



**Sussex North & Brighton Branch**  
Registered Charity No.206630

## **Why we set rehoming criteria for individual cats**

We understand it can sometimes be a frustrating process when you are trying to rehome a rescue cat and find that your application for a specific cat is not successful. We want to explain why we put rehoming criteria in place following our assessments of the cats. Each cat that comes into our care is an individual, with different levels of socialisation and varying trauma and so have their own unique needs. For this reason, we do not have a one size fits all rehoming criteria. Rehoming criteria for each cat are set with the cats needs in mind and rehoming matches are made considering the type of home and lifestyle that would suit the cat, but also considering the owners lifestyle and what would suit them. We do this as good matches benefit everyone and reduces the chance of the cat having to be returned to our care. See below for some of the rehoming criteria we may set and why it may be in place. If a cat must be returned to us because their new home hasn't worked out, it is traumatic for not only the cat, but the adopters too, who wanted to give that cat a forever home, so we do whatever we can to make the right match that will last a lifetime.

## **No other cats in the home**

### **Reasons why we may say this:**

- \*The cat is known not to like other cats.
- \*The cat is frightened of other cats.
- \*The cat has been attacked by another cat.
- \*The cat has been in a multi cat household and has had issues with other resident cats.
- \*The cat has medical/health issues, that means it would not be suitable to live with another cat.
- \*We have no clear information about the cat and as a result, cannot be sure it can live safely and happily live with another cat.

### **Why this is important:**

- \*Cats are, by nature, solitary animals and forcing a cat to live with another cat or cats when it would rather not, is a welfare concern. Your cat may not want a new "friend" even if its previous companion has died. This is particularly true in situations where either the resident

cat, or the cat in our care is fearful of other cats, but another example of this could be a situation where you have a senior resident cat, who in many cases, would struggle to cope.

\*To stop a potential cat fight. We have a duty of care to make sure both your own cat, and the cat we are looking for a home for, are not put in a position that may lead to a fight.

\*To prevent the cat being returned to us because it doesn't get on with the current resident cat/cats.

\*To prevent injury and trauma to either your resident cat or the cat we are looking for a home for, because one cat has attacked the other or has been attacked themselves.

\*To prevent high vet bills that may result from a cat fight/attack.

\*To make sure the cat feels safe in their own home and that they are thriving, not just surviving, and living in fear of a new arrival.

\*To prevent your own cat being injured and/or traumatised by an incident.

## **No children or, No young children**

### **Reasons why we may say this:**

\*The cat has been treated badly in the past and we have history of the cat behaving aggressively to ask for space when their other body language signals have been ignored or not read correctly by children.

\*The cat hasn't been around children and is unknown how it reacts to children and there is no way to safely test that.

\*The cat is showing signs of fear and trauma and requires a quiet and predictable home (Yes, we know some children are quieter and more predictable than others but can the same be said for their visiting friends or the fact that kids grow up and change?).

\*We do not have enough history around the cat and so can't guarantee the cat and the child's safety.

\*The cat has a bite history - a cat does not bite for no reason and despite many people saying "there was no warning" there is always a warning, us humans just can't speak cat and once a cat has bitten or attempted to bite, no risks can be taken.

\*The cat is a kitten, but they have already experienced trauma.

### **Why this is important:**

\*We do assess some cats as suitable to live in homes with children so please don't feel we have a blanket policy that we will not place cats in homes with kids. However, we believe all

cats are individuals so if the cat you are interested in has not been assessed as suitable to live in a home with children of a particular age, please keep looking to find the cat that we have assessed is right for your home environment.

\*The child may be injured or frightened if scratched or bitten by a fearful cat.

\*The cat may be returned to us if it bites or scratches a child.

\*The cat is already traumatised, so no further risks can be taken, as any more trauma, could mean there is no way back for that cat.

\*We do not know enough about the cat and are not willing to risk finding out the hard way when the cat is already in the home. The risk is not worth it for the child and the cat's safety and for the risk your child will be upset if it doesn't work out with your new pet.

\*Despite being a kitten, they have had very early trauma, or lack of quality socialisation during the "sensitive period" and as a result have a nervous temperament. Despite popular belief, kittens are not blank canvases, as by 8-12 weeks their sensitive period is usually over and so temperament is already partially or fully formed and that teamed with the fact that we cannot ignore the genetic element of behaviour, means that despite being young, not all kittens can learn to be comfortable in any given situation or environment.

## **No dogs**

### **Reasons why we may say this:**

\*The cat has been known to have been chased/attacked by dogs.

\*The cat is known to fear dogs

\*The cat has never lived with a dog and there is no way to test for it accurately and ethically, that won't either stress out the cat or the dog.

### **Why this is important:**

\*We cannot guarantee the safety of the cat or the dog.

\*Cats have been known to move out/run away if unhappy in the home and this will be more likely if the dog turns out to react aversively towards the cat.

\*Because the cat may be returned if it doesn't like your dog or if your dog doesn't like the new cat.

## **Must have a garden/ access to the outside**

### **Reasons why we may say this:**

- \*Most cats quality of life will be improved by a garden.
- \*The cat has health issues that affect mobility and so requires its own garden.
- \*The cat is nervous, and finds being outside worrying and so requires a garden for safe outside exploration and toileting.
- \*The cat is aversive to using a litter tray and so having garden/access to the outside will be vital for toileting opportunities.
- \*The cat has been known to be mostly outside when given the choice.
- \*Most cats needs cannot be fully met in an inside only home.
- \*The cat has been reported to have been frustrated and unhappy in a previous indoor only home.

### **Why this is important:**

- \*The cat would struggle to go out and explore and so a garden is vital, so they can go to the toilet and get some outside time without having to roam further afield.
- \*The cat is finding the outside world worrying and will need exposure at their own pace, so having a garden is vital for toileting and for safe and predictable outside space for the cat.
- \*Litter training can be tricky to master, and it is made all the trickier, by not having easily accessible private outside space.
- \*When we rehome some cats, particularly young kittens, they are not always fully vaccinated and so having a garden is vital for the cat, as they cannot go out and about until fully vaccinated.
- \*If a cat is known to enjoy the outside and be outside most of the time if given the choice, then it is not likely that they will be happy and thrive in an indoor environment. This could lead to behaviour and health issues developing which would impact the cats quality of life or lead to the cat being returned to our care.
- \*Most cats are explorers, tree climbers, cat socialisers, neighbour flirts etc and so for them to be able to do all the things they enjoy, access to the outside is vital. We aim for cats that we rehome to thrive in their forever home, not just survive.
- \*If we have history for the cat in our care that states that the cat was not happy in a previous environment, we will not risk putting them back into that environment. Again, this could lead to stress related health and behaviour issues, the cat being returned to us, causing further trauma to them and we want cats who have already been through so much to thrive, not just survive.

## **Adopters must be around most of the day**

### **Reasons why we may say this:**

\*The cat is a kitten, who will benefit from having their new humans around most of the time, to meet the vast needs of a young cat and to help with the kitten feeling safe and bonding with their new humans.

\*Being left alone for too long can be detrimental to the specific cats' physical and mental wellbeing.

\*The cat has medical needs that require medication and monitoring that would not be possible if their human is out most of the day.

### **Why is this important:**

\*The cat may end up with a more nervous temperament as a result of inadequate socialisation as a kitten.

\*They may be particularly human orientated and so being left alone may trigger separation anxiety and distress.

\*Symptoms may be missed that could indicate health issues getting worse, or medication doses may be missed which would be a huge welfare concern.

## **Experienced homes/owners only**

### **Reasons why we may say this:**

\*The cat may display behaviours that are harder to manage and so would be better handled by someone who has dealt with the issue previously.

\*The cat may have more complex or breed specific needs, that in most cases, would likely be expected and so could be better planned for by owners with experience of meeting those needs.

\*The cat may have a health condition that requires regular treatment and monitoring, which is more likely than not to be managed with more ease by someone with experience of this.

### **Why is this important:**

\*Behaviour issues are one of the main reasons that cats are given up to a rescue centre and if someone has not had experience of a particular behaviour issue, it is more likely to be mismanaged and escalated, which may lead to the cats' return.

\*Behaviour issues can be a lot to deal with, not only for the cat, as there is usually a negative emotional component behind most behaviour issues, but also for the owner and you never really know how difficult something is to manage until you are having to deal with it yourself, which could lead to the cats return if the owner decides that they can't manage it.

\*Certain breeds, such as Persians and other brachycephalic breeds are prone to certain health and/or behaviour problems that would be easier spotted/managed and treated by an experienced home/owner.

\*Some health issues require ongoing treatment and management, such as monitoring and knowing what signs to look for that may indicate the cats needs further medical intervention. Experience with monitoring health issues means signs are less likely to be missed that could indicate decline or improvement. A lot of treatment also requires a certain amount of formal handling, to administer treatment, such as restraint for medications such as eye drops and confidence in giving medicines that may require injections etc. For the best chances of accurate monitoring and treatment, experience would be preferred.

## **Must be a quiet home**

### **Reasons why we may say this:**

\*The cat may be timid or easily startled.

\*The cat may have a health condition brought on by stress, such as cystitis.

\*The cat may have come from a busy home, and it is reported they were unhappy or didn't cope.

\*The cat may be recovering from surgery and need peace to do that.

### **Why is this important:**

\*A timid cat is usually timid by temperament and so will not "Come around" and learn to cope in a busy or noisy environment. If we know a cat would be unhappy in a certain environment, we will not rehome them there.

\*There are many health and behaviour issues that are brought on by stress. If we know a cat has a history of developing or exhibiting any conditions related to stress, we will not take the risk of putting them in any avoidable stressful situations. The cat may be unhappy, run

away, or be returned to us if they develop any sickness or behaviour issue, that could have been avoided.

\*If we have had a cat bought into our care as they were not coping in a busy environment, we will not take the risk of rehoming them back into one. The cat may be unhappy, run away, or be returned to us if they are not coping.

\*When any animal is recovering from surgery or any health condition, they need quiet predictability and in some cases need to be kept as still as possible as to not aggravate any healing wounds. For this reason, we would not rehome a recovering cat to a busy home.

## **Should only be rehomed to low cat population area**

### **Reasons why we may say this:**

\*The cat has been reported to have got into fights with neighbourhood cats in the previous home.

\*The cat has shown signs of intensely disliking other cats in the cattery whilst in our care and has reacted aggressively towards them.

\*It has been reported that the cat was very afraid of neighbourhood cats whilst in the previous home.

\*The cat has shown signs of being very afraid of other cats in the cattery whilst in our care.

### **Why is this important:**

\*If a cat has been reported to have gotten into fights or behaved aggressively towards other cats in the neighbourhood, this could lead to injuries, to both the cat in question and to neighbourhood cats. Fights can lead to injury which can lead to costly vet fees and fights can also cause or exacerbate any behaviour issues around other cats due to negative associations.

\*If a cat is particularly scared of other cats, having a high cat population in the area may lead to the cat being too scared to go outside, which will impact their quality of life.

## **Must be an indoor only cat**

### **Reasons why we may say this:**

\*The cat has an illness or disability that would mean being able to access the outside or re-access the inside may prove difficult.

\*The cat has a disability, such as sight or hearing loss, that would mean that may struggle to keep themselves safe from hazards such as traffic. Or may lack the senses in order to find their way back home.

\*The cat may have a physical disability which would mean it could not jump or run to escape danger or predators.

\*The cat has an illness such as FIV, that may be transmitted to other cats.

### **Why is this important:**

\*The cat may end up lost if they cannot find their way home due to lack of vital senses.

\*The cat may end up being injured or worse if they cannot see or hear oncoming traffic.

\*It would be irresponsible to allow a cat that has transmittable condition to risk spreading it to other neighbourhood cats. Equally if a cat has a condition that causes a repressed immune system it should not be exposed to the risk of picking up a disease from other cats in the neighbourhood.

### **Requires an “inbetweenner” home**

An inbetweenner cat, is a cat who tolerates, rather than enjoys human company in most cases. This is usually the result of lack of, or poor-quality socialisation during the cats “sensitive period” as a kitten. This now means that their temperament has been formed in a way that they are unlikely to be fully comfortable in the company of humans. Inbetweenner cats can live in a home environment, but it would need to be with the understanding that they may or may not seek out human interaction and must be allowed to come and go as they please in an environment where it is safe to do so. Inbetweenner cats are often misidentified as feral cats or cats that just need “time to come round”. For more information on what an inbetweenner cat is, what they can offer you as a pet guardian and what would be required to offer one a home, please see our full guide on inbetweenner cats.

### **Requires a “feral” home**

A true feral is a cat who has, in most cases, no contact or interaction with humans throughout their life and especially during their “sensitive period” as kittens. A true feral is a cat who is essentially a wild animal and so can be frightened of humans and find human contact extremely aversive and so would need an appropriate home to accommodate this. Feral cats would not be suited to live in a home environment and would be suited to living on a farm or allotment environment or similar and can be a very effective deterrent for



pests. For more information on what a feral cat is, what they can offer you as a pet guardian and what would be required to offer one a home, please see our full guide on feral cats.

## **Why is all this important?**

Cats who end up in a rescue centre have already been through so much trauma. They have lost their home, their humans and everything they know and are now in a strange place, where despite staff and volunteers trying their best to care for them, isn't a home and can be a very stressful experience for them. In addition, they may have been the victim of abuse and neglect and that is why they have ended up in our care. It is our responsibility to make that the home we choose for these cats, is going to be the right home where they will thrive and to reduce the risk of them being returned and having to go through that traumatic experience all over again. We do not work on a first come first serve basis. We work on a basis of choosing the home we believe is the very best home on offer for every cat that comes into our care, and we have a skilled and dedicated team who have experience matching cats to potential adopters, in a way that will benefit not only the cat, but also the humans. We understand that it can be frustrating when you want to get a cat and this does not happen as quickly as you would like, however being patient can really pay off, as you will be more likely to end up with a cat that truly suits your home and lifestyle, and a rescue cat will find their forever home.