

# 5 Ways to Reduce Feline Fear at the Vet

By Dr Gretta Howard

Cats are usually most comfortable in their own environment – at home. So, when it is time to visit the vet, cats can get incredibly stressed but this fear can be reduced by following these 5 steps:

## 1. **Acclimatise your cat to the carrier –**

Does your cat carrier only get brought out just prior to a visit to the vet? This could create a negative association with getting inside the carrier, so try making the carrier accessible to your cat all the time, and make it into a cosy place to sleep. The aim is to create a feeling of security and positivity around the carrier rather than your cat being afraid of it.

## 2. **Bring your cat in a secure cat-friendly covered carrier**

Cats love to hide when they are worried about a situation. The zip-up carriers tend to be the most cat-friendly as they are soft yet secure, allow the cat to see out and have multiple access points via zips, which means your cat can be gently removed prior to examination. On arrival, it is best to cover the whole carrier to allow your cat to hide.

## 3. **Line your cat's carrier with a towel or absorbent pad**

If you've got to go, you've got to go...always remember to line your cat's carrier with a towel or an absorbent pad so that if your cat needs to toilet during the journey to and from the vet, he or she remains dry. At Turramurra Veterinary Hospital, we have a supply of absorbent pads for the journey home if you forget to line your cat's carrier.

## 4. **Use feline-friendly pheromones**

Feliway spray contains a copy of a pheromone that cats produce from glands in their faces when they are feeling calm and happy. You may notice cats 'head butting' and rubbing the sides of their mouths on surfaces while they are purring. The same 'happy cat' pheromone found in Feliway is used during this common feline behaviour. Feliway can be purchased at Turramurra Veterinary Hospital in a spray to use in the cat carrier the night before the appointment. Feliway diffusers are also located around our clinic to reduce feline stress.

## 5. **Pre-visit medications**

In some extreme cases, it doesn't matter how hard we try, your cat may be so terrified at the vet that this fear creates aggression when attempting an examination. In these instances, an oral medication to relax your cat can be dispensed by one of our vets to be given 2 hours before the visit, to make it a more pleasant experience for all. If an oral medication is too difficult to administer, then an injectable sedative administered by the vet may be the answer.