

## Teach Your Cat to Enjoy Being Held

Some cats love being held and others don't! How can you train your cat to enjoy being held and touched? We will give you tips to do just that.

Whether it is for petting, grooming, nail trims or veterinary exams, some cats become stressed when they are being handled and restrained. Your cat may demonstrate his dislike for the physical interaction by trying to wiggle or squirm out of your arms. He may meow or growl as you are holding him, and the most obvious sign your cat is displeased will be his tail flicking back and forth as you handle him.

Your cat may not enjoy being held, or having the veterinarian examine him, but this is a necessary part of being a cat. It is our job to ensure he is trained to tolerate, if not enjoy, these experiences.

### *How to train your cat to love being held:*

Start your first training session when your cat is relaxed. Invite him up on your lap and begin to pet him in long strokes down his body, scratch his ears, and allow him to rub his face in against your hand. Be sure to include other parts of his body such as his tail, legs, and stomach. Always use long strokes, and a soothing voice. Practice this step three to four times per day for thirty seconds. After your cat demonstrates he is comfortable with having his body petted you are ready to move to the next step.

Pick up your cat and place him in your lap. Have your hands around his shoulders while he sits in your lap for five to ten seconds. Offer him a special treat and allow him to jump back on the floor. If your cat is comfortable with this step and can sit in your lap for brief periods, begin picking up his foot, letting go of the foot and offering him a treat. Repeat this step as you touch his mouth/treat, touch his tail/treat, rub his belly/treat. You want to work in small increments several times per day to increase his tolerance for sitting patiently in your lap as well as having different parts of his body handled. The goal is to keep him within his threshold for tolerating the handling. Do not try to do too much, too soon where he is overwhelmed and attempts to get away.

Incorporate these handling exercises into playtime with your cat. Encourage him to chase one of his toys on a string for several seconds. Take a brief pause, handle his feet and begin playing again. The goal is always touch/treat, or touch/play as we build our cat's tolerance level for handling and restraint. If you find yourself in a situation where your cat is becoming stressed, take a break and resume at a later time.

Practice makes perfect here, so when your cat is comfortable with you holding him, begin to invite others to practice the same steps. Before you know it, your cat will be able to tolerate being held even at the vet's office.

