

CREATING POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CATS

To promote positive handling for cats, it is important to consider their senses and environmental surroundings to avoid fearful responses.

SOUND

To prevent auditory fear:

- Avoid loud noises
- Speak in soft, calm voices
- Maintain a calm and quiet environment
- Avoid noise transfer from other animals or barking from dogs
- Measure sound in the facility using a smartphone app to ensure noise levels are reasonable (i.e., on average below 70 dB)

Cats can hear at very high frequencies. Loud and unfamiliar sounds can be frightening.



VISION

To prevent visual fear:

- Avoid rapid movements and animated hand gestures
- Avoid direct eye contact or staring
- Put yourself on the same level as the cat, approach from the side, and do not loom above or over the cat
- Use a loose towel if the cat prefers to stay hidden but needs to be physically assessed or complete the physical assessment on a lap, on the floor, or wherever the cat may prefer
- Ensure cats have access to a safe and comfortable spot they can retreat to

Cats have much better visual capabilities than humans and can see at very low light.



SMELL

To prevent olfactory fear:

- Provide familiar scents, like that of a favourite person or bedding, to help cats to adapt to new situations
- Use plug-in diffusers or spray formulations of synthetic pheromones (such as Feliway) to mimic the natural pheromone that deposits when a cat rubs their face on objects. Spray synthetic pheromones on towels used for handling, carriers or housing bedding and cages

Unfamiliar smells can frighten and arouse cats.



TASTE

Ensure you have asked the guardian what these are to ensure you can provide positive reinforcement with treats the cat likes and will find rewarding.

Cats can be picky eaters and will have preferred food and treats.



TOUCH

To prevent fear of touch:

- Pet according to the cat's preferred petting location and style (as identified in intake information)
- Try not to overwhelm the cat with too many people approaching and handling
- Avoid petting fur in the opposite direction
- When required, use gentle, low-stress, and passive restraint

Petting in unfamiliar ways can cause a cat to become fearful.



Cats' preferred* petting locations

- Top of the head
- Area between the eyes and ears
- Cheeks
- Back of the neck



*Not all cats enjoy these areas!