



Working Cat Acclimation Protocol

The process of relocating a Working Cat to a new home can be disorienting. It isn't as easy as opening the door of your cat's carrier and allowing them free range of their new space. Cats are very territorial and environmental change can be a difficult adjustment. If not allowed a proper acclimation period, they can quickly depart and not return.

The good news is that Working Cats usually adapt very well to their new surroundings if given a minimum of 2 weeks — and a recommended 4 weeks — of adjustment time in their new space.

1) Your Working Cat will need an escape-proof place to spend their time during this 2-4 week period. This can be a secure room or a large dog crate. The most important part is that your cat is contained and has no access to the outside where they can become disoriented. The items needed for their acclimation room or crate may:

- Temporary litter box (with litter, clay litter is preferable)
- Two bowls for fresh food and water
- Cardboard box (on its side, to serve as a hiding place)

You can always add more to their acclimation space. Blankets or bedding are a nice addition and newspaper or potty pads lining the bottom of a crate makes for easier cleaning. Covering their crate with a sheet or blanket will reduce stimulation for your cat and increase their comfort level. You may even add toys; however, your cat may be too nervous to play while acclimating.



- 2) A daily task will be cleaning the litter box and giving fresh food and water to your new family member. It's normal for your cat to retreat into their cardboard box while you perform these tasks. Do not try to pet or handle your cat during this adjustment period, especially if yours is particularly fearful.

A good practice is to bring your cat wet food at mealtime. Combining this with an audible cue such as whistling or saying "here, kitty-kitty" can help condition your cat to a set feeding schedule, allowing them to know when to come running for their meal. During feeding, you may sit quietly and read a book in their presence (or even read the book aloud as they become more comfortable) which helps strengthen your bond and their positive associations with you. *People who make an effort to bond with their Working Cat typically have the most successful outcomes.*

- 3) After the 2-4 week acclimation period, you may open the crate door (or the door of the secure room). Your cat will begin to explore on their own time. Leave the crate set up (or the door open of the secure room) so they have a familiar, safe place to go if feeling overwhelmed at any time. Continue to fill their food and water bowls inside the crate or room during their explorations, using your same audible cue. Once you notice your cat spending more time outside of the crate or room and showing more comfortable and social behaviors toward you, the food and water bowls may be moved to a more convenient location. At this point, you may also remove the crate.

If you borrowed your crate from Animal Humane, please return it to either of our locations:

**Animal Humane New Mexico
Main Campus**
615 Virginia St. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87108
505.255.5523

Westside Adoption Center
10141 Coors Blvd. NW
Albuquerque, NM 87114
505.323.PETS (7387)