

## MOVING WITH PETS

How to minimise stress when moving home



Change is part of life. Moving homes is a big change. There's a lot of stress and upheaval, not only for you, but also – and especially – for your pets. By preparing yourself properly, you can minimise stress for your animal family members and help them get acclimatised to their new home quickly.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Choosing the new home:** When moving to rented accommodation, you will need to obtain the landlord's permission for keeping cats and dogs (and in some countries, any kind of pets). This permission should be explicitly mentioned in the rental agreement. You will also need the landlord's prior approval to attach a safety net to the balcony or to install a cat flap or cat ladder. Building a permanent outdoor enclosure for cats, dogs, rabbits or other animals will also require prior approval from the landlord.

**Transport:** If your new place is a long drive away, ask your veterinarian about how to ensure a stress-free journey. Animals should not be transported in warm or hot temperatures, so aim to travel early in the morning or late in the evening.

**Redecorating:** If at all possible, try to get any painting in your new home completed a few days before the move; the strong odours emitted by paints and varnishes can make it difficult for your pets to get acclimatised to their new home.

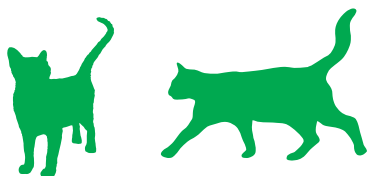
**Neighbours:** If your cats or dogs will be allowed outside, try to talk to your new neighbours in advance in order to identify any potential conflicts and sources of danger. If this can't be done in advance, aim to introduce yourself and your animals to your neighbours as soon as possible after you have moved in.

**Change of address/reporting requirements:** Don't forget to contact the database company your dog's or cat's microchip is registered with to provide your new details. If applicable, also update the information on any address capsules/tags on collars. In some countries, like Switzerland, dogs have to be deregistered from their old residential community and re-registered at the new one. Check with your local authorities for the requirements for dogs. Special rules can also apply to keeping of exotic animals, so make sure you check with the relevant authority.

**Veterinarian:** Research veterinary practices near your new place of residence well in advance and save their number(s) in case of an emergency. Pay attention to the veterinarian's specialisms, especially for exotic animals.

**Food/Water:** Continue feeding your animals the same food in their new home that you used to feed them in your old place. For particularly sensitive animals, it is advisable to take some water from the old home to use in the first few days in the new home.

**Improvement:** If at all possible, a move should be seen as an occasion to improve things for your companion animals. You should take advantage of this opportunity to see if you can improve their living conditions.



## MOVING WITH CATS

Cats are the pets that are perhaps the most sensitive to changes. They are creatures of habit and therefore strongly dislike having their daily routine and habits disturbed. Cats who are allowed to go outside will struggle with a move even more, as both their home and their outside territory will change. So, when you move with your cats, you should ensure that the move isn't detrimental to their lives. Outdoor cats, for example, are unlikely to be happy if they suddenly become pure indoor cats. And cats used to having a large territory to roam in are unlikely to be happy to settle for a small garden just because the new home you chose is next to a busy road. You should therefore ensure that you choose a home where your animals will feel as comfortable as they did before.



**Before the move:** Cats are generally curious. Many will find all the excitement around a move highly stimulating and be very inquisitive, especially when it comes to the removals van, so do ensure that your neighbours' cats don't accidentally move with you! Also make sure that you don't leave any hazardous objects lying around unattended (e.g. mirrors leaning against a wall, sharp tools or any small parts), as these could be swallowed by or injure curious cats.

Try to radiate calm and serenity during the packing phase and allow your cats to participate in a playful way. All the usual rituals and routines should be continued, and any cat furniture should be left in its usual place until the day of the move. This will make your cats feel safe, as sensitive or anxious animals can be upset by all the activity and the fact that familiar objects will start disappearing day after day.

It is crucial that you do not replace or wash any of their things: the old scratching post, cat beds, litter tray(s), toys and blankets – all these things should go with you to the new home. As a general rule, it's best to replace as little as possible, including things like the sofa, armchair, bed, etc. Cats will acclimatise to a new place much quicker if they are surrounded by familiar smells. Any furniture you do not want to keep can always be replaced at a later stage, once the cats have settled in the new place. Also, don't replace the litter before moving; this might sound odd, but your cats' used litter is another source of familiar smells that will help them to accept the new home more quickly.

You can support particularly sensitive cats with feel-good sounds (RelaxoPet), pheromones (plug-in or spray), Bach flowers or dedicated medication (e.g. Zylkene, Anxitane). Please note that you should start using/administering these about 10 days before moving day. Talk to your veterinarian if you find that your cats are very nervous.



For indoor cats, plan to secure the balcony well in advance.

**On the day of the move:** As moving day tends to be noisy and hectic, you should take some precautions for your cats. You can protect your cats from stress and keep them safe by putting them in a room that has already been emptied, along with their scratching post, cuddly blankets, litter trays and food and water bowls. Shut the door and lock the room. Put a sign on the door, alerting moving staff and helpers that the room is off-limits. Wait until the home has been completely cleared, then place the cats in a secure carrier and take them, together with all the cat utensils, to your car. The cats should not be transported in the removals van but rather with you as your proximity will help them feel safer. Cover the carrier with a light blanket or towel (ensuring airflow) to reduce external stimuli and keep them calmer during the drive.

Once you arrive at the new location, it is best to place the cats, together with their belongings, in a separate room, until things have been moved in and all doors and windows are closed.

Should this not be feasible, you could put the cats in a cattery for a short period or leave them with people they know and who you trust to keep the cats safe.

**After the move:** Cats will get used to their new home more quickly if you place the cat furniture in a similar location to the old place. It is very likely that the animals will hide to start with. Give them the time they need to emerge and start exploring the new home at their own pace. Cheeky, confident cats may go on a discovery tour quite quickly, while cautious cats, or cats with limited senses (senior and disabled cats), are likely to take longer. Be patient and calm, as your mood will transmit to your cats.

**Cats with outdoor access:** Cats are very territorial animals and many a cat will try to find its way back to the old territory following a move. This can be dangerous and is why it is important to keep the animals inside for the first 4 to 6 weeks. Keep your cats entertained during this time by organising games and food hunts. Even if a cat seems desperate to



go outside, stick to your guns; you will be doing your cat a great favour in the long term. Keep the windows closed or attach a protective grid across openings in advance. Decide in advance whether you would like to install a safety net around the balcony/patio area or whether a small temporary cat enclosure (a 'catio', e.g. from Omlet) will do for a transitional period. This has the advantage that the cats can see, smell and hear their new environment before they're allowed to roam free for the first time. Their 'house arrest' should be ended at the earliest once the cats start behaving normally and are visibly comfortable and relaxed.

Once they have fully acclimatized to their new home and you decide to let them go out for the first time, try to do so just before the usual feeding time and ideally in rainy weather so that they will come back soon. Accompany them so that you can react quickly if something does not go as planned. You could also use a harness with a leash to take your cats outside in the beginning to show them their new environment and the way home. Just keep in mind that there are no 100% safe cat harnesses and not all cats will tolerate a harness.

It should go without saying that every cat with outdoor access should be microchipped without fail.





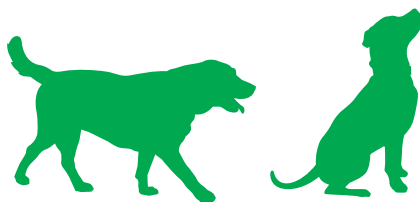
### Tip

Ideally, your cat should wear a safety collar with a GPS or tracking transmitter. This way, you will be able to quickly locate your cat if it does not return home when expected.

Cats that have been used to outdoor access and are moved somewhere where they are no longer allowed outside may develop behavioural issues. To counteract this, you should arrange your new home in a way that provides a lot of variety from a cat's point of view. Attach climbing facilities to the walls and under the ceiling to provide more room for the cats to move around. Play with them several times a day, start clicker training sessions and make sure you provide them with a secure balcony that provides interesting smells and visual stimuli.

If you have moved to a place where there are other people and pets, allow your cats to first rest in their own room with familiar objects and smells, as mentioned above. You can then start to gradually introduce them to their new housemates, under supervision, over the following days.

## MOVING WITH DOGS



Unlike cats, dogs tend to be more relaxed about moving, but you should still bear in mind a few things in order to make the move as stress-free as possible for your dog(s).

**Before the move:** When choosing a new home, you should check whether there are attractive walking paths and areas in which dogs can walk freely. Is there a suitable dog school nearby that uses non-violent/positive reinforcement methods? Once you have chosen the new home, you can start to explore the new environment with the dog prior to the move. This will allow the dog to become familiar with the area and will make it easier for him or her to get used to it.

Do not replace your dogs' familiar things: beds, cuddly blankets, bowls, toys – these should all be taken to your new home. Familiar smells provide security! You can further support your dogs during this phase by using adaptile plugs or collars or medications such as Zylkene or Anxitane.

You should start using these 1 to 2 weeks before the move and keep using them for at least 1 to 2 weeks after the move.

**On the day of the move:** We recommend leaving your dogs at their usual dog day care centre or with their usual dog sitter during the actual move. A dog cannot understand why his or her daily rhythm is disrupted, furniture is being moved, there is a rush and there is hardly any time for him. Some dogs might not mind, but they will nevertheless get in the way of the activities surrounding the move. There is a risk that the dog will be injured by tools lying around or even run away.

If it's not possible to leave your dogs with someone trusted, you should set up a separate room in the old place with the dog's baskets, food, water and toys. Make sure the room is locked for the duration of the move.

Once the dog can be transported to its new home, you should do it the way you always do it, for example in a carrier or well secured in the car. This is not the time to make changes.

**After the move:** In the new home, you should return to your usual routine as quickly as possible and continue familiar rituals. The frequency of walkies, eating times and games in the usual rhythm help provide a feeling of safety. Be even more generous than usual when it comes to cuddles and treats during the upheaval. Licking mats and snuffle mats are another way to help provide a sense of calm in the new home.

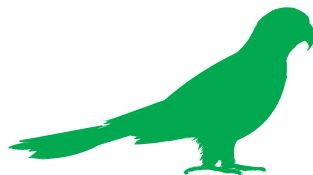
Although dogs tend to get used to a new home more quickly and more easily than cats, a move to a new home will mean a change of territory for them too. So, give your dogs plenty of time to explore the new surroundings on their walkies. Don't explore the entire area on the first day – give them ample time to sniff everything. Also remember that even a dog who is used to being alone may struggle in the first few days. So, plan plenty of time for this to become a normal routine again.



### Tip

In the initial period, you should keep your dog safe by using a safety harness and a tracker, especially if it is an anxious dog.

## MOVING WITH BIRDS



A move is loud and hectic, which means lots of stress for birds. They should therefore be kept in a very quiet place until the final moving day. If you have the option, let your birds stay with trusted friends for a few days. This will allow for you get everything done in peace without the birds being affected by the upheaval.

Your bird cage will probably be too large or bulky for transporting the birds. It is best to use a small cage for this purpose, like you use for veterinary visits. The transport cage should be sparsely furnished, one or two perches should be sufficient. You can line the cage's floor with kitchen paper instead of the usual bedding. For longer distances, you should provide food and water and allow a sufficient number of breaks, as birds tend not to eat or drink in a moving car. Seed balls/cobs are better for food on the move than loose grains. Cucumber or apple slices, or similar, can be used as a water substitute. The cage should be covered with a dark cloth, taking care that fresh air is always flowing. It is essential to avoid drafts. The cage must be securely fastened and the ride should be as smooth as possible – try to avoid bumpy roads, sudden acceleration or sudden braking.

And remember: Birds need to fly freely every day! Commercially available cages are usually too small for species-appropriate housing. You can use the move to optimize the living conditions of your feathered friends. The aviary or bird room at the new location should be set up and ready for the birds to move in. Leave on a night light (socket light) during the first few nights; this will help the birds to acclimatise, as strange noises in the dark may frighten them at first.







## MOVING WITH RODENTS OR RABBITS



Small animals are very sensitive to the noise generated during a move. They are easily scared by the noise and the many people. A pet sitter would be the best option here, too.

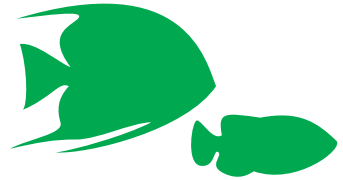
It is best to move hamsters or mice in their own cage – and only once everything in the new home is ready and there is no more noise or commotion. It is important that nothing can tip over and injure the animals during transport.

If their home cage is too large for safe transport, use a safe transport cage, along with some of the bedding and a house, to move your animals to their new home. It is best to cover the cage with an air-permeable dark cloth. For long journeys, make sure you provide food and water.

For rabbits and guinea pigs, you should ensure that the outdoor enclosure or the animal room is ready for them to move in as soon as they get to the new home. The cage should only be used as a means of transport, not as a home!

These types of animals need plenty of exercise and a move offers the opportunity to improve their living conditions. The correct way to keep rodents and rabbits is by providing an appropriate run; they should not be kept in cages.

## RELOCATION OF AQUARIUMS



Moving an aquarium is challenging, but it can be done, as long as you prepare for it adequately. There are specialised companies that can help, and the larger the aquarium, the more advisable it is to get professional support.

**Aquarium water:** We recommend filling a few canisters with some of the old water from the aquarium and take it to the new location

**Aquarium filter:** The filter should be kept moist and transported in a separate container/ packaging. Do not clean it under any circumstances, so that it can immediately start working in the new home with the help of the filter bacteria it contains.



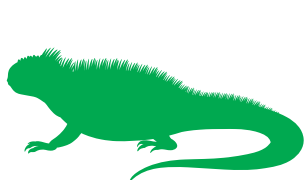
**Transport:** The animals are usually transported in special fish transport bags with rubber closures. For larger animals, we recommend a Styrofoam container; buckets with lids are also practical. When transporting the fish, it is important to keep the ratio of water and air within the fish transport bag to approximately 1/3 water and 2/3 air. This will provide the fish with sufficient oxygen during the move.

Additionally, place the fish bags in polystyrene boxes to protect them and the bag from external influences. To keep the water uncontaminated, do not feed the fish before transporting them.

**Plants and Decoration:** Fish should be transported separately from plants and decoration. Small plants can be transported in suitable bags, larger ones in special, stable packaging. Gravel and accessories should also be packaged separately. The gravel should not be cleaned as the bacteria it contains will ensure a healthy ecosystem in the aquarium.

**Aquarium:** Before transporting it, the aquarium must be completely empty and well protected – for example, with foam material. It should be securely fastened in the vehicle using non-slip mats and straps.

**In the new home:** Setting up the aquarium quickly should be your top priority, as the animals get stressed in their transport bags. First of all, carefully check your aquarium for possible transport damage, as even the smallest cracks or damage can quickly lead to breakage. Add the gravel, plants and decoration, then fill the aquarium with the aquarium water you brought with you. After this, carefully place the fish in the aquarium. Only then can you slowly add new water. Make sure you check the water quality and the condition of the animals regularly.



## MOVING WITH REPTILES

A move with reptiles should be carefully planned and prepared. Many animals require a constant temperature, humidity and suitable lighting conditions. Temperature fluctuations can pose a risk even if it is only a short distance. The animals could become cold, dehydrated, stressed or ill during the move. It is also essential to consider the animals' special rhythm of life (e.g. hibernation). Securing the animals properly is crucial; an escape can not only result in the loss of the pet but, depending on the species, can also pose a risk to humans and the environment.

For this reason, you should not underestimate the requirements for the transport containers! Transferring the animals between containers/terrariums can also be a challenge, especially when it comes to potentially dangerous animals, which is why a specialist should be consulted if necessary. The transport box should be firmly secured in a well-padded polystyrene box and preferably transported in your own car. It should not slip even on winding roads and when braking. It is best to seek advice from a specialist well in advance.

**In the new home:** The rapid construction of the terrarium should be a top priority, as staying in the transport containers causes the animals a lot of stress..





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