

First Steps Toward a Cat Friendly Practice



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STEP 1

Aspire to be cat friendly

Becoming a Cat Friendly Practice is an achievement that can truly benefit your veterinary clinic. Members of the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) typically find that being a Cat Friendly Practice helps their clinics in specific ways:

- » **Builds relationships with cat owners.** Educating cat owners about their pets allows them to have a better understanding of feline behavior and a greater appreciation for routine veterinary care. A cat owner will value that your practice has devoted the extra time and attention to increasing the standard of care for their cat.
- » **Increases routine visits.** Stress often keeps an owner from providing routine veterinary care for a cat but, when the owner learns how to minimize stress, they are more likely to bring their cat to the veterinary practice for routine care. As a Cat Friendly Practice, you will have access to educational materials and brochures that communicate to cat owners on how to decrease stress associated with the visit and promote the benefits of routine visits.
- » **Improves cat health and wellness.** Routine visits assure that a cat is getting the feline-specific veterinary attention needed on a consistent basis. The criteria required to become a Cat Friendly Practice assures that your practice is fulfilling the essential feline-specific standards.

You may want to achieve these in your practice or have additional, unique reasons for wanting your veterinary clinic to become a Cat Friendly Practice. Consider the specific reasons why you want your practice to participate in this program and be able to talk about them with others.



AAFP membership

At least one veterinarian at your clinic must be a member of the AAFP in order to become a Cat Friendly Practice. If you are not already an AAFP member, please join us at www.catvets.com.

STEP 2

Create excitement at work

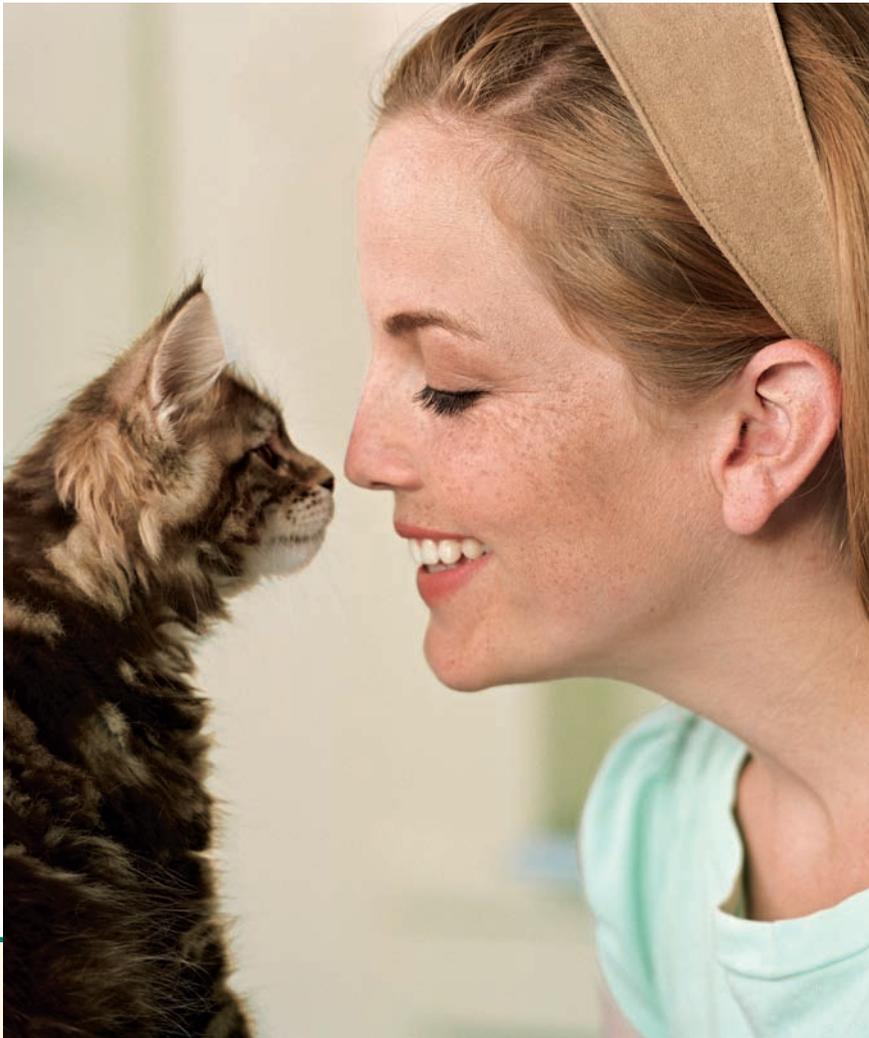
Ok, you have determined your reasons for wanting to become a Cat Friendly Practice. Now, you are ready to share your vision with your co-workers.

Communicate your vision

Tell your co-workers why your particular veterinary clinic should want to become a Cat Friendly Practice. Go through your reasons, point by point, and convey your enthusiasm for the program. Consider any objections that your co-workers may have and be ready to address those objections. Utilize the Bayer Veterinary Care Usage Studies to gain key points from research to support the need to become a Cat Friendly Practice.

Build interest

Find out how your co-workers feel about the program. Ask questions. Ponder the concerns of others and, if you do not already have an answer, figure out how to resolve these initial concerns. Keep an open dialog with co-workers who agree and disagree with your interest in the program. Be patient and continue to try to build interest and gain a consensus.



Assemble the team

Give each interested co-worker a job description and designate as many as three individuals as Cat Advocates. Cat Advocate(s) must be knowledgeable about the feline-focused standards and will lead the implementation of practice policies and procedures to support a cat-friendly environment. Set consistent meeting times every week so you will be able to assess your team's progress.

STEP 3

Understand the documents

Once your team is assembled, you want to get down to the nuts and bolts of what it takes to be a Cat Friendly Practice. You will have many tasks and areas of the clinic to consider as your team works through the process. As an AAFP member, your clinic can visit <http://catfriendlypractice.catvets.com> to log in. From there, you will need to download or print these important documents:



- » **Cat Friendly Practice Program Checklist.** The checklist contains the various criteria that your practice will have to meet to become a Cat Friendly Practice. The easy-to-use online format guides you through ten topic areas and contains sample video, manual excerpts and additional educational resources. There is also a downloadable paper checklist that you can print out to help you walk through and assess your clinic.
- » **A Guide to Creating a Cat Friendly Practice.** This document contains helpful educational information regarding cat behavior and the standards of quality care for feline patients. It also consists of information designed to help a practice lay the groundwork for the delivery of care to cats.
- » **Frequently Asked Questions.** This document provides answers to many common questions and provides helpful tips and solutions for certain checklist items that may require guidance.

One of your cat advocates should take the lead and be the primary person who logs into the Cat Friendly Practice online module. Other co-workers on the team need to read and understand the materials as well. Discuss any information that is a concern for the employees or clinic.

STEP 4

Complete the checklist

On the Cat Friendly Practice Program Checklist, mark off any items that your co-workers or clinic currently meets. Depending on the size and specialization of your clinic, there may be entire sections of the checklist in which your practice already meets the criteria. From there, identify the items that your clinic needs to work on and determine a course of action. Typically, a clinic can complete the checklist within several weeks or months of the start date.

You may want to break up the checklist and assign sections of it to particular members of the team. Breaking the checklist into smaller portions will make the process seem more manageable and allow each member of the team to play a part in the success of the program.

As you move through the process, you can use the online checklist as your official checklist for marking off items that you have completed. The program will save your input online, and you can return at any time to resume.

Discuss your progress

At your team's weekly meeting, you will want to monitor the progress of each section of the checklist. Discuss any roadblocks that team members encounter and do your best, as a team, to provide creative solutions to continue moving toward your goal of becoming a Cat Friendly Practice. If you need help finding a creative solution, send an email to the AAFP Headquarters at info@catvets.com or reach out to colleagues using the AAFP Listserve Community. Remember that the process may take time. Just be patient and keep chipping away at the checklist.

As you go through this process, you may want to login and mark off the checklist items that you have fulfilled in the online program. Your progress will be saved as you go so you can come back and add as you go.

Apply for designation

Once you have met all the criteria, you can complete the application online by uploading all necessary documents, photos and solution explanations. The AAFP will notify your clinic of its acceptance as a Cat Friendly Practice within two weeks after receiving your application. After you are approved, you will receive your marketing toolkit in the mail. Good luck!

