

## ***Moving and New Locations***

Although one might not immediately see “moving” as related to “unusual vocalizations”, there is a very common thread that links the two issues, so I thought I’d place them together: disorientation. Just as moving a pet, either permanently or temporarily, to a new location can lead to “toilet troubles”, as mentioned briefly in that section, so can it lead to changes in other types of behavior that can be perplexing, and often disturbing, to both pet and human. Looking at the topic of location changes from the point of view of the animal can be very helpful in solving, and sometimes even preventing, some of the problems that can occur.

An animal being moved to a new location is not going to understand what's happening, especially if it's all dumped on him at once. He won't know where he is, or that he belongs there. If he's being put temporarily into a kennel situation, he may even worry that his person has abandoned him.

From the start, the act of moving in itself can be scary. Strangers traipsing in and out, taking the family's belongings out to a big truck, moving furniture out the door, turning familiar space into a foreign landscape ... if you look at it through their eyes, you should be able to understand how upsetting it can be.

Although this section focuses primarily on moving house, much of it can also apply to adopting a new pet, or bringing a pet to a kennel, pet sitter's or other temporary arrangement.

As always, it helps to try to think like your animals would, and perceive the situation from their unique viewpoint. What is important to a dog, cat, bird or other pet as he adjusts to his environment? What will be the most difficult thing for him to adjust to?

Dogs, for example, are very scent-oriented. All animals smell better than we people do (there could be a joke in that, but we won't go there.... ) but canines in particular are very dependent on their sense of smell. Therefore, one simple solution to helping a dog feel comfortable in a new home, is to transport familiar smells before you transport the dog. Having something he recognizes and feels comfortable with in place when he moves in will give him something to anchor to.

Birds are very visual. If it's possible to set up the bird's room with familiar objects from home before you move her, it will go a long way toward helping her adjust.

Cats are possibly the hardest animals to move. Cats tend to be oriented to energy, and they anchor their own energy fields to objects and places. Therefore, when one moves a cat, one is literally amputating the cat from his environment. This is one reason it is very urgent to keep cats who normally go outdoors inside for quite a long time after moving. I recommend at least three months, and then only supervised outings for a long while ... the energetic ties to the old home are very strong, and a cat cannot help trying to follow them when he feels their pull. When moving house, it's very helpful if you can bring objects that the cat is accustomed to along and have them in place before you move the cat himself. It will be easier for him to attach to his new location, if there are already anchors in place that he is, quite literally, connected to. This amputation is also the reason many owners report that their cats become depressed after a move ... it actually, quite literally, hurts some cats to be moved from their familiar places.

One caution I cannot stress strongly enough is for the person to be absolutely rabid about keeping their animals secure. Be paranoid, be fanatical, jump all over people about keeping doors closed. If necessary, put the animals into a back room during moving day ... both out of the old and into the new houses. Lock the door, keep only one copy of the key. Put up signs all over the place threatening bodily harm to anyone who opens the door. I cannot count the vast number of times I've received frantic calls from people who have lost a beloved pet because a workman left a door or gate open! (These cautions also apply to having workmen who are not moving-related into the house, such as painters or plumbers. If you have guests in the house, lesser versions of these warnings are appropriate as well.)

In the new place, it's best to set up one room in advance, move all the animals into it with food, water, litter boxes, and lock it up tight. Then, particularly with cats, give the animal a few days to accustom to that room. They need to lay down new anchors, as it were, before being allowed access to other parts of the house. Once you're removing barriers, do so gradually, letting the pet explore outward from this new "central headquarters", applying his scent and connections as he goes. Being in a big rush to acclimate a pet to a new place often leads to confusion, so be patient with your friend, and let him meet the new house gradually and at his own comfort level.

Of course there will be those animals who are dying to explore, and will let you know vocally that the "a little at a time" approach is not for them. Be flexible if this is the case, of course, you want to find a balance between security and adding more stress by being too restrictive. Try to supervise excursions, and consider closing the animals with you in your own bedroom at night, to give them a sense of family and security. One area you can not "give" on, though, is letting that outdoor cat out the door! He's just going to have to learn patience until he's so firmly ensconced in the new digs that he won't be inclined to follow the pull of energy back toward the old.

**A True Story:** *Cats really do keep ties to old homes for a very long time. Many, many years ago, a chocolate-point kitten was born in our home. Sasha, as a baby, was adopted by a lovely lady in a neighboring state. When Sasha was nine years old, his beloved human died. Arrangements were made, with the help of friends, to bring Sasha back home to us. He arrived looking very different from the little cocoa-faced kitten we remembered ... but Sasha remembered quite a bit, and illustrated that in a surprising way. When we first let him out of the carrier, he went right to the master bedroom closet, where in fact he had been born, and began climbing all over. He was secured in the bedroom for some time, and showed us when he was quite ready to be allowed back out into the house. When released, he went right for the cabinets over the refrigerator, the top of which was a favorite kitten exploration place. He settled right in up there, his new favorite spot from which to survey his domain. A few days later, I looked up to see the corner of a blanket hanging over the edge, and could see that it was a baby receiving blanket. "Oh, how nice," I thought, "Someone gave Sasha a blanket to lay on." However, when questioned, no one in the house knew what I was talking about. Sasha had gone, on his own, into the linen cabinet in the second bathroom, and dragged his own blanket to his napping place. That, however, was not the most surprising bit. I climbed on a stepstool to get a better look at the blanket, and then went back to old kitten baby pictures. Sasha had not only picked out "a" blanket, he'd chosen the very blanket that had lined the kitten bed when he was just a tiny baby.*

Another issue people often have problems with after a move is house training. Cats forget where their litter boxes are and reliable dogs suddenly start having accidents. Remember that animals don't always generalize such things very well, and be prepared to do a little 'refresher

training' with your pets when you move. The dog has to learn where the new doors are, where the yard is, and where in the yard it's okay for him to go. The cat has to be anchored enough to the new rooms to remember from the opposite end of the house where she left her litter box. This is another good reason for restricting freedom in the new house at first. It helps the animals to gradually learn what is what, and where is where, with confidence.

Talking with your animals, well in advance, about a move always helps the process. Remember, when you talk to them, to paint mental images. Find familiar comparisons when discussing time ... "It will take as long to get there as it does to go to grandma's house" is going to be easier for a dog to grasp than, "It will take two hours in the car." If it's possible to take a dog to the new place for a few visits, and let her leave her scent in the yard, that will also be very helpful. That's a little harder with cats, birds and other pets, of course, but consider bringing some "scent" from the new house home to the old for introduction purposes if possible. When talking to them, remember to include mental images of things like neighbors and their pets, any unusual landmarks or noises in the new neighborhood, and other major differences. Moving a cat from the country into a busy city, for example, is going to be less of a culture shock if her person has been successful in "playing" sounds and images for her ahead of time.

Moving is always stressful for everyone involved. Hopefully, by seeing things from an animal's viewpoint, preparing a few things ahead, and having a plan for their comfort and safety when they arrive, you can remove some of that stress for both you, and for your animal friends.

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