

## Communal Cat Room- Set Up Procedure

Benefits to communal housing:

- Creates a home-like environment that allows a closer and more natural interaction between the adopter and cat.
- Allows for interaction between cats, although some cats do not enjoy this and should not be included with the communal cats. This maintains safety for both the individual cat and the group.
- Allows space for cats to partake in normal cat activity: scratch, run, jump, play, perch and hide etc.

Who can be housed in a communal room?

- Only healthy “adoption” cats should be housed in a communal room setting. All “observation” cats have unknown health status and must be individually housed until they have been determined as adoptable.
- Segregate cats by age:
  - Cats >8 years old should not be housed with kittens/adult cats
  - Kittens <3 months should not be housed with older kittens/adults
  - Kittens are not immune competent until 12 weeks of age, which means that they are more susceptible to diseases that adult cats may be carrying sub-clinically.
- Finally, housing groups should be kept as consistent as possible (i.e. avoid constantly adding new cats to replace cats who are adopted).

Space needed for Communal Cat room:

- It has been suggested that a minimum of 1.7m<sup>2</sup> of floor space per cat is required to avoid high stress levels. This is equivalent to just over 18 square feet of floor space per cat. Cats housed together in the same room should be able to maintain a distance of at least 1-3 meters (roughly 3-10 feet) between each other (this can include vertical distance).
- If an enclosure is too small, there may be an increase in aggressive encounters or cats will attempt to avoid each other by decreasing their activity.

- Overcrowding can cause stress which can contribute to illness and disease.

#### Litterboxes:

- There must be a litterbox for every cat plus 1!
- The litterboxes must be placed throughout the room and not in one location. This will prevent territory aggression amongst the cats.
- For example, if you have 3 litterboxes in the room, but they are all together, the cats see that as one large litterbox and not 3 individual ones!

#### Food and water dishes:

- There needs to be more than one feeding space for the cats.
  - This will prevent food aggression or territory aggression amongst the cats
  - This will prevent certain cats from monopolizing one area and denying others access.
- Food and water dishes must be kept at least 3 metres from the litterboxes.

#### Cleaning the communal cat room:

- NO cats are to be loose during the cleaning/disinfecting process of the room
- The room must be easily cleaned and disinfected with non-porous surfaces. All enrichment items (ie. shelves, toys, blankets, towers) must be easily cleaned/disinfected as well. Please refer to your Communal Cat Room cleaning protocol for detailed steps.
- All food and water dishes must be completely changed daily.

#### Noise Control:

- Loud noise should be kept at a minimum to decrease stress (ie. room must not be located near barking dogs, high traffic areas, laundry room etc.)

#### References:

Dr. Lila Miller, DVM, Sr. Director, Animal Sciences & Vet Advisor, ASPCA  
<https://www.petfinder.com/pro/for-shelters/guidelines-communal-housing/>