

## The Feline Fort® – A defence Against Stress

The Feline Fort®, developed by Cats Protection, is the perfect way to offer hospitalised cats a place to hide; a behaviour which research suggests reduces stress.

Hiding behaviour is an important coping mechanism for many species, and the Cat Hide part of the Feline Fort® would be suitable for small furrries, such as hospitalised rabbits and guinea pigs.



Like all of us, cats need time to themselves to feel safe and secure, yet a recent questionnaire conducted at the annual British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) congress 2013 showed that over 60% of veterinary practices do not currently provide a hiding place for the cats in their care. As a result of a competition on CP stand, Hampton Vets in Cheshire won a free Cat Hide, part of the Feline Fort®, at the BSAVA congress.

“As we all know, it is very important to minimise stress of hospitalised patients to enable normal maintenance behaviours, reduce anorexia, facilitate effective monitoring and handling, and limit any effect on the immune response and optimise welfare. It is equally important to minimise stress of day patients to reduce the risks associated with stress prior to anaesthesia and during recovery,” said Nicky Trevorrow, Cats Protection’s Behaviour Manager.

“Furthermore, stressful experiences can make subsequent trips to the vets that much more difficult for all concerned! Enabling hiding behaviour can help to reduce stress by enabling a normal feline coping mechanism. The Cat Hide part of the Feline Fort® is perfectly placed for use in veterinary practice to meet these needs while still providing easy access to examine the cat.”



Cats Protection, the UK's leading feline welfare charity, has developed the Feline Fort® in conjunction with scientific findings by Dr Rachel Casey, Senior Lecturer in Companion Animal Behaviour and Welfare at Bristol University, who conducted research into the effects of providing cats with hiding enrichment.

The studies, carried out at Cats Protection adoption centres, demonstrated that the welfare of cats in care is greatly improved by providing them with somewhere to hide, and fortunately also showed that cats which hide do not have a decreased chance of being adopted.



The Feline Fort® is a three-piece unit consisting of a cat step, a table and a hide. These can be used in a variety of configurations and allow cats to increase their vertical space, allowing them to feel safe and secure in their environment. The fort is also easy to disinfect, durable and has the added benefit of looking great.



The Feline Fort® or the Cat Hide part is available\*\* by calling the Cats Protection helpline on 03000 12 12 12.

For more information about the work of Cats Protection, or to make a donation, please visit the website at [www.cats.org.uk](http://www.cats.org.uk).

\*\*The Feline Fort® is only available in mottled grey and not in pink, solid grey or blue as shown in the above pictures.