



VASILIKI VARVAKI/ISTOCK

## You're taking me where?

### Steps to a stress-free feline vet visit

**F**or many cats, a trip to the vet can be traumatic. Here are some suggestions for making the trip less stressful:

- **Teach your cat to love the carrier.** Always keep the carrier out in a warm, sunny spot lined with a soft towel or pillow. Reward her for entering or sleeping in the carrier. Under supervision, practise short carrier stays with the door closed. Begin with a few seconds and slowly increase the time. Give lots of positive rewards like treats and string play at the door.
- **Practise moving her in the carrier.** Assuming kitty is comfy in the carrier; begin short walks around the house. Then venture outside, eventually working up to short car rides. With a friend driving, sit with kitty, talk to her and give yummy treats during the trip. Begin with a quick trip around

the block and slowly increase the time. Repeat often.

- **Make non-medical visits to a clinic.** Cats need to become accustomed to the smells, sounds, people and other pets at the clinic and associate them with a positive experience, such as treats and pats. Most cat-friendly clinic staff will welcome your request to give positive attention and treats to your cat. Make it a fun adventure!
- **Practise the physical exam at home.** Introduce handling activities in a fun, stress-free way. Give this exercise a name, like “time for a check-up.” Associate your improvised “examination table” with yummy treats and lots of loving. Open kitty’s mouth and slip a piece of tuna or

other tasty treat on her tongue. Examine her body, ears and tummy, lift her tail and squeeze on her toes to expose the nails.

All of these techniques, done in an enjoyable and positive way, will make vet visits easier for your cat, you and veterinary staff. For kittens, this technique is a breeze. For adult cats, who may have already had a traumatic clinic experience, this may not be as successful.

For a fearful feline, consider switching to home care – many veterinarians are offering this service. ■



*Nadine Gourkow is manager of animal welfare for the BC SPCA with expertise in both cat and dog behaviour.*