

# WELCOME HOME!

## BONDING WITH YOUR NEW CAT

Congratulations on the adoption of your new cat. Remember a new cat coming from a home or shelter may have just experienced a difficult time in their life. They have lost their home and their routine. Give your cat the time and space she needs to get used to you and her new surroundings.

Shelter staff will have provided you with a special *Hide, Perch & Go box*. This box is both a cat carrier and an important “safe haven” for your cat. This sheet will explain how to use the box once you have your new cat at home. If you already have a cat at home, please read our CatSense Behaviour Sheet: *Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Cat*, prior to introducing the new cat.

### **How the Hide, Perch & Go Box Works** *Hide, Perch & Go*

To help cats cope with the stress of being at a shelter, the BC SPCA developed the Hide, Perch & Go box. The box provides cats with more control over their limited environment allowing them to express behaviours such as hiding, perching and face rubbing (scent marking) that help reduce stress. As the box is saturated with their own scent, cats feel safer and more at home. While adoption is a wonderful event in the life of a shelter cat, arriving in a new home with new smells, people and furniture means that the cat will once again feel anxious, stressed and possibly scared.

### **Making the Transition**

Once reassembled from the carrier to the hide and perch box, your cat will have a familiar, secure place to adjust to your house. By using the box you will reduce the risk that your cat will hide in difficult to reach places, display defensive aggressive behaviour typical of scared cats (e.g., hissing, spitting or swatting) or attempt to escape through an open door or window.

### **Setting Up the Box at Home**

Upon arriving home, go straight to a small room where the cat can stay for a few days. There should be no places to hide in this room except for the box. The room should have a litter box, food and water bowls. Cats do not like to eat near their litter box so keep the food bowls and the litter box away from each other.

- Open the Hide, Perch & Go Box and let your cat out. Let her explore the room while you work quietly reassembling the box.
- Remove the inside portion, place it on top and secure the top to the bottom by pushing the small cardboard flaps into the appropriate holes (see photos).
- Place the box near a wall, making sure that the two openings are not blocked.
- Sit on the floor and quietly observe.
- Your cat may come to you right away or go directly into her box. Do not hold, restrain or force her to do anything.

### **BONDING EXERCISE**

Leave your cat in the room while you begin the bonding process. Although you are excited about this new addition to your family, being patient for a few days is the best and most loving thing you can do. Remember that shelter cats have just experienced a very difficult time in their life. They have lost their home and their routine. Give your cat the time and space she needs to get used to her new surroundings.

- Go to the room as often as you can. Bring gifts such as healthy and tasty food treats or toys (e.g. feather stick, cat ball) every visit. Every person in the household should take a turn doing this.
- Sit on the floor and place these treats near you or wave the toy around.
- Wait for your cat to come to you - DO NOT grab or attempt to hold the cat.
- Talk to her - a high-pitched but quiet voice is always more reassuring for cats.
- If she comes to you, pet her gently under the chin

- Every cat is different. Some may show you love and climb into your lap right away, others may stay in hiding and watch you from afar until they feel safe. Take your cues from your cat. Let her make the decision as to how much interaction is comfortable with her. The adjustment may take hours, days or even weeks.

### **INTRODUCING YOUR CAT TO THE REST OF THE HOME**

When your cat begins to show greeting behaviour when you enter the room, (i.e. walking toward you with her tail straight up in the air and perhaps meowing) try going to the opposite side of the room and call her. If she comes to you when you call her, it is time for a walk around the house. Here are a few tips for orienting your cat to the home environment:

- Make sure all windows and doors are securely closed.
- Block off any small space that your cat could crawl into and be out of reach (e.g. vents, behind fridges and stoves).
- Be very interactive with your cat, talk to her and play with a moving object.
- Observe your cat for any signs of fear (e.g. crawling, puffed up tail, dilated pupils, rapid breathing). If she is too scared, return her to the small room for another day.
- Watch for any indication of escape behaviour (e.g. sniffing at the outside door, attempts to open windows, pacing near air vents, slowly looking at all areas of the ceiling). If you notice such behaviour, return her to her room and continue the bonding exercise for a few more days.
- If your cat seems relaxed, comes when called and does not seek to hide or look for an escape route, then she is ready to freely roam around your home.

**CAUTION:** The BC SPCA strongly encourages creating an interactive and stimulating inside environment for your cat. If you plan to let your cat go outside, be sure to have a secure outdoor area and wait at least one month before letting her explore this area.