

Finding a home you can live with!

Finding a good home for a cat is rarely easy. Here are a few suggestions to help you find and screen prospective adopters.

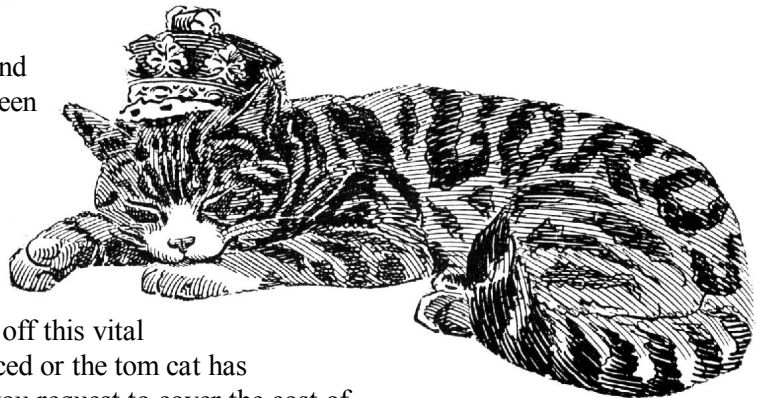
Your primary obligation is to the cat. In fact, the animal's future and safety are in your hands. The adopter is not "doing you a favor." You are not trying to "get rid of" the kitty. You are seeking a permanent, loving home for an animal entrusted to you. Talk to prospective adopters. If you have doubts about the home, trust your instincts. You do not need a concrete reason to turn people down. It is better to lose a home than to place a cat in a bad situation.

Charge a fee (minimum \$40) when placing any animal. "Free" animals are easy prey for dealers who collect and sell animals to laboratories. People who pay something for a pet are more likely to value it. If you are uncomfortable taking money from an adopter, accept a check made out to a humane organization and mail the donation for the adopter.

Whether you get cash or a check, ask to see identification. Check that both name and address match the information you have been given by the adopter.

Get the animal neutered/spayed before attempting to place it. Because early age altering is available, even kittens should be fixed before being placed in a home.

Many well-intentioned animal owners put off this vital surgery until after litters have been produced or the tom cat has strayed. It is quite reasonable for the fee you request to cover the cost of the spay/neuter. The adopter would have to pay for the surgery eventually and you have saved them the inconvenience of having it done.



Talk to the person who will take care of the pet. Ask open-ended questions of prospective adopters and then let them talk. Listen carefully to the answers. Evaluate whether you can be comfortable with the placement. Questions you will want answered include the following.

- ✓ Do they have any pets? What kind?
- ✓ What happened to previous pets?
- ✓ Are their pets neutered? If not, they should deal with that BEFORE bringing in another pet!
- ✓ Why do they want an(other) animal?
- ✓ Can they afford the cost of an(other) animal?
- ✓ Do they have a regular vet?
- ✓ Do they take their pets for annual checkups?
- ✓ Where will this pet be kept?
- ✓ What will happen to the cat if they move?
- ✓ Is their cat/will this cat be an indoor pet, an outdoor pet or an indoor/outdoor pet?
- ✓ Is their cat/will this cat be declawed? On all four feet?

If the prospective adopter does not want to talk with you, do not give them the kitty. You cannot feel comfortable about a home you know nothing about. Whenever possible, offer to deliver the new pet. Do not give final approval for the adoption until you are satisfied that the new home is suitable.

Declawed cats should not be placed to be outdoor or even indoor/outdoor pets. Declawing remains a controversial issue. Placing a kitten/cat in a home where it will be declawed is a personal choice. You need to be aware of what the surgery entails (amputation of the last joint of the toe) and the possible effects on the behavior of cats (litter box problems, more likely to bite). In some countries, declawing is illegal because it is deemed to be an inhumane operation. We strongly recommend that you do not place cats to be declawed.

If you do choose to place with people who will declaw, here are a few guidelines to follow. Young kittens are more likely to adapt when declawed than older kittens or cats. If the surgery is to be done, it should be done when the cat is as young as possible. Cats over two years old should not be placed to be declawed. The surgery is painful, hard on them, and they may not adapt. Declawing an adult cat can lead to serious behavior problems. In any case, declawing should be done on the front feet ONLY. Most animal professionals agree that declawing on all four feet is both cruel and senseless.

Only in VERY rare instances should you place a new pet in a home with an un-neutered cat or dog. Bringing a new pet into a household with a sexually mature animal is likely to cause behavior problems. This could result in two homeless animals instead of one. Encourage the prospective adopter to neuter/spay before adopting another pet. If they cannot or choose not to afford to neuter their pet, they do not need another animal.

If the adopter has never had a pet, be sure they understand it is a lifetime commitment. A cat will require their time, will spend their money and will want them to change. It will be a small price to pay for the entertainment, companionship and joy it will provide.

Great care should be taken if a cat is to be placed as a barn cat or a working cat. Prospective owners should provide food, water, shelter and veterinary care for their working cats. While human companionship may not be important for feral cats, normally socialized cats should be placed in situations where they will interact with people. Farm homes should always be checked by visiting before placing a cat. Watch out for unusually dangerous situations such as a house on a highway, very close wooded areas with predators, etc. Check the condition of the shelter which will be provided for the cat. Will it be too cold in winter or too hot in summer?

You will need to advertise to find people who are interested in adopting a new pet. An ad in a major newspaper in your area is a good way to find people to interview. It is often helpful to make a flier that includes a description of the cat and his or her behavior and a current, close-up picture. These fliers should be given to veterinarians to be displayed. They can also be placed in pet supply stores, book stores, grocery stores and other public places. Do not advertise in schools. Mention the fee in your ad or flier.

With care and perseverance, you can find your feline friend a home you can live with.

