



Re-homing adult cats

These suggestions are for cats who have been beloved pets and now, for some reason, cannot remain with their people. For feral cats, stray cats and cats-that-turn-up-on-your-doorstep, the suggestions will be slightly different, but the principles will be the same.

We hope they are helpful and useful.

As the cats' human (whether you chose them or they chose you), you find yourself responsible for coming up with the best solution *for the cat* under these difficult circumstances.

Unfortunately CatzRus cannot take in adult cats. We do not have a shelter – we are a foster based rescue group with a focus on orphaned and abandoned kittens. We wish we could save them all, but if we were to take adult cats into our homes, we would not be able to help the kittens who need us – and we don't even have enough space for all of those! Adult cats find it difficult to adjust to new environments, especially where there are other cats. It is also very difficult to re-home cats over the age of 6 months even though that's when their delightful personalities and characters are evident and they can really connect with like-minded new humans. (We think that adopting an adult cat is a great idea, but most adopters prefer kittens.)

Some thoughts and suggestions on re-homing adult cats:

BE PERSISTENT. BE PROACTIVE. BE CREATIVE. CONSIDER EVERY OPTION. PUT THE CAT'S NEEDS FIRST. THE GOAL IS TO ENSURE THAT THE CAT SUFFERS AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE. DO NOT ALLOW YOUR EMOTIONS TO GET IN THE WAY OF YOUR MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO FIND THE RIGHT SOLUTION FOR YOUR CAT. NEVER DUMP AN ANIMAL ANYWHERE!

Maybe the problem can be resolved, for example:

Allergies: If allergies are your issue, make sure that your cat is really the problem. Doctors can do specific allergen tests, and we know of cases where the allergen turned out to be something entirely different and the cat wasn't to blame at all. Allergy de-sensitisation could also be an option.

Sometimes people contact us because they are expecting a baby and are afraid the baby might be allergic to their cat. We suggest a bit of research because some studies have shown that “Pets really do seem to prevent allergies: the more cats or dogs you live with as an infant, the lower your chance of developing asthma, hay fever or eczema.” <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2188610-the-more-pets-you-meet-as-a-baby-the-lower-your-risk-of-allergies/>

Complexes that prohibit cats: If you have no choice but to move into a complex that prohibits cats, it is worth exploring your legal options and rights very carefully. We have some letters and documents that could help you plead your case. If your cats will adjust to being indoor cats, that could be an option worth considering.

If keeping your cat(s) *really* isn't an option, then please think about the following:

Only you know the temperament of your cat(s) and how they might adjust to various situations and environments. The solution that might work for one cat, will not work for every cat. you will need to do what is right for *each* cat that is relying on you to make the best decisions on their behalf. The age and health of your cat must also be considered. If your cat is elderly and/or unhealthy, then do the right thing and please don't make someone else do it!

Start looking for a suitable new home for your cat(s) as soon as you become aware that it will be necessary. Starting a week before your emigration is just not good enough. Ask family, friends, friend-of-friends... However, do not apply emotional pressure. A cat does not deserve to live in a home where it is actually unwanted.

If you are able to, consider offering to cover your cat's expenses in their new home. There are many cat

lovers who just can't afford a cat. If you could help with finances, even getting food and litter delivered when necessary, it will be a whole lot easier to find a good home for your cat. You would need to draw up a contract that would include regular vet check-ups and arrange with your vet that they will discuss any treatments with you before proceeding. It will take some thought and effort and ongoing commitment, but it could be a good option.

Take *good* photos of your cat. Most happy adoptions happen because of a cute eye-catching photo. Make posters, write about your cat's personality, explain their preferences, fears and dislikes. Do everything you can to make a human think "that sounds like my kind of cat". Be entirely honest – or you will just make problems for your cat and the adopter down the road. Share the posters everywhere.

Please consider requesting space in a cat shelter *as a very last resort*. It is your responsibility, if at all possible, to find a new home for your cat. Shelter environments are very stressful for most cats, and there just isn't enough space for all the cats that shelters are asked to take in. There is no guarantee that your cat will find a new home from the shelter. They may spend the rest of their lives there. Some shelters are forced to euthanize cats who have been there for a certain time. Consider this option cautiously and carefully. Your cat will need to have the right temperament for shelter-life: confident and friendly. If your cat is terrified of every noise and sudden movement, or if he is a fighter: then please don't do that to your cat or the shelter manager.

Currently over 4 million South African companion animals are homeless, living on the street or in shelters. Adding more numbers to this horrifying statistic is neither wise nor kind. This is why responsible pet ownership (including sterilisation) and responsible re-homing is so important.



If you have carefully considered all the options and factors, including the temperament, health and age of your cat, and you conclude that the kindest and best option for your cat(s) is going to be euthanasia, then let us talk for a moment about this very difficult decision.

This decision is heartbreaking for the human, but can often be the right decision for the cat. Our goal should be to give our cats the best lives possible. Where this is not possible, then our higher calling is to minimise suffering, be it physical suffering or be it trauma. All caring cat owners know that fear and emotional trauma can be almost as bad for a cat as physical suffering.

Some people will lambaste you for your decision. They are not responsible for your cat's well-being. You are.

If you decide you need to walk this difficult road for the sake of your cat, call your vet and talk it through with them so that they are prepared for your visit. Understand that there will be costs involved.

Take your cat to a vet who will administer a sedation to your cat before euthanasia and will allow you to stand with your cat. Consider taking a friend along. Plan that you won't have to go home alone. Know that you will grieve and try to build a supportive structure around yourself of people who understand your tough brave decision and your loss. Don't expect everyone to understand.

Comfort yourself with the knowledge that your cat knew your love right to the end. Although you suffer, your cat does not. You will not have to wonder how they are coping in a crowded shelter or if your timid cat is ok in a strange new environment.



We truly hope that as many cats as possible will be able to live the happy lives we wish for all of them. We hope you will be able to find the best option for your cat if you are no longer able to care for them.