



Quarantine in animal shelters Vienna January 2014

QUARANTINE AND ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES AT CATS PROTECTION

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Cats Protection (CP) is the largest feline welfare organisation in the UK with objectives of re-homing, the promotion of neutering and education on the care of cats. It achieves this through

- 31 adoption centres throughout the UK
- 250 voluntary branches
- 8000 volunteers
- Rehome and reunite 50,000 cats each year.
- Help to neuter 170,000 cats each year.

Cats Protection's administrative centre is based at the National Cat Centre in West Sussex. As well as offices, there is a state of the art adoption centre with around 200 cat pens with its own self-contained, fully staffed veterinary clinic. Most of CP's adoption centres are much smaller with 100 pens or fewer and use private veterinary practices as internal research has shown that it is only cost-effective to have an on-site clinic if there are at least 140 pens.

Dealing with cats on a herd basis

Keeping cats in shelters means treating them on a herd basis, while still catering for the needs of the individual. Cats were originally solitary hunters and have not evolved as a social species. Therefore the shelter environment where they are in close proximity to other cats is very stressful and the nature of feline infectious disease, where there can often be carrier states, means infectious disease control is a major problem. Also the previous history of the cats is often unknown and there is a constantly changing population. Good housing, husbandry, rehabilitation and veterinary care are all essential in a successful shelter, especially to aid the control of infectious disease.

Housing – CP criteria

- Safe and secure – cats are great escape artists and safety corridors are essential.
- Adequate ventilation – 6-12 air changes/hour. Pens with at least partial exposure to the exterior are ideal. Active ventilation is necessary in indoor sections.
- Adequate temperature – 15-24°C. Heat lamps, pads or bars may be used. Over heating can occur in glass, metal and UPVC pens in summer.
- Smooth, non-porous surfaces should be used with as few joints as possible.
- Ideally metal or plastic rather than wood.

- Solid, full height, ideally opaque barriers between cats to act as sneeze barriers and to stop the cats seeing each other
- Easy to clean with good access to the cats
- Adequate space for the cats to exercise
- Areas for the cats to feel secure and hide
- Areas to climb and perch.

Areas of an adoption centre

It is essential to find the balance between the behavioural needs of the cats and maintaining disease control. Mixing cats should be avoided if at all possible; at CP they are kept singly or in small groups (2-3 adults or litters of kittens) if from the same household. There are designated areas within the shelters separating cats in different risk groups, and the cats are moved through them.

- Quarantine (known as admissions at CP)
- Pre-homing/holding
- Homing
- Isolation
- Maternity

Ideally each area should have separate food preparation, washing and tray wash facilities. Also there should be separate equipment for each section; colour coding can be very useful for this.

Quarantine

All newly admitted cats are kept in the quarantine or admissions area for a minimum of 7 days or at least 2 days after their first vaccination, whichever is longer. Cats are kept singly or with cats from the same household and have their initial health checks here. They are observed closely and any sick or infectious cats are isolated and barrier nursed. The public is not allowed in this area.

There are debates as to how long quarantine should be and it may vary depending on whether the cats are kept singly or communally, what sort of screening, health checks and preventative care take place, the type of intake, hygiene regime, stress levels, the local prevalence of disease etc.

Hygiene

Disinfectants are chosen for their efficacy and their safety for both cats and staff. Phenolic disinfectants are toxic to cats. It is sometimes necessary to use different ones routinely and in specific outbreaks. CP has a standardised routine, usually with different staff cleaning each section. If this is not possible kittens should be attended to first followed by healthy adults, quarantined cats and then those in isolation. Pens, bowls and litter trays are cleaned and disinfected daily and pens are deep cleaned between cats. Food is prepared away from litter and food bowls are washed separately from litter trays. Hands are washed between cats and disposable protective clothing should be worn. In quarantine separate gloves and aprons are used between each pen. Bedding and toys are disposable or made of materials that can be disinfected. Footbaths are used between sections and especially before entering and exiting quarantine, maternity and isolation. Cats with infectious disease are isolated and barrier nursed.

Veterinary care

A health check is carried out by a trained member of staff on admission to pick up any major issues and to scan for a microchip. The eyes, ears, mouth, nose, coat, limbs and rear end are checked. All cats are screened with a Wood's lamp for ringworm and any potentially infectious cats are isolated. Cats are given a clinical examination by a vet as soon as possible including screening for diseases such as the feline leukaemia virus (FeLV) and the feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) if sick or high risk. NB There is no point routinely screening for feline coronavirus as this merely indicates that cat has been exposed to the virus and does not indicate whether it has feline infectious peritonitis. Any disease that is identified and easily treated is dealt with.

Vaccination is an essential part of infectious disease control. The core or essential vaccines in shelter medicine are feline herpesvirus, feline calicivirus and feline parvovirus. If working in an area where rabies is endemic, rabies vaccination is essential for both cats and humans. The non-core vaccines are those that are given on the basis of risk assessment and if funds are available e.g. FeLV, Chlamydia felis, Bordetella bronchiseptica. CP routinely gives the core vaccines (except rabies) and FeLV in its adoption centres. Other vaccines are given on a risk basis.

All cats are treated with endo and ectoparasiticides, microchipped and neutered if old enough (from first vaccination). Good record keeping is essential to monitor the individual cat, provide information for the new owner, to monitor the efficacy of health plans in the adoption centre and the information can be used for epidemiological studies.

Stress

Stress plays a major part in many infectious and non-infectious diseases and has a negative effect on the welfare of the cats and how they are perceived by prospective owners. Environmental enrichment is vital – toys, facilities for climbing, perching and hiding etc.

When the cats first arrive they suffer from acute stress which can be alleviated by

- Giving them somewhere to hide (The Feline Fort and hide, perch and go box are excellent for this)
- Preventing cats looking directly at each other
- Providing a regular and predictable routine
- Providing scent continuity via bedding
- Having the same person deal with the cat each day

Chronic stress through boredom and frustration occurs after time and is helped by

- Using different toys and active play
- Using puzzle feeders and making them work for their food
- Varying the routine with regard to people and timing

For further information

Cats Protection website

www.cats.org.uk