



Issue: Making that Carrier A Little Less Scarier

Most cats don't enjoy being placed into a carrier, especially if they only come out for vet visits. Cats are smart—they could quickly associate the carrier with a scary car ride and/or an unpleasant trip to the vet. Getting a cat to go into a carrier can also become difficult if the cat has never come in contact with one before. Fortunately, all the stress can be easily avoided with a simple introduction.

Steps to Introduce Carriers to Cats

1. Place the carrier in an area in your home that the cat frequents. Make sure that it is opened and allow curiosity get the best of your cat.
2. Put your cat's favorite treats inside. You can feed your cat their regular meals inside the carrier as well. This will build a positive association between the carrier and food. Make sure to keep the door open at this stage.
3. Place your cat's favorite toys and bedding inside. You can also have play sessions inside and around the carrier. Playing helps build confidence in cats, so playing with them near the carrier will help them feel like they're the new lion king of that domain!
4. Once your cat gets comfortable being inside the carrier, you can try closing the door. First, for a few seconds, then the amount of time can gradually increase if you see that the cat remains calm. You can reward with treats throughout the process.
5. If the previous steps are successful, you can try lifting the carrier up with the cat inside and placing it back down. Once your cat is comfortable, try walking around a few steps so that your cat gets used to being in motion while in the carrier. Reward with treats each step of the way.
6. If your cat is still uncomfortable when inside the carrier during trips, try using Feliway Spray. Feliway is a synthetic calming pheromone that can help reduce stress. Spray the carrier 10 minutes prior to placing your cat inside. Never spray directly onto your cat.

Ideally, the carrier should stay in a place where your cat can easily access it and use it as a safe spot if they want to. If left out like a regular piece of furniture that your cat has grown comfortable with, you will likely find it far easier to get your cat into the carrier when you need to. The carrier's presence is no longer the scary thing linked only to unpleasant trips to the vet.

Always remember to cover the carrier during use outside of the home. This will help decrease the stress of being outside, especially if your cat is not used to it.

For more information:

International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants: m.iaabc.org

Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists: corecaab.org