

“Stressor Stacking” During the Veterinary Visit



Feline Veterinary Medical Association

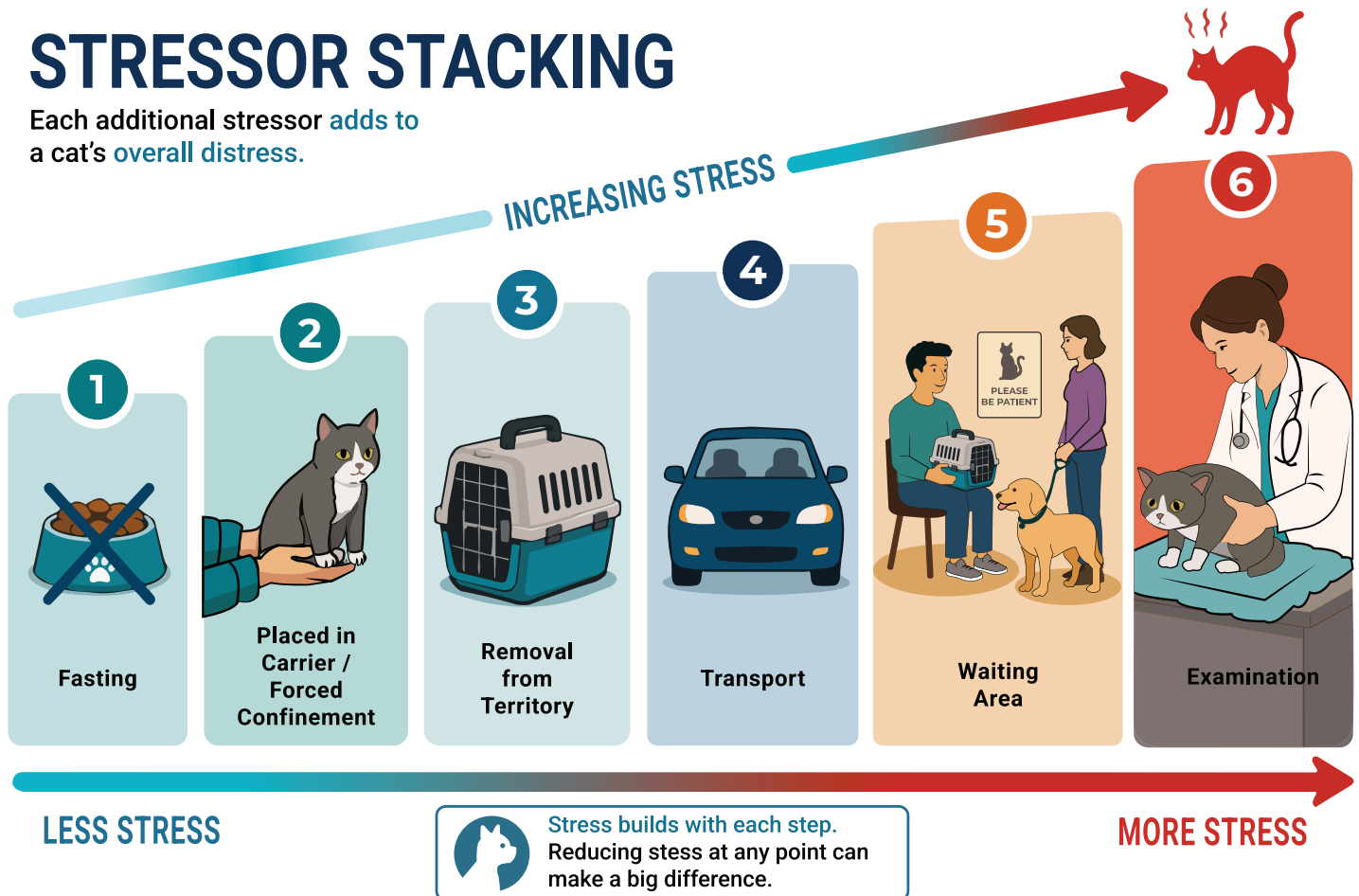
A cat's coping ability is influenced by both the number and intensity of that cat's perceived stressors. For example, cats may cope with being temporarily confined in their carriers at home, but when compounded by enforced confinement, fasting, removal from their territory, transport, sensory stimuli in the waiting area, restraint or handling that is not gentle and often painful, and removal of their sense of security/control, stressor stacking is experienced. This often results in cats being unable to cope and consequently showing signs of protective (negative) emotions and behavioral responses.

Stressor stacking will continue not only during the cat's visit (e.g., in response to the environment, physical examination, sample collection, treatments, and/or hospitalization), but even at home (e.g., medication administration, reintegrating with the other household cats). This creates a negative experience for the cat (who will remember it at the next appointment).

Fortunately, small changes in carrier and transport practices, the practice environment, and veterinary team interactions with feline patients can minimize stressor stacking and result in positive experiences for the cat, caregiver, and veterinary team.

STRESSOR STACKING

Each additional stressor **adds to** a cat's **overall distress**.



More Veterinary Professional Resources – catvets.com/CatFriendly

More Caregiver Resources – catfriendly.com/CatFriendly