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UNDER EMBARGO

AAFP/ISFM Release Two New Cat Friendly Veterinary Guidelines

BRIDGEWATER, NJ; LONDON, UK; November 2, 2022 – Veterinary professionals worldwide will now have access to two new Cat Friendly Guidelines that promote positive, respectful interactions with their feline patients and reduce the stress associated with the veterinary environment. Published jointly by the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) and the International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM), the [‘2022 AAFP/ISFM Cat Friendly Veterinary Interaction Guidelines: Approach and Handling Techniques’](#) and the [‘2022 ISFM/AAFP Cat Friendly Veterinary Environment Guidelines’](#) cover all aspects of a cat’s veterinary experience, including the journey to the practice and interactions with veterinary team members, as well as the clinical environment.

Endorsed to date by 27 leading international veterinary and feline welfare organizations, the new Guidelines contain a wealth of information and practical tips. Some of the key areas covered include:

- Implementing Cat Friendly interactions and minimal handling that allows the cat to have a sense of control and choice (and training every team member on how to do this)
- Educating cat caregivers about how to reduce distress when traveling to the veterinary practice (including carrier training). Stressor stacking can affect the entire veterinary experience, so starting a positive experience at home is key
- Creating an experience that considers the cat’s natural behaviors and altering an approach to each individual cat

- Creating an environment that considers and implements ways to reduce fear–anxiety, and promotes positive emotions and behaviors that cats find comforting
- Ensuring the entire veterinary team understands species-specific behavior and individual differences (and how this affects the entire veterinary visit/experience)
- Understanding how to identify the cat’s emotional state and the subsequent behavioral response (and what to do in each situation)

Heather O’Steen, CAE, AAFP CEO states, “We’re excited to launch these Cat Friendly Guidelines to the veterinary community. They will enhance feline welfare, caregiver loyalty, and human safety, as well as create more positive veterinary visits for all! They will become the foundation for feline care and the veterinary experience.”

Dr. Nathalie Dowgray, Head of ISFM, expressed, “We are extremely proud of our new Guidelines; they have been a lot of hard work with large amounts of literature to review and multiple time zones to work across, but the effort has been worth it. We hope all veterinarians working with cats will take the time to read them and apply the concepts and ideas to their clinics and to how they personally interact with their feline patients.”

The Guidelines have been authored by experts in feline medicine and behavior, who have undertaken an extensive literature review and also drawn on the valuable experience gained from over 10 years of the groundbreaking [ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic](#) and the [AAFP Cat Friendly Practice® Program](#). These Programs have had a significant impact on feline welfare, changing the way veterinary professionals around the world treat and interact with cats. Key benefits of the Programs include reduced distress for feline patients, less recovery times for cats, decreased risk of misleading clinical findings and test results, reduced injuries, higher satisfaction among caregivers, and improved interactions with cats at future visits.

It is the hope of the AAFP and ISFM that all veterinary professionals working with cats adopt the new Cat Friendly Guidelines. These Guidelines represent the gold standard of interacting with cats and creating a Cat Friendly environment. Veterinary professionals are encouraged to start by making small changes and continuing to incorporate more recommendations over time. The Guidelines, which are free to read, appear in a Cat Friendly Special Issue of the [Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery \(JFMS\)](#) and include a suite of [supplemental resources](#).

The ‘2022 AAFP/ISFM Cat Friendly Veterinary Interaction Guidelines: Approach and Handling Techniques’ and the ‘2022 ISFM/AAFP Cat Friendly Veterinary Environment Guidelines’ are proudly endorsed by the organizations below. We thank them for supporting the new Guidelines.

- American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA)
- Asociación Argentina de Medicina Felina (AaMeFe)
- Asociación Uruguaya de Medicina Felina (AUMeFe)
- Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV)
- American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (ABVP)

- American College of Veterinary Behaviorists (ACVB)
- AniCura Group
- Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists (ANZCVS) Feline Chapter
- Banfield Pet Hospital
- BluePearl
- British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA)
- British Veterinary Association (BVA)
- British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA)
- CATalyst Council
- European Society of Veterinary Clinical Ethology (ESVCE)
- EveryCat Health Foundation
- Fear Free
- International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care (IAAHPC)
- International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management (IVAPM)
- Linnaeus
- Mars Veterinary Health (MVH)
- Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine (MSU-CVM)
- National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA)
- New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA)
- University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine (UTC-CVM)
- VCA Animal Hospitals
- World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA)

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About the American Association of Feline Practitioners

The [American Association of Feline Practitioners \(AAFP\)](#) supports its members and improves the health and welfare of cats by supporting high standards of practice, continuing education, and evidence-based medicine. As a trusted leader in the veterinary community, the AAFP has a long-standing reputation and track record for facilitating high standards, including Guidelines for practice excellence and educational resources. Over the years, the AAFP has encouraged veterinary professionals to continuously re-evaluate preconceived notions of practice strategies in an effort to advance the quality of feline medicine practiced. Launched in 2012, the [Cat Friendly Practice® \(CFP\) Program](#) was created to improve the treatment, handling, and overall healthcare provided to cats. Its purpose is to equip veterinary practices, teams, and individuals with the tools and resources to reduce the stress associated with the visit and elevate the standard of care provided to cats. Launched in 2020, the [Cat Friendly Certificate Program](#) now provides this education to individual veterinary professionals. [Catfriendly.com](#), or Cat Friendly Homes, is the AAFP's cat caregiver educational resource which is powered by feline veterinarians and includes a monthly newsletter, The Cat Column.

About the International Society of Feline Medicine

The International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM) is the veterinary division of the pioneering cat welfare charity International Cat Care. Trusted by vets and nurses, it provides a worldwide resource on feline health and wellbeing.

Cat Friendly Clinic (catfriendlyclinic.org) is a worldwide programme from International Cat Care and its veterinary division, the International Society of Feline Medicine which supports cats, their caregivers, and staff at the veterinary clinic. Because of their unique nature and needs, taking cats to a veterinary appointment can be very stressful, both for cats and caregivers. The Cat Friendly Clinic programme is designed to reduce stress at every stage, including support for caregivers in transporting their cat to the vet, enabling a friendly environment within the clinic, and guidance for vets and vet nurses in handling. It also promotes a partnership of care between caregiver and clinic.

About the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*

The *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* (jfms.com) is the official journal of the [International Society of Feline Medicine](#) and the [American Association of Feline Practitioners](#), and is published by SAGE Publishing.