



# Cat Friendly Clinic



## What is a Cat Friendly Clinic?

The International Society for Feline Medicine (ISFM) is the veterinary division of International Cat Care ([www.icatcare.org](http://www.icatcare.org)), a charity dedicated to improving the health and welfare of cats worldwide.

We understand that there are unique difficulties in bringing a cat to a veterinary clinic:

- Cats often do not travel well and feel unsafe away from their home
- They are highly sensitive to new sights, sounds and smells
- Most cats prefer quiet and solitude and are highly susceptible to stress
- Most cats are highly stressed by nearby dogs in a vet clinic
- Cats need to be handled gently and with respect in the clinic



### Cat Friendly Clinic standard important for vets ...

The ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic programme means that accredited clinics have reached a higher standard of cat care in that they:

- Understand the needs of cats and have made vet visits more cat-friendly
- Understand how to approach and handle cats gently and with care
- Have good knowledge and equipment to manage the care of cats

Achieving the Cat Friendly Clinic accreditation involves all staff, from receptionists, nurses and technicians, through to vets. Each accredited clinic

also has at least one 'Cat Advocate' – someone who ensures the cat friendly standards are adhered to, and who would be happy to talk to you.

### Cat Friendly Clinic standard ... what does it mean for my cat and me?

An ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic gives you peace of mind and reassurance, letting you know that:

- The clinic has achieved certain minimum accreditation standards
- The clinic and clinic staff have thought about the specific needs of cats
- The staff will be happy to talk with you, show you what they do, and show you around the clinic

### What are the different levels of ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic accreditation?

Cat Friendly Clinic (CFC) accreditation is at three levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold. These recognise that vet clinics vary widely in their size, location, structure, staffing and equipment. Full details of the requirements can be found on our website – [www.catfriendlyclinic.org](http://www.catfriendlyclinic.org) – along with a list of our accredited clinics.

Staff at every accredited clinic have promised to handle and treat cats with understanding, gentleness and respect, and to make every effort to make the visit to the clinic as stress-free for you and your cat as possible.

If you have any questions or concerns about the your cat and the clinic, please ask a member of the staff who will be pleased to help. Additionally, if you have concerns about any of the Cat Friendly Clinic criteria being met at the clinic, please ask to speak with the Cat Advocate. You can also let us know about the clinic you attend at [catfriendlyclinic.org](http://catfriendlyclinic.org)

|                        | Bronze                                                                                                 | Silver                                                    | Gold                                                           |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Waiting room</b>    | Cat-only appointment blocks if no separate area for cats                                               | Must have separate area in waiting room for cats          | Additional facilities in waiting room (baskets off floor etc.) |
| <b>Hospitalisation</b> | Not necessarily required                                                                               | Dogs and cats separated in ward and minimum cage sizes    | Must have separate cat ward and larger cages sizes             |
| <b>Consultations</b>   | Safe, secure and well equipped consulting room. A minimum of 10 minute duration for consultation times |                                                           | A dedicated cat consulting room. 15 minute consultations       |
| <b>Operations</b>      | Surgical facilities not required on premises                                                           | Must be able to anaesthetise cats if needed               | Must have a separate dedicated operating theatre               |
| <b>Equipment</b>       | Good level of feline-friendly equipment required                                                       | Additional equipment, eg, X- rays, dental facilities, etc | Higher level required – eg, laboratory equipment, etc.         |

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## Bringing your cat to the clinic

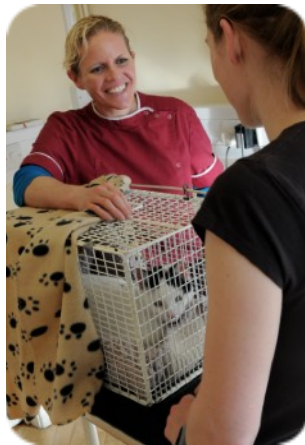
Cats are independent, territorial animals that need to be in control of their surroundings and are sensitive to different smells. These things can make visits to a vet clinic stressful.

### Look for a good veterinary clinic

Look for a veterinary clinic that knows and understands cats, and tries to reduce the stress for cats - ideally find a clinic accredited under the International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM) Cat Friendly Clinic standard.

### Choose a good carrier for your cat

- It should be robust and easy to clean (plastic or plastic-coated)
- Top-opening carriers are easier – the cat can be gently lifted in or out
- Cover the carrier with a blanket or towel during the journey to keep the cat calm
- Secure the carrier in the car in a footwell or seat so it cannot move
- Hold the carrier carefully – avoid swinging it or banging it against objects



### Familiar smells will make your cat less stressed

- Use the carrier at home – encourage your cat to sleep or be fed in the carrier, so it does not only appear when there is a vet visit!
- Put bedding or clothing that smells of home in the carrier
- Rub a cloth around the cat's face to pick up scent, then rub this around the carrier and leave it inside
- Spray the carrier with Feliway® (if available), 30 minutes before using it
- If your cat panics, wrap him/her in a thick blanket and put both in the carrier
- Take spare bedding (smelling of home) in case the cat soils the carrier

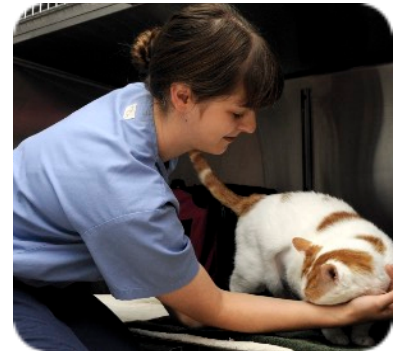
### In the waiting room

Find an accredited ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic, and look for:

- A separate cat waiting room, or a separate area for cats
- Shelves or raised areas so the cat carrier can be placed off the floor
- Choose a quiet location and keep the cat carrier covered
- If needed, perhaps keep your cat in the car until you are seen by the vet

### In the consulting room

- An ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic has promised that all staff treat cats gently, respectfully and with proper skill • Staff should take time to allow cats to calm down
- If you don't understand anything, ask for further explanation
- If you are unsure about administering medications, ask a vet, nurse or assistant to help you



### Staying at the clinic

An ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic will meet certain standards. You should not be afraid to ask to see where your cat will be staying. Look for:

- A separate, calm, cat ward; or a separate area within the hospital ward for cats
- Solid, clean and secure cages that are of a good size to allow a comfortable bed, litter tray, food bowls etc adequately separated from each other
- Comfortable bedding, and somewhere for a cat to hide
- A clinic that allows you to leave your own bedding for the cat, that smells of your home
- If your cat is being kept in the clinic, ask when you can visit

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## Taking your cat home from the clinic



### Going home

After a stay at the clinic, you may need to take special care of your cat when they get back home:

- If it has had an anaesthetic that day, your cat may still be subdued and a little unsteady on its feet
- Cats may be nervous and disorientated – talk and stroke them gently, allowing them to initiate closer contact when they are ready
- Try to prevent your cat licking any wound or pulling at any stitches. If this happens, ask your vet about a soft collar your cat can wear temporarily
- Call the clinic if you have any concerns such as the wound looking red or swollen, a discharge, or if you feel that your cat is not recovering well
- Make sure any medications are given
- Pain can be difficult to recognise in cats but signs include loss of appetite, hiding or being withdrawn. Contact the clinic if you have any concerns.
- You may need to keep your cat indoors, for the first night or longer
- Provide a quiet, warm spot in the house for your cat to rest

### Re-introduction to other cats at home

Your cat may have picked up unfamiliar scents while at the clinic, especially after an overnight stay or longer. These smells may make other

cats at home anxious so it is best to re-introduce the cats gently:

- Make sure you are present to supervise when the cats are re-introduced;
- Don't overwhelm the returning cat with attention from people or pets;



### Feeding your cat

Following an operation, your cat may be reluctant to eat. To encourage them you can try:

- Warm the food to body temperature if using tinned/sachet food
- Offer very tasty foods, such as kitten foods
- The clinic may suggest a special diet to encourage eating and aid recovery • Provide small, frequent meals, and remove the bowl between feeds
- Try hand-feeding your cat if needed, and gently stroke your cat
- Smearing a tiny amount of food on a paw may start them eating;
- Use a shallow food bowl to avoid the cat's whiskers touching the sides;
- Contact the clinic if your cat does not eat for more than a day or two

### Remember

If there is anything you are concerned about, just contact the clinic.





## Giving skin, ear or eye drops/ointment

### Using a topical (skin) spot-on preparation

Many flea, parasite and even worming medications now come as spot-on preparations, making them much easier to use on cats.

However, making sure the products reach the skin and don't just remain on the hair is vital to make sure the preparation works properly.

- Read the instructions – some products must be applied at two different locations
- Gently restrain your cat - having a second person to help will make it easier, or you can try wrapping the cat in a towel or blanket if they are wriggly
- Part the fur/hair on the back of the cat's neck (between the head and shoulders) so you can see the skin clearly
- Apply the product onto the skin itself. Try to get as much product on the skin as possible and as little as possible on the hair

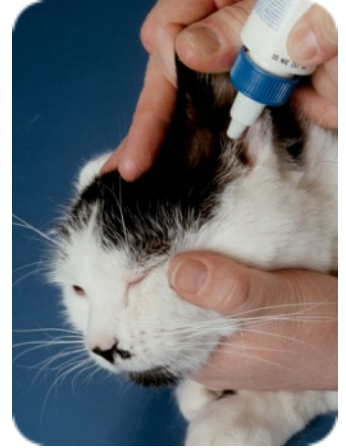


**Warning – Never use dog flea preparations on cats – some may contain concentrated permethrin which can be fatal to cats. Always ask your vet if you are unsure.**

### Giving ear drops

- Hold your cat firmly but gently – having a second person to help will make it easier, or you can try wrapping the cat in a towel or blanket if they are wriggly

- Hold the head and ear in your hands and tilt the head a little to one side so that the ear to be medicated is uppermost
- Squeeze the required number of drops into the opening of the ear. Keep holding the head and ear firmly to prevent the cat shaking its head
- Massage the ear base gently to distribute the drops within the ear canal



### Giving eye drops or ointment

- Hold your cat gently but firmly - having a second person to help will make it easier, or you can try wrapping the cat in a towel or blanket if they are wriggly
- Hold your cat's head in your hands, tilting the head so the nose is pointing upwards
- Open the eyelids gently on one side with a thumb and finger
- Place a few drops or a line of ointment on the surface of the eye (as directed by your vet)
- Close the eyelids and massage gently to spread the medication over the whole of the eye



**You can watch videos on our YouTube channel for extra help ...**  
**[www.youtube.com/icatcare](http://www.youtube.com/icatcare)**



## Giving tablets to your cat

### Giving tablets to your cat

Giving tablets to your cat can be stressful and few cats are cooperative. However, it is very important that a course of medication is completed, and if you are having any difficulty, simply contact the clinic – they will understand and try to help.

### Can the tablet be given in or with food?

Some tablets are palatable and may be eaten voluntarily by your cat. Others can be hidden in a small amount of a favourite food (a small piece of butter, cheese, meat or fish) or even crushed and mixed with a tasty treat, making them much easier to give. However, some tablets cannot be crushed or given with food so always check with your vet.



### Giving a tablet

Always handle your cat gently, work calmly and be reassuring. If your cat gets very stressed, contact your vet to explore alternatives.



Someone gently holding your cat while you give the tablet can be very helpful. Alternatively, it may be easier to gently wrap your cat in a large towel/blanket to keep them still and prevent you being scratched.

- Hold your cat, using your hands, arms and body to keep it still and confined
- Hold your cat's head firmly but gently, placing your thumb and fore finger on either side of the jaw at the corner of the mouth

- Holding this area firmly does not hurt your cat, but gives you control of it's head
- Hold the pill between the thumb and first finger of the other hand
- Tilt the cat's head so the nose is pointing up
- Open the mouth using a finger on the row of tiny teeth at the front of the bottom jaw, gently pulling down
- Once open, push the tablet to the back of the mouth as quickly as possible, and release the head so the cat can swallow
- The trick is to get the tablet as far back in the mouth as possible so that your cat can only swallow it and not spit it out!
- 'Pill poppers' or 'pill givers' can be used to avoid the need for a finger in the cat's mouth. Some people find these easier
- To help the tablet go down and prevent problems, it is usually best to give a small amount of food or dribble a small amount of water into your cat's mouth after a tablet is given – check with your vet what is best



**You can watch videos of how to give tablets on our YouTube channel for extra help ... [www.youtube.com/icatcare](http://www.youtube.com/icatcare)**



## Changing your cat's food

### Why do you need to change your cat's food?

Your vet may recommend your cat is fed a different or special diet. This may be to help, for example, in:

- Controlling a specific disease (eg, diabetes or kidney disease)
- Controlling your cat's weight
- Tempting an inappetent cat to eat
- Improving recovery from surgery or illness
- Improving your cat's diet based on its age and needs



### How to change your cat's food

Some cats develop strong preferences for certain foods, but following a few simple tips can make changing the diet much easier. Always follow your vet's



advice on how to introduce a new diet, but in general:

- Make the change to a new diet gradual over 3–7 days (or even longer if you have a very fussy cat)
- Start by mixing a small amount of the new diet with the old diet
- If your cat accepts the new diet, gradually increase the amount of the new and decrease the amount of the old diet over several days until only the new diet is being fed
- If your cat is reluctant to take the new diet, make the change more gradual, over a longer period
- If using wet (tinned or sachet) food, warm it slightly (to body temperature) to enhance palatability
- If done gradually, most cats accept a change in diet, but talk to your vet if you need any further help or advice