Hiding Boxes
If they don’t have a box – they do their best to hide
Hide Panel
• Visual barriers between cages
Make Other Adjustments

• **Noise reduction**
  - radio – moved, off, turned down, station changed
  - staff quieter – no slamming, yelling, etc.

• **Night-time light reduction**
• Cats feel more secure when they can survey their surroundings from a high place.
• Add a perch for the cat to get up higher
• Move stressed cats to higher cages
• Cats spend a large portion of their day either resting or sleeping so it is important to provide them with comfortable surfaces.
Hammocks
Familiarity

Unfamiliarity is stressful to cats

- different caretakers every day
- being moved from cage to cage daily
- removing all items that smell familiar from the cage everyday.
Spot-clean when you can!

• Don’t clean the entire cage - taking away everything that smells like the cat – just take out the soiled items.

• If your protocol is to clean the entire cage every day (replacing towels etc.), provide a rubbing cloth on the front of the cage that will stay with the cat.
Rubbing Cloth
Predictable Schedules

• Cats do not like unpredictability – please stick with the same routine for:
  
  – Feeding time
  – Play time
  – Petting time
  – Enrichment/special treat time
  – Chaotic time (cleaning, noise)
Synthetic Feline Facial Pheromone

Has a calming effect on most cats
• Plug-in diffusers emit the pheromone into the environment on a constant basis – but if the room is too large every cat may not benefit from it.

• Spray – walk through 2 times a day and look for stressed cats – spray feliway on a cloth and then put the cloth inside the cage with the cat.
Music

- Soft, soothing music has been shown to have a calming effect on animals.
- Radios on during the day can prevent the cats from being startled by sudden noises.
- Stations with human conversation can help habituate the cats to unfamiliar human voices.

National Public Radio
Through a Dog’s Ear CD
Psycho-acoustically designed music
Human Companionship

Calm interactions can go a long way to help a cat adjust to the shelter
Social interaction with humans

Cuddle time

Play time
They want OUT!
I don’t mean this!
Handling cats to reduce stress

- Cats are control freaks – they have a fundamental need to control their environment and their choices.

- Cats are not good at dealing with stress – they are good at avoiding it (flight).

- They do not like to be picked up and held because it takes away their option to flee.
Handling Cats

• Always use the minimum amount of force/restraint necessary

• Rough handling and extreme physical restraint are counterproductive

• For really scared cats or fractious cats – use maximum restraint – restrict all body movements using a towel wrap.
Towel wraps

• **Goal is that the cat struggles less and remains calm**
Stress Reduction Procedures

• Provide a hiding place
• Provide a high place to be
• Allow them a familiar scent
• Maintain predictable schedules
• Help provide for normal sleep cycles
• Provide a comfortable place to rest
• Pheromones therapy – Feliway®
• Soft soothing music – low volume
• Human companionship
• Get them out of the cage when you can
• Handle them with care and compassion
How long is too long to stay?

• We need to assess the cat’s psychological wellbeing in the environment.

• We need to PAY ATTENTION.

• We NEED to be HUMANE! Remember chronic stress is the worst kind of stress. It damages the body and the mind.
Behavioral Deterioration

• Much easier to see in dogs because dogs often express themselves outwardly.

For cats look for:
- not eating for a length of time
- not grooming (or excessive grooming)
- constant hiding
- complete social withdrawal
- lethargy and depression
Make sound, humane decisions

• Think about the cat’s quality of life RIGHT NOW!

• Not what it could be if ever there was an adopter willing to take a chance.

• Remember – cats live in the moment. They have no idea a brighter future might be in front of them. They only know today and how they feel day after day.
AND - keep them mentally stimulated
Enrichment
What do I mean by Enrichment?

Providing an interesting, complex, challenging, stimulating, and variable environment that encourages the animals to explore, think, learn, engage, and be well – mentally and physically.
Environmental Enrichment

Modifying the environment so that it:

- is more comfortable
- provides more space (larger enclosure, etc.)
- provides more choices (different levels, etc.)
- is more stimulating (views, stimulating the senses, etc.)
Behavioral Enrichment

Stimulating the brain by:

- giving the animal opportunities to perform species-typical behaviors.

- giving the animal opportunities to think and learn.
Environmental Enrichment

wouldn’t that be nice here?
Comfortable Environment

- Soft bedding
- Platforms
- Hammocks
More Space – More Choices

Certainly needed here
port holes cut between two cages
The choice to perch
The choice to hide
Utilizing the vertical space = more usable space and more choices
More space and more choices
The Senses

We should consider all the senses when we develop enrichment strategies for shelter animals.
Auditory Stimulation

Research has found that classical music calms shelter dogs (Wells et al. 2002)

New Age Music
Auditory Stimulation for cats
Wind chimes
Olfactory stimulation in the zoo
Fish oil dabbed around environment
Visual Stimulation
A room with a view
Bird feeders outside the window
Aquariums in the cat rooms
Bubbles!
Moving things outside the cage
Fishing pole toy
Disk Shooter Toy
Perpetual motion toys
Behavioral Enrichment

- Providing opportunities for the animals to think and learn

- Providing opportunities for the animals to perform species typical behaviors
Opportunities to perform species-typical behavior

Cats NEED to scratch – it’s normal feline behavior
Provide scratching boards inside the cages
All animals like to play
Opportunities to play in the cage
Variety is important

Replace the toys regularly so they are novel. Cats habituate to toys very quickly.
Fun with paper
Corn husks and fleece strips
Interactive play
Opportunities to “get high”
Catnip
Catnip
Grow some fresh
Outdoor enclosures
They want OUT!

They NEED out!
To stretch, play ....
And get some exercise
4 on the floor program

All cats should get out of their cages at least twice a week – to stretch, move around, scratch, play.
Cats are social animals

Dogs and humans are a social obligate species – they NEED social companionship to be emotionally healthy.

Cats are a solitary survival species but they also live in social groups – social companionship is important to them too.
Social interactions with other cats

Group Housing
Group Housing Precautions

• Do not overcrowd the space
• Monitor group for mismatched personalities
  - shy, timid cats may be intimidated and stressed
  - bold, dominant cats may be bullying others

• Make sure there is easy access to feeding and elimination areas and that there are enough of each. Spread the resources around the enclosure.
Utilize the vertical space to provide plenty of hiding and perching areas.
Human social contact is VERY important too.

Petting, brushing, play, quiet time together
Providing opportunities for the animals to think and learn
Food Acquisition Challenges
Cat Kongs
Cheap Alternatives

- Egg carton
- Yogurt container
- Pizza box
- Paper bag
- Ice cube tray
Pizza box puzzle feeder
Egg Carton Feeder Puzzle
Commercially made feeder device
Shelter-made - PVC Pipe Feeder
Commercially available puzzle
Shelter-made puzzle feeder
Dogs aren’t the only ones that can use their noses

- Cats are hunters and thus are seekers
- Stimulate their seeking system
- Scatter kibble or treats in the environment for them to seek and find.
Clicker Training

Very effective form of training because its principles are based in science.
Not just for the dogs!!!
Target Training in the zoo
Targeting with the tigers
Target training in the shelter
This simple target game

- Encourages the cats to move about in their cage
- Encourages the cats to interact with a human
- Encourages the cats to think
- Provides the cats with some control (the thing they are lacking most in captivity)

“\[I\] can make things happen with my own behavior!”
“Hey, come here with that darn clicker!”
Out of the cage target training

- Allows for some stretch time
- Encourages them to move about in their new environment
- Encourages interaction with humans
Kitty Agility
Make efforts every day:

• To recognize stress in the cats.

• To reduce stress as much as possible for ALL of the cats from the very first day.

• To keep all of the cats mentally stimulated and behaviorally healthy during their stay.
• THE END

kelleybollen@animalalliances.com