



Stanhope Park Veterinary Hospital

CAT FLAPS

Having a window kept slightly open is one way to allow your cat freedom to come and go as they please, but this obviously poses a security risk. Another option is to open and close the door when your cat wishes to go in or out, which is not only quite inconvenient, but potentially stressful for your cat, especially if you are not around when they need to go out to eliminate or to escape from threats or stressors, within the home or from outside.

Cat flaps are a great idea both for you and your cat, but consideration should be taken to the type of cat flap and its location within the home.

WHERE TO FIT A CAT FLAP

- Your cat should have easy access to the cat flap from both indoors and outdoors. Think ahead to the future when your cat may find climbing or leaping up to reach the cat flap more difficult or uncomfortable. Your cat may also need to access the cat flap quickly and easily if they are being chased or threatened by something outside. If the cat flap can only be fitted somewhere off the ground, then consider providing a ramp or steps for easy access.
- Fit the cat flap well away from your cat's important resources, such as food, water, and resting places. Food, or even a comfy bed placed near the cat flap might encourage other cats to come in through the flap, whilst having important resources placed near to a potential entry point could be quite stressful to your cat due to the potential threat of entry from an intruder.
- Litter trays should also be positioned well away from a cat flap. Cats can feel very vulnerable when toileting and may be reluctant to use a litter tray located near to an entrance or exit.
- When a cat ventures outside, they are leaving the safety and security of their home, and heading into a world of potential dangers such as other cats or dogs in the neighbourhood. This can make cats feel vulnerable when going out through the cat flap, especially if leaving a dimly lit room into bright sunshine, or from bright artificial light into darkness, when the eyes need time to adjust. Providing somewhere to hide outside the cat flap, before venturing further afield can help provide a sense of security – bushy plants are ideal for this (remember to always check that plants are safe for your cat as many can cause toxicity if eaten or even just by contact). Try to avoid placing large solid objects nearby though, as these can provide a vantage point for other cats to ambush your cat when using the cat flap.

If you have any questions about your pets, call us on 01325 620968 or ask a member of our team



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TYPES OF CAT FLAPS

The easiest and cheapest cat flaps to install are those that are simply a flap that your cat can push through. These however, will not stop other cats (and also potentially wild animals!) entering into your home. An “exclusive” cat flap is one that can only be used by your own cat(s).

Magnetic or infra-red operated cat flaps:

These are relatively inexpensive and easy to fit. However, they do require your cat to wear a collar with a special tag attached to activate the cat flap. Collars on cats are a controversial subject, as there is the potential to cause injury to your cat if they get caught in it. Cats are also quite good at losing collars, preventing them from getting back in through the cat flap.

The magnetic or infra-red locking devices are often not sufficient to prevent other cats from forcing their way through the flap if they are determined, and the mechanism can sometimes be slow to respond, leaving your cat vulnerable if they are being ambushed.

Microchip activated cat flaps:

These type of cat flaps work by reading your cat’s microchip number (implanted under the skin in the scruff of the neck). A collar is therefore not required, and the locking device is usually stronger than magnetic or infra-red operated cat flaps, as well as being quicker to respond. Some more high-tech models enable you to restrict the cat to one-way access for a set period of time, with programmable settings for more than one microchip if you have a multi-cat household.

Because of their more advanced technology, microchip activated cat flaps are subsequently more expensive, and their design can sometimes make them more complicated to install. And of course, your cat(s) needs to be microchipped (have the chip scanned by your vet to ensure it is working correctly).

TRAINING YOUR CAT TO USE THE CAT FLAP

When you install a cat flap, your cat will need to learn what it is and how to use it. The simplest way to do this is to either prop open or remove the flap if possible, leaving just a hole through which your cat can climb in and out. Spend time encouraging your cat back and forth through the gap using tasty treats and lots of praise. Never force your cat through the gap, as this will be stressful and only deter your cat from using it.

Once your cat is confident going through the open gap, drop down or replace the flap but without the locking mechanism engaged, so that it can be opened without waiting for a collar or microchip to be read. Again, encourage your cat through with tasty treats and praise, and ensure your cat is fully accustomed to going through the flap over a few days, before engaging the locking mechanism.

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