

Cat Friendly Clinic Foundation Criteria

The following criteria form the minimum requirements for all clinics applying to be a Cat Friendly Clinic (CFC). If all these criteria are met, then Bronze CFC status can be awarded. Additional criteria must be fulfilled to achieve Silver or Gold CFC status (see separate document).

Staff Education

All vets and nurses/technicians in the clinic must undertake at least 3 hours of feline specific continuing professional development (CPD) per year.

CPD records should be kept and provided at the time of reaccreditation.

It is strongly encouraged that all other staff who interact with cats and/or their caregivers (e.g., receptionists) undertake feline training appropriate to their role.

ISFM provides access to feline specific CPD, other examples include:

- Reading books (e.g., clinical textbooks), clinical journals and online materials
- Attendance at conferences/seminars (in person or online)
- Completing courses (in person or online)
- Watching/listening to webinars or podcasts

Suitable current clinical books and journals (printed or digital) must be freely accessible to all staff and must include relevant feline literature.

The clinical outcome of cases must be monitored, and there must be an opportunity to discuss outcomes with other veterinarians regularly (e.g. colleagues in the clinic, online forums such as the ISFM Members' Forum, regional meetings etc.), leading to changes in case management where appropriate. Records of such discussions and decisions made should be kept.

There must be ongoing staff education (including new staff) about the CFC criteria, feline friendly interactions, use of techniques to reduce stress for cats in the clinic and the use of synthetic feline facial pheromones.

Cat Advocate

The clinic must appoint at least one person (maximum three) as the 'Cat Advocate' who must ensure that all necessary Cat Friendly Clinic criteria are met and maintained. The Cat Advocate(s) can be any member of staff, if more than one Cat Advocate is appointed, they should ideally represent a mix of staff such as vets, nurses and receptionists. Click [HERE](#) for the full details of being a cat advocate.

Cat Friendly Principles

All staff members must adhere to ISFM's Cat Friendly Principles for Veterinary Professionals at all times.

Cat Friendly Interactions

When interacting with cats, all staff must:

- Adhere to the 2022 AAFP/ISFM Cat Friendly Veterinary Interaction Guidelines.
- Adhere to the 2022 ISFM/AAFP Cat Friendly Veterinary Environment Guidelines.
- Show a gentle and empathetic approach.
- Minimise stress during handling and procedures.
- Minimise the stress of physical examinations - this may include examining cats in the bottom of their carrier, on the floor, on a bench or on a lap; leaving examinations that may increase stress until the end (e.g., examining the mouth, examining painful areas); and direct and especially prolonged eye contact with the cat should be avoided.
- Recognise and respond appropriately to feline fear and anxiety.
- Not use forceful restraint or 'scruffing' of cats, or inappropriate equipment such as gauntlets, cat bags, muzzles and cat nets.
- Use anti-anxiety medications or chemical restraint rather than heavy physical restraint.
- Minimise the negative impacts of odours, bright lights and noise for cats in the clinic.

Clinic staff must also:

- Instruct caregivers about how to reduce stress during the journey to and from the vet clinic.
- Recommend good cat carriers to caregivers.

The clinic must have a written clinic-wide protocol on wellness checks for cats (unless the clinic is a referral only/specialist clinic which does not offer routine health checks). This includes but is not limited to:

- Vaccination frequency
- Routine health check frequency
- Parasite control recommendations
- Routine blood screening – including age of onset and tests performed
- Click [HERE](#) for an example wellness plan which can be used in your clinic.

The clinic must routinely assess pain in feline patients and intervene with appropriate analgesic therapy whenever pain is suspected or anticipated. This includes but is not limited to:

- Prior to examination in a painful cat (unless contra-indicated).
- Use of appropriate multimodal analgesia when indicated.
- Appropriate perioperative analgesia for all surgical procedures, including dentistry.
- Use of pre-emptive analgesia whenever possible.
- Appropriate analgesic therapy for both hospitalised cats and those requiring therapy at home.

An example of an acute pain scoring chart can be found [HERE](#) or click [HERE](#) to visit the Feline Grimace Scale website. You may also refer to the ISFM Consensus Guidelines on the Management of Acute Pain in Cats [HERE](#).

Surgical operations for the purpose of modifying the appearance of a cat or for non-medical purposes (including declawing) must never be carried out or recommend.

General Clinic Requirements

Clients registered with the clinic must always be able to access emergency veterinary care, and they must be informed how to obtain such care outside normal clinic opening hours.

The clinic must ensure that caregivers are aware of who is involved with the care of their cats and who the Cat Advocate is. Having a board/poster in the waiting room listing members of staff, with their pictures and a description of their role is the best way to achieve this, but information may also be provided on the clinic website.

Relevant cat information such as the [Cat Friendly Clinic caregiver leaflets](#) and [cat carer guides](#) must be readily available for caregivers. This must include, but is not limited to, information on:

- The Cat Friendly Clinic scheme
- Transporting a cat to the clinic
- Medicating a cat

Informed consent must be sought for all procedures (including diagnostics, medical treatments, surgery and euthanasia) when the cat is admitted to the clinic – this should ideally be via the use of forms that the client signs to give written consent.

Options for investigations and treatment, and likely costs, must always be discussed with clients. Written estimates and itemised invoices must be provided on request.

The clinic must record client complaints and act on them when appropriate.

The clinic must be able to access information on the management of poisons.

The clinic premises must adhere to good standards of cleanliness and hygiene and all areas should:

- Have surfaces that are disinfected between patients (along with equipment and hands).
- Be free from excessive noise.
- Be in good decorative order.
- Have no offensive odours.
- Have adequate lighting and ventilation.
- Have adequate temperature control to keep an ambient working temperature of 18–26°C.

All applicable health, safety and legal regulations that relate to veterinary clinics in your country must be adhered to. These include but are not limited to regulations regarding:

- Scavenging and monitoring of waste anaesthetic gases.
- Use of ionising radiation.
- The storage and use of hazardous chemicals.
- Data Protection.
- Employment.
- Purchase, storage, dispensing and use of medicines.
- Personal protective equipment (for e.g., dentistry, radiography etc.).

Waiting Room

A suitable waiting room must be provided for caregivers and their cats prior to a consultation – this must contain sufficient seats for routine use and be free of excessive noise. The only exception for this would be a mobile veterinary service/clinic where the consultation takes place within the client's home.

Direct contact between dogs and cats, and visual contact between dogs and cats in the waiting room must be avoided by having:

- A cat-only waiting room, OR
- A cat-only waiting area separated with sight barriers to stop visual contact between cats and dogs (a cover placed over a carrier helps the cat to feel more secure but is not an adequate visual barrier between cats and dogs), OR
- If neither of these are possible, have cat-only appointment times for ALL routine cat visits.

Clinics must ensure cats in their carriers are raised up above floor level in the waiting room, and that sight and sneeze barriers exist between cats (e.g., clean washed covers that can be placed over carriers).

NB. This criteria is not applicable to a mobile veterinary service/clinic where the consultation takes place within the client's home.

Consulting Room

There must be at least ONE clean and hygienic room dedicated to consultations, which must*:

- Have a floor and examination table that allow thorough cleaning and disinfection.
- Have a clean non-slip surface on the examination table.
- Allow complete closure for privacy and safety.

A clean towel or blanket must be used for each cat.

The number of consulting rooms should be adequate for the normal caseload of the clinic*.

Within the consulting room(s), ready access must be available to essential equipment (that is used appropriately) including, but not limited to:

- Stethoscope(s)
- Auriscope(s)
- Ophthalmoscope(s)
- Thermometer(s)
- Accurate, calibrated weighing scales appropriate for cats.
- An indirect blood pressure monitor with cuffs suitable for cats – this is for measuring BP in conscious cats (a multiparameter anaesthesia monitor is not appropriate – we recommend either Doppler or HDO equipment). A useful monitoring form can be found [HERE](#)

There should be at least one examination area in the clinic that can be darkened for ophthalmic and other examinations – this does not necessarily have to be a dedicated consulting room*.

*These criteria are not applicable to a mobile veterinary service where consultations take place in the client's home.

Consulting Room continued

The length of a routine consultation must be an absolute minimum of 10 minutes (although longer is strongly recommended) to minimise stress for cats, allow them to acclimate to the environment, and to permit staff to use cat friendly interaction techniques.

A thorough patient history and clinical examination must be performed at each routine examination and complete clinical records must be kept including, but not limited to:

- Caregiver and patient details.
- Dietary and environmental history.
- Behaviour and preventive medication history.
- Clinical examination.
- Bodyweight and body condition scores.
- Pain assessment scores.
- Other clinical information such as investigations, diagnoses and treatments.
- Laboratory reports, consent forms and fee estimates.
- Vaccinations or medications given.

Hospitalisation

Hospitalisation facilities are not required at Bronze level.

If the clinic does not have these facilities, an arrangement must always be in place to allow hospitalisation of cats, when needed, during the day and/or night. This may include arrangements with another local clinic to hospitalise cats.

If cats are hospitalised for any period of time in the clinic, the facilities must meet the minimum requirements for Silver (see separate document).

Anaesthesia

An operating theatre and the ability to induce and maintain anaesthesia is not required for Bronze level accreditation.

If the clinic does not have these facilities, an arrangement must be in place with another local clinic to enable surgical intervention when necessary.

If cats are anaesthetised in the clinic, the facilities must meet the minimum requirements for Silver (see separate document).

Surgical Equipment

Surgical equipment and the ability to perform surgery within the clinic is not required at Bronze level.

If the clinic does not have these facilities, an arrangement must be in place with another local clinic to enable surgical intervention when necessary.

If cats undergo surgery in the clinic, the facilities must meet the minimum requirements for Silver (see separate document).

Dental Equipment

Dental equipment and the ability to perform dentals/dentistry within the clinic is not required at Bronze level.

If the clinic does not have these facilities, an arrangement must be in place with another local clinic to enable dentals to be performed when necessary.

If cats undergo dental procedures in the clinic, the facilities must meet the minimum requirements for Silver (see separate document).

Diagnostic Imaging

Radiography equipment and the ability to take radiographs within the clinic is not required at Bronze level.

If radiography is not available in the clinic, there must be a clear written protocol for how to arrange radiography if required.

If radiography is available in the clinic, the facilities must meet the minimum requirements for Gold (see separate document).

Laboratory Equipment

The clinic must have basic in-house laboratory equipment including, but not necessarily limited to:

- Equipment to measure blood glucose concentration.
- Equipment to perform basic urine chemistry analysis (e.g. urine strips).
- A refractometer suitable for use with both urine and serum/plasma.
- Facilities to prepare blood smears and smears of fluids/tissue impressions.

Trained staff must undertake all laboratory procedures, and these must be performed in a suitable area (e.g. an impervious bench with hand washing facilities).

Arrangements must be made for more extensive laboratory investigations, either on-site or through a suitable external laboratory.

Medicinal Products

Medicines must be:

- Recorded and stored according to manufacturer's recommendations and statutory requirements.
- Labelled with the date they are opened.
- Prescribed and dispensed according to current guidelines and statutory requirement.
- Disposed of appropriately if out of date.
- Antimicrobials should be used judiciously and in line with current guidelines, especially in the light of antimicrobial resistance.

The clinic must notify all adverse drug events to the appropriate veterinary, drug and/or licensing authority(ies).

The CFC certificate and any promotional material in which it features can only be cited for the specific clinic for which it was completed. Each clinic premises will need a separate application with supporting information.

The CFC certification will need to be renewed annually to maintain registration on the ISFM and client facing websites and to use the CFC status and logo. Annual ISFM Clinic Membership is also required. In addition, a full reaccreditation is required every 3 years.

ISFM may share data submitted with any local ISFM veterinary partner organisation and with ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic commercial partners, but data will not be made available to any other parties.

ISFM may undertake random visits to accredited clinics and may collect feedback (eg, from clients) and reserves the right to withdraw accreditation if any of the above is found to be untrue.

The clinic agrees to the following:

- To remain a Clinic member of ISFM during the accreditation period
- To have its contact details displayed on the Cat Friendly Clinic website
- To display the Cat Friendly Clinic Charter prominently in its waiting room
- To inform ISFM of any changes to the Cat Advocate(s)
- To ensure the Cat Friendly Clinic logo is used on clinic materials
- To inform ISFM of any changes to the clinic which may affect the accreditation