


# SYDNEY DOGS & CATS HOME

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## TIMID CAT GUIDE

Thank you for opening your home to a timid cat! With time and patience, you will be rewarded with a beautiful loving cat.

There are some key things to be aware of when bringing a timid cat into your home – the following advice will ensure a smooth process in gaining their trust.

### **First and foremost – be patient!**

- Some cats take longer than others, but they will get there eventually.

### **Start them off in their own space**

- A spare room is ideal.
- Keep the door closed so that they are confined to this room – if they have access to the whole house too soon, they are likely to get very overwhelmed.

### **They will hide**

- Don't worry if the cat spends most of their time hiding – this is completely normal and expected!
- Territory is really important for cats, so coming into a completely new environment means they have to start from scratch in feeling safe.
- Provide them with multiple hidey options – these can include cardboard boxes, their carrier, or an igloo bed, just to name a few!

### **Be wary of escapes**

- Timid stray cats are used to a life on the street, and if they get spooked they may try and find a way out.
- Be careful when opening doors, and do not open any windows in the cat's room (even if you have flyscreen – they can push their way through!)

### **Helping them settle in**

- Sit quietly in the room with them – show them that you're safe to be around.

- Read, go on your phone/computer, listen to music, talk on the phone – any nice quiet activities will help the cat understand that you're not a threat.
- You don't have to try and interact directly with them at this stage – simply existing in the same room as them will help in gaining their trust.

### **Use food to gain their trust**

- If the cat won't eat when you put their food down, leave the room and let them eat on their own.
- Over time, they will begin to eat in front of you.
- When this happens, slowly start decreasing the distance between you and the cat while they're eating, until you can eventually feed them from your hand.
- If the cat is a bit spooked by your hand, you can try offering food on the end of a skewer or spoon.
- Use yummy treats such as roast chicken, tuna in spring water, or dine paste to really spark their appetite!
- The cat will begin to associate you with food and will eventually begin to approach you for more.
- Once the cat is comfortable eating from your hand, you can progress to brief pats – keep these interactions short and sweet to prevent overwhelming the cat.
- You can try patting the cat with a feather wand toy first, then work up to your hand.
- Over time, you can progress to longer full body pats as the cat gains trust in you.

### **Other techniques**

- Try Feliway – this is a spray that contains 'happy cat' pheromones and is scientifically proven to help cats feel less anxious.
- It's best to use Feliway sparingly as too much can cause a stressful chemical smell – simply spray it on a blanket, let it air out for at least 15 mins, then place the blanket in the cat's room.
- If your cat is on anti-anxiety medication, ensure they are eating this every day by putting it in a small meal or treat, to make sure they eat all of it.

When in doubt, message your Cat Foster Officer for any advice and support 😊