**Teaching your cat to love their carrier.**

Tips on being able to get your cat into a carrier for vet visits.

It doesn’t have to be a battleground, with you scrabbling under a bed or starfish-limbs. Here are our tips for training (to prepare when you don’t need it) and handling (for when you really need them in there now).

**Which type of carrier?** You can get front- or top-opening carriers, that are solid or mesh. Mesh carriers allow your cat to see their surroundings which they may prefer, and you can cover with a blanket if they need to be calmed or out of sight of dogs in the vet waiting room.

**Training**

* Get them used to their carrier by leaving it out as a hidey bed. Put blankets in there, some calming pheromones, and throw treats in on occasion to build up a positive association. This helps remove the link between seeing the carrier and being put in it.
* Some cats will be fine with the carrier being out but get scared once you pick it up and come towards them. Practice just carrying the carrier around the house so that this is also desensitised.
* Practicing as many of the triggers that a cat may use to figure out that they’re being put in the carrier, without *actually* putting them in the carrier, helps reduce their suspicion when the time comes!

**Handling them in**

* Prepare – give yourself plenty of time, lock the cat flap, get them into one room, and block any hiding spaces under or behind furniture.
* Tip the carrier at a 45 degree angle. You can place it on a cushion or blanket to do this, and it makes it easier to put the cat in.
* Aim for a bum-first approach. This is overall less scary for the cat because they can still see out as they’re being put in the carrier and gives them less of a chance to plant their feet against the door. For cats with a history of fighting the carrier, a change of tactic can also help break the routine they’re used to.
* Engineer a ‘best choice’ scenario, where your cat chooses the hiding place of the carrier as a safe place (see our video online).
* Towel-wrapping. It allows you to safely put your cat in any kind of carrier (top or front-opening), as well as being useful in general for giving treatment or medication (see our video online).
* Stay calm – if they panic then let them go and come back later.

For more Pet Health advice visit www.bcdh.org.uk/pet-care-advice