

The Pets As Therapy Temperament Assessment - Cat

You and your pet will be assessed as a team, the assessment will last approximately 45 minutes and is to evidence the behaviours and temperament required. Assessors are trained to conduct the test in such a way that these behaviours are assessed fairly and consistently.

Visiting can be tiring and stressful for the pet, seeing many people in a novel environment. They may be visiting a warm room, the floors may be slippery, there may be a lot of walking or stairs or lifts to get to your visit locations. Sadly, not all pets are suited to becoming a PAT cat but we know they make amazing pets and companions for their owners.

Please note that your assessment will NOT be carried out at your home address, it will be held in a neutral environment for you and your pet.

Cats should

Walk on a relaxed lead, without excessive pulling, using a collar or harness and static lead.

Why? PAT Cats must be held on their lead at all times, they should be comfortable with this and walk nicely.

PAT Cats need to be confident in new surroundings

Why? It is important PAT cats are confident and comfortable to enjoy their visits

PAT cats should enjoy physical interaction with new people, of all ages and having their paws, tail and ears handled

Why? During PAT activities PAT cats will meet many new people who will instinctively want to stroke or hold them, PAT Cats should be happy and confident with this

Take a treat gently without snatching from the assessor **Why?** Recipients of visits love to be able to give their PAT cat a treat. If taken, it is important that they take it gently because some patients, such as older people have very fragile skin which can damage easily

Respond appropriately to a sudden noise or disturbance in the room

Why? PAT Cats encounter lots of new and unexpected stimuli – they should not be overly fearful of this and recover quickly.

PAT Cats should not use their claws when being held or on a person's lap

Why? When cats use their claws they can cause injury to those holding them, elderly people and immune compromised are more susceptible to infection

Handlers should

Demonstrate they can lead their cat in a controlled manner **Why?** It is important PAT cats are comfortable and relaxed on a collar or harness and static lead and listen to your direction

Present their cat in a fit, clean and healthy condition

Why? Visiting can be tiring; it is important that your pet is fit and healthy and visits do not have an adverse effect on their health. You will be engaging with many people during a visit, for hygiene reasons it is imperative your cat is clean and their nails are trimmed.

Understand the purpose of a PAT visit

Why? Visits should not be made to your workplace or at the detriment of your pet, PAT pets are not assistance, support or emotional support pets.

Identify your pets' needs and body language

Why? It is important that you know what your cats' needs are and what they are trying to communicate. When they are stressed, tired or unhappy, you should be confident to stop for a break or end your visit where necessary

Be able to restrain your cat when necessary

Why? During visits there may be a time that you need to restrain or move your cat quickly, it is important that you can do this and your cat accepts it without a negative reaction

Be happy and confident to represent Pets As Therapy

Why? PAT visits bring much joy, those you visit will look forward to seeing you as well as your pet and will want to speak to you as well as fuss your pet

Assessors are asked to make a note of any other behaviours that they may observe throughout the assessment, for example: licking, vocalising stress behaviour, straining to escape. Such behaviours are not acceptable on Pets As Therapy visits. Please see the next page for the main reasons why cats are deferred following assessments

Reasons for Deferral

Sometimes, cats are deferred following assessment, you will be invited to be reassessed at a time recommended by your Assessor of PAT Head Office.

Below are the main reasons why cats are deferred, which you may find useful to consider before presenting your cat for assessment. Deferrals are discussed and considered very carefully by the charity – where there is considered to be an unacceptable risk to the clients/patients that we are visiting the cat will be deferred.

Pulling or uncomfortable on the lead – Cats will be deferred if they pull on their lead or struggle to escape their collar or harness, this indicates the cat is stressed and the handler does not have full control

Trying to escape – Cats must be comfortable in new and unfamiliar surroundings, without trying to escape or leave the room, they should also be confident to leave their travel carrier when initially arriving

Unhappy to interact – PAT Cats are approached by many strangers of all ages and abilities. It is important cats are happy with this interaction and do not find it stressful

Vocalising – Cats that meow excessively, growl or hiss will be deferred, these behaviours can indicate the cat is stressed or anxious.

Claws – Cats claws should always be in a retracted position when being held or on a lap, the cat should not use their claws to hold or knead. When extended, cats' claws can cause injury and they carry bacteria that cause infection

Licking – Cats mouths can carry bacteria; many cats naturally carry some bacteria including *Pasteurella multocida* that is transmittable to humans by licking. Cats will be deferred if they lick excessively

Not socialised - Cats should be well socialised in a variety of locations and venue types. Most cats are comfortable in their own home, or another home environment meeting strangers but it is important that cats are comfortable in new, strange environments outside of the home, happy to meet and interact with strangers of all ages.

Taking food greedily - Snatching food so that the assessor can feel the cat's teeth is not accepted due to the possible risk of injury to the client/patient if the dog is offered food whilst on a visit. Continually using treats as a way of keeping your pet focused or under control is also unacceptable.

Jumping up - Jumping up is not allowed because of the danger of causing injury.

Behaviours such as biting, scratching or aggression are undesirable from a PAT Cat and will result in your application failing.

Considering if your cat may perform any of these behaviours during the test may be a useful indicator of whether they are ready for assessment or they would benefit from a little more time.

For further information regarding your assessment, please contact the Pets As Therapy Head Office

Email: info@petsastherapy.org

Tel: 01865 671440