

Research

Evaluation of the addition of in-cage hiding structures and toys and timing of administration of behavioral assessments with newly relinquished shelter cats

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Abstract

Most cats entering shelters are euthanized. This study used behavioral assessments to determine how quickly a cat acclimated to its new environment and whether enrichment eased this transition. Twenty-five cats at 2 municipal shelters were evaluated with 2 separate standardized behavioral assessments at 3 separate times, beginning the day after entering the shelter. One behavioral assessment included an in-cage evaluation, whereas the other assessment involved a stepwise combined in- and out-of-cage evaluation. Eleven of the cats were given a cardboard box to hide in and a toy in the cage, whereas 14 cats were not given these objects. Our results suggest that cats need 72 hours to achieve optimum behavioral scores and a decrease in stress levels based on the 2 separate evaluations. The tests were correlated in their outcomes.

Keywords

welfare; behavior; cat; enrichment; shelter; stress

Figures and tables from this article:

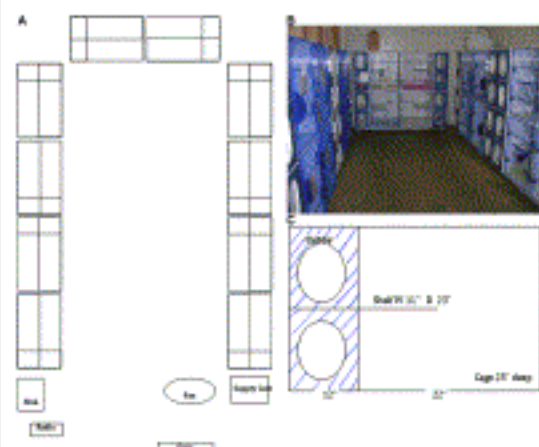


Figure 1.

(A) Top view of CSACS stray hold feline kennel area. (B) Image of stray hold feline kennel area, taken from door. (C) Front view of cage at CSACS. Note "cubby" and shelf as a resting perch. Top cubby holds resting area and bed, whereas bottom cubby holds cardboard litter pan. CSACS, City of Sacramento Animal Care Services.

Figure options 