evolving needs.*

### 9.1 Adoption success

Adopting a cat is a significant commitment, and creating a positive transition is essential for their wellbeing. Give your cat time to adjust to their new surroundings and establish a routine. Provide a quiet and comfortable space for them to retreat to initially. Gradually introduce them to different areas of your home and family members. Patience, love, and understanding are key to building trust and allowing your cat to feel secure in their new environment.

### 9.2 Building a strong bond

Developing a strong bond with your cat is a lifelong process. Spend quality time with them through play, grooming, and gentle interactions. Respect their boundaries and allow them to approach you on their terms. Provide plenty of love, attention, and positive reinforcement to foster a deep and trusting relationship. The bond you build will bring immense joy and fulfilment to both of you.

### 9.3 Enrichment and mental stimulation

Continuously providing mental and physical stimulation is important for your cat's happiness and wellbeing. Engage in regular play sessions using interactive toys, laser pointers, or feather wands to keep them mentally and physically active. Rotate toys and provide new challenges to prevent boredom. Consider puzzle feeders or treat-dispensing toys to stimulate their problem-solving abilities. A stimulated and engaged cat is a happy cat.

### 9.4 Aging gracefully

As your cat ages, their needs may change. Provide appropriate accommodations, such as comfortable bedding and easy access to food, water, and litter trays. Monitor their health closely and seek veterinary care at the first sign of any concerns. Adjust their diet as recommended by your vet to support their changing nutritional needs. Provide gentle exercise and mental stimulation tailored to their abilities. Shower them with love, attention, and care as they enter their senior years.

### 9.5 Lifelong commitment

Owning a cat is a commitment that lasts for their entire lifetime. Cats rely on their human companions for love, care, and support. This commitment involves providing proper nutrition, regular veterinary care, a safe and stimulating environment, and lots of love and attention. As a responsible cat owner, you are responsible for ensuring their wellbeing and meeting their needs throughout their lives.

### 9.6 Community and resources

Joining a community of fellow cat owners can provide support, guidance, and camaraderie. Participate in local cat-related events, join online forums, or seek out local cat clubs or organisations. These communities can offer valuable resources, advice, and a platform to share experiences with like-minded individuals.

### **9.6.1 Avid's Angels Cat Rescue adopter group**

We would be delighted if you would join our Facebook adopter group 'ACCR Adoptions + Success Stories', where you can reach out for assistance – or just post lots of happy photos of your newly-adopted cat!

The link to join is: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/200739002683771>

Please don't hesitate to contact Avid's Angels Cat Rescue if you require any advice or assistance, we are always happy to help. Contact details can be found at the end of this handbook.

### **9.7 Cherishing the moments**

Owning a cat is a remarkable journey filled with love, laughter, and unforgettable moments. Cherish every moment together and embrace the joy and companionship they bring into your life. Cats have relatively short lives compared to humans, making each day with them precious. Capture their antics in photographs or videos, create memories through shared experiences, and embrace the unique bond you have with your feline friend. Remember that you have the power to provide them with a life full of love, care, and a safe environment.





## 10) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### *Will my new cat be able to go outdoors straight away?*

No, the adopted cat should not be allowed outdoors for the first 3 months, irrespective of age, to allow him/her to settle and get used to their new environment.

If you have adopted a kitten, please don't let him/her outdoors until after the 2nd vaccination and neuter/spay has taken place, and not until the kitten reaches the age of at least 9 months old.

### *How much time do I need to spend with my cat?*

The amount of time you should spend with your cat depends on various factors, including their individual personality, age, and overall needs. While it's important to provide your cat with adequate attention and companionship, the specific time commitment can vary from cat to cat.

Some cats may require more or less interaction depending on factors such as age, health, and temperament. Pay attention to your cat's body language and cues, as they will let you know when they are seeking attention or when they need some alone time. By providing a balance of quality time, play, and a stimulating environment, you can ensure that your cat feels loved, content, and well-cared for.

### *What if my new cat isn't working out?*

If you are encountering any issues with your adopted cat, in the first instance please contact Avid's Angels Cat Rescue for help and support.

If you can no longer take care of the cat, or wish to rehome him/her for any reason, Avid's Angels Cat Rescue (AACR) **must** be informed immediately and given the chance to have the cat returned, or for alternative arrangements to be made. Please note that the adoption fee is non-refundable, regardless of how long you have the cat in my possession, even if you are not able to keep the cat or if you return the cat to AACR for any reason.

## 11) CONTACT DETAILS

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Please don't hesitate to contact Avid's Angels Cat Rescue if you require any advice or assistance, we are always happy to help and love to receive updates.

### **Our contact details are as follows:**

Jenny Herriot: 07399 407987

Rescue Phone: 07833 740133

Email: [admin@avidsangelscatrescue.co.uk](mailto:admin@avidsangelscatrescue.co.uk)

AACR Adopter Group + Success Stories group on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/200739002683771>

## **Congratulations on reaching the end of this Adopter Handbook!**

We hope that the information and guidance provided throughout this handbook will be helpful in your journey as a cat owner. Remember that every cat is unique, and individual needs may vary. Trust your instincts, seek professional advice when necessary, and most importantly, shower your cat with love, care, and affection.

The bond you share with your cat is a special one that will continue to grow and evolve over time. Embrace the joys, challenges, and rewards that come with cat ownership. Your commitment to providing a loving and nurturing home for your feline companion will make a profound difference in their life.

As you embark on this new chapter with your cat, remember to cherish the moments, learn from each other, and create lasting memories.

We wish you a wonderful journey filled with happiness, laughter, and the unconditional love of your furry friend.

**Best wishes,**

**Avid's Angels Cat Rescue**



**AVID'S ANGELS  
CAT RESCUE**  
*Compassion in action*

Bank Transfer:  
*Bank Name: Lloyds*  
*Sort Code: 77-02-09*  
*Account Number: 55116368*

[paypal.me/avidsangels1](https://paypal.me/avidsangels1)  
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