

# Park Veterinary Centre

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## How to...Reduce the stress of bringing your cat to the vets

### Why do cats dislike car travel?

Cats don't like to leave their familiar territory. Unlike dogs, they are not really reassured by the presence of their owner. In a new environment, such as the car in this case, they cannot predict what might happen.

Cats may also be more sensitive to the movement of the car – their sense of balance is very acute, so the motion may not be pleasant to them, and they may not feel in control of the situation. The car will also sound and smell very strange.

Cats that experience car travel as young kittens, during the period between 2 and 7 weeks of age when they are most receptive to learning new things, tend to tolerate it much better.

### Before your visit:

- Cat carriers provide safety for both you and your cat during transportation and often give a cat a sense of security by being hidden in a secure, closed container
- Your cat basket should be sturdy and escape proof, preferably with a top opening as this can make getting your cat in and out of the basket much less traumatic especially if fearful, fear aggressive, sick or painful, or if mobility problems – plastic coated wire baskets are ideal
- Try to make the basket “part of the furniture” at home – you can use the basket as a permanent bed or resting area, or just bring it out for a few days before a routine visit. Feeding your cat in the basket can help build a positive association with the basket
- Placing some of your clothing or the cat's used bedding in the basket might help and in addition to this there is a synthetic facial pheromone spray available (Feliway™, Ceva Animal Health) which can be sprayed on the cat's bedding or into the basket 30 minutes before putting the cat in
- Have separate baskets for individual cats as stress can lead to defensive aggression. If your cats do get on well then you can place the baskets close together
- If you struggle to get your cat in through a front opening you can try taking the top half off, putting the cat in the bottom half and fastening the lid afterwards or gently reversing your cat in through the door
- Cats like to be able to hide so covering part of the basket with a towel or blanket can be useful

### During the journey:

- Secure the basket in the footwell of the car behind the front seat or on the seat with a seatbelt. Ensure the carrier is level
- Putting a plastic bag/similar underneath the basket will help to protect your car should your cat have an accident along the way. Bringing a spare blanket/newspaper will also be beneficial in this case
- Allow plenty of time to enable you to drive calmly, and avoid loud noises. Talk quietly and reassuringly to your cat. Remember your cat may sense any tension that you have!

### At the surgery:

- If concerned about noise/dogs in the reception area you may wish to wait with your cat in the car until called in by the vet or nurse. Please book in with a receptionist as normal and let them know you will be waiting outside. Alternatively you may use our admissions room should it be vacant
- Keep your cat at least partially covered and try to avoid putting your cat basket on the ground as cats tend to feel safer at a height

