

ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic

• Accreditation criteria •

There are three levels of Cat Friendly Clinic certification: Bronze, Silver and Gold. For a clinic to achieve Cat Friendly Clinic accreditation, they must meet *all* of the criteria at the relevant level.

This document summarises the major requirements at each level of accreditation. Although there are a number of criteria that must be fulfilled, and a number of these relate to the clinic premises and equipment, of equal importance in Cat Friendly Clinics is the ethos of the clinic and the attitude and approach of the staff.

Staff training and continuing development and clinical governance

Bronze requirements

Veterinarians and technicians/nurses must undertake relevant continuing professional development (CPD), and records of this must be kept.

- For veterinarians this must be a minimum of 35 hours per year (up to 10 of which can be personal study)
- For nurses/technicians this must be a minimum of 15 hours per year (up to 5 of which can be personal study).
- An appropriate proportion of this must be in feline medicine and surgery
- Personal study includes:
 - Reading books
 - Reading journals
 - Reading other relevant material (such as the Cat Friendly Clinic manual!)
- Non-personal study may include:
 - Attendance at conferences/seminars
 - Watching or listening to webinars/recorded lectures
 - In-clinic seminars etc.

Suitable and up to date clinical reference materials (both books and journals) must be freely accessible to all staff, and must include relevant feline medicine and surgery literature.

The clinical outcome of cases must be monitored, and there must be an ability to regularly discuss outcomes with other veterinarians (within and/or outside the clinic), leading to changes in approaches to case management where appropriate. Records of such discussions and meetings should be kept.

No charge is made for being part of the Cat Friendly Clinic scheme, but clinics must either be existing ISFM Practice Members, or must join before Cat Friendly Clinic accreditation is received. Practice membership (www.icatcare.org/isfm-membership) includes a monthly subscription to the Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery for the clinic along with discounts for ISFM congresses and events and other benefits.

Silver requirements

No additional requirements at Silver level

Gold requirements

No additional requirements at Gold level



Cat Friendly Clinic is a programme from the International Society of Feline Medicine, the veterinary division of the charity International Cat Care (www.icatcare.org). The programme is generously supported by:



in Europe



in Asia, Africa & Australasia



in Australasia

Handling of cats and cat owners within the clinic

Bronze requirements

The clinic must adhere to ISFMs cat friendly principles at all times when handling cats and dealing with clients. This includes, but is not limited to, all staff:

- Adhering to the AAFP/ISFM 2011 Feline Friendly Handling Guidelines
- Adhering to the AAFP/ISFM 2012 Feline Friendly Nursing Care Guidelines
- Showing a gentle, empathetic and respectful approach to cats when being handled or restrained
- Minimising stress during handling, examinations and procedures
- Recognising and appropriately responding to feline fear and anxiety
- Instructing clients about how to reduce stress during the journey to and from the vet clinic
- Recommending good cat carriers to clients
- Avoiding heavy manual restraint and 'scruffing' of cats
- Consider ways to minimise the negative impacts of odours, bright lights and noise for cats in the clinic

The Cat Advocate will ensure that all necessary Cat Friendly Clinic criteria are met in the clinic, including implementation of Feline Friendly Handling and Nursing Care

Silver requirements

No additional requirements at Silver level

Gold requirements

The clinic must have written requirements for standards of professional behaviour, appearance and hygiene for all staff



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Owner communications

Bronze requirements

The clinic must ensure clients are aware of who is involved with the care of their cats – Having a board in the waiting room, listing members of staff with their pictures and a description of their role is a good way to achieve this.

The clinic must nominate one or more veterinarians or veterinary nurses/technicians as ‘Cat Advocates’. Their role as Cat Advocate must be clearly displayed for clients (e.g., on a display board in the waiting room) and they must take responsibility for ensuring adherence to the ISFM Cat Friendly Clinic criteria, and be prepared to answer client questions.

Relevant cat information must be readily available for clients. This must include, but is not limited to, having information on:

- The Cat Friendly Clinic scheme (such as the Cat Friendly Clinic client leaflet*)
- Transporting a cat to the clinic (such as the Cat Friendly Clinic client leaflet*)
- Medicating a cat (such as the Cat Friendly Clinic client leaflet*)

** These leaflets are downloadable from International Cat Care (www.catfriendlyclinic.org)*

Clients registered with the clinic must be able to access 24-hour emergency veterinary care, and they must be informed how to obtain such care outside the hours when the clinic is normally open.

Options for investigations and treatment, and likely costs must be discussed with clients and updated as necessary. Written estimates and itemized invoices must be provided on request.

Silver requirements

Informed consent (signed forms) must be sought for all procedures when the cat is admitted to the care of the veterinarian (including diagnostics, medical treatments, surgery and euthanasia)

The clinic must have means of recording and considering client complaints.

Gold requirements

There must be evidence of proactive communication with clients (for example client newsletters in paper or electronic form)

The clinic must encourage feedback from clients and must act on the feedback when appropriate

The clinic must have a written complaints policy and procedure that is available to clients on request. Records of complaints and follow-up actions must be kept.



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Veterinary clinic premises

Bronze requirements

The clinic premises must:

- Be free from excessive noise
- Be in good decorative order
- Have no offensive odours
- Have adequate lighting
- Have adequate ventilation
- Have adequate temperature control to keep an ambient working temperature of 18-26C
- Adhere to good standards of clinical cleanliness and hygiene

Silver requirements

No additional requirements at Silver level

Gold requirements

No additional requirements at Gold level

Waiting room or reception area

Bronze requirements

Wherever consultations take place on the premises, a suitable waiting room must be provided

For the normal clinic caseload, the waiting area must

- Be of sufficient size
- Have sufficient number of seats for clients
- Be free of excessive noise

The waiting room must be:

- A cat-only waiting room, or
- Have a cat waiting area separated with appropriate barriers to prevent visual contact between cats and dogs, or
- Have sufficient routine cat-only appointment times so direct contact with dogs is avoided.

Silver requirements

The waiting room must be either:

- A cat-only waiting room, or
- Have a cat waiting area separated with appropriate barriers to prevent visual contact between cats and dogs

The cat waiting room/area(s) must be sited so that access to the consulting rooms minimises contact with or passing by dogs, and minimises noise

Gold requirements

In the waiting area, cats (in their carriers) must be placed safely above floor level (e.g., using chairs, benches shelves or raised recesses).

In the waiting area, vertical barriers must be incorporated between cats in their carriers to prevent aerosol (sneeze) contamination and direct eye contact between cats – as a minimum to achieve this, clean washed covers should be placed over cat carriers.



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Consulting room(s)

Bronze requirements

Where consultations take place on the premises, a suitable consulting room must be provided

There must be at least one room dedicated to consultations, which must:

- Be clean and hygienic
- Have adequate light and ventilation
- Have a floor and table that allow thorough cleaning and disinfection
- Have an examination table with a clean non-slip surface for cats

Within the consulting area, ready access must be available to essential equipment (that is used appropriately) including, but not limited to:

- Stethoscope(s)
- Auriscope(s)
- Ophthalmoscope(s)
- Thermometer(s)
- Accurate, calibrated weighing scales appropriate for cats
- An indirect blood pressure monitor with cuffs suitable for use in cats

Routine consultation length must be an absolute minimum of 10 minutes, although longer is strongly recommended to minimise stress, allow the cat to acclimatise and to allow 'cat friendly' handling.

Hands, surfaces and equipment must be washed/disinfected appropriately between handling of (and use with) all feline patients (whether in- or out-patients).

Silver requirements

There must be a sufficient number of consulting rooms for the normal caseload, and these must:

- Have enough space for the veterinarian, client(s), cat(s) and a nurse or technician.
- Allow complete closure for privacy and safety

Within the consulting area ready access to a means of showing radiographs (a viewer, or a screen for digital radiographs) must be available

Gold requirements

There must be at least one consulting room that is primarily or exclusively used for feline consultations

Routine consultation length must be an absolute minimum of 15 minutes, although longer is strongly recommended to minimise stress, allow the cat to acclimatise and to allow 'cat friendly' handling.

There must be at least one examination area that can be darkened for ophthalmic and other examinations – this does not necessarily have to be a dedicated consulting room.

Within the consulting area ready access must be available to equipment for measuring intra-coular pressure (IOP)



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Clinical records

Bronze requirements

Complete clinical records must be kept and must include the following information, where applicable:

- Owner (name, address, contact telephone etc.)
- Patient name and identification (e.g., microchip number)
- Species, Sex, Age, Breed, Colour
- Weight and Body Condition Score
- Pain score assessment
- Dates of all examinations
- Investigations and treatments
- Clinical information such as history, examinations, investigations, diagnoses and treatments
- Vaccinations (including vaccine batch numbers)
- Clinical problems
- Prescriptions or medications dispensed/administered
- Any drug reactions
- Laboratory reports
- Consent forms
- Fee estimates
- Details of any referrals

The body weight of all animals to be sedated or anaesthetised must be recorded using suitable, accurate, calibrated scales.

Silver requirements

No additional requirements at Silver level

Gold requirements

No additional requirements at Gold level



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Hospitalisation of cats

Bronze requirements

Hospitalisation facilities are not required at this level, but arrangements must be in place with another local clinic to hospitalise cats where needed, and these facilities must meet the minimum (Silver standard) criteria below.

If hospitalisation facilities are available within the clinic, they must meet the Silver standard as listed below.

Silver requirements

Facilities must be available for routine hospitalisation of cats in a dedicated hospitalisation ward.

Within the hospitalisation ward:

- Dogs and cats must be separated as far as possible
- Visual contact between dogs and cats should be minimised
- Noise from dogs should be minimised
- Ideally a partition should be created between a dog and cat area

Hospital cages must:

- Be secure and escape proof
- Be constructed of non-permeable material
- Have a solid opaque floor
- Have walls and a ceiling that are ideally solid and opaque. They can be mesh or bars, but if so a cover must be available and used so that visual contact between cats is avoided and a sneeze barrier is created
- Be easily cleaned and disinfected (including the cover, if used)

For cats hospitalised up to 24 hours, cages must have minimum **internal** dimensions of:

- 2700 cm² (eg, 45cm x 60cm) floor area and
- 39cm height

For cats hospitalised longer than 24 hours, cages must have minimum **internal** dimensions of:

- 3600 cm² (eg, 60cm x 60cm) floor area and
- 55cm height

A written policy is required for the overnight care of all hospitalised cats, and owners must receive information on the level of overnight supervision their cat will receive.

Ideally cages must not be facing each other or adjoining each other at an angle less than 180°. If cages do face each other (directly or at an angle), there must be a minimum of 2m between the closest parts of the cages and/or a solid opaque barrier between them.

Litter trays must be provided for all hospitalised cats and a variety of litter types must be available.

Comfortable soft bedding must be used for all in-patients (this may include towels, blankets, acrylic bedding, 'igloos', etc.).

The cage must include somewhere for the cat to hide for all patients (e.g., a sack bed, an 'igloo' bed, a high-sided box etc.).

A variety of cat toys must be available for hospitalised cats that are either disposable or readily cleaned and disinfected.

All cats must be identified while hospitalised at the clinic (e.g., use of disposable collars and well identified accommodation)



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All cats hospitalised overnight or longer must have daily in-patient sheets recording basic parameters, with timed and initialled entries including, but not limited to:

- Vital signs (TPR)
- Pain assessment score
- Treatment(s)
- Food and water intake
- Urine and faeces output
- Clinical signs
- Weight (recorded regularly, ideally daily)

There must be frequent and appropriate checking of all hospitalised cats. As a minimum, there should be an examination of *every* in-patient by a veterinarian *at least* once daily *every day* they are hospitalised. Details of examinations should be recorded in the clinical records

Gold requirements

There must be a quiet, calm, cat-only hospitalisation ward for all feline patients that is physically partitioned from any canine ward with a solid barrier. The ward must have adequate and appropriate:

- Lighting
- Ventilation
- Temperature control
- Cages of good condition and of sufficient number for the clinical workload

All cages used for overnight accommodation or longer (with the possible exception of temporary cages used for isolation etc.) must have solid opaque floors, walls and ceilings

For cats hospitalised up to 24 hours, cages must have minimum **internal** dimensions of:

- 3600 cm² (eg, 60cm x 60cm) floor area and
- 55cm height

For cats hospitalised longer than 24 hours, cages must have minimum **internal** dimensions of:

- 6300 cm² (eg, 70cm x 90cm) floor area and
- 60cm height

For any cats hospitalised for more than 24 hours, there should be the ability (wherever possible) for cats to perch as well as hide in the cage (e.g., the cage must have a shelf or platform of some sort so that the cat can rest above floor level).

There must be the ability to isolate a cat with a contagious infectious disease in a separate area away from all other patients and there must be a written policy on how to manage such cases. Staff must be trained on how to implement the procedures, which must include:

- Details of waste disposal;
- Protective clothing to be worn;
- Disinfection of all utensils/equipment and accommodation;
- Designated persons to be responsible;
- Reference to Health and Safety information pertaining to the risks of dangerous pathogens and zoonoses;
- Clear information regarding the demarcation of the isolation area.

Additional hospitalisation facilities

Bronze requirements

No additional requirements at Bronze level

Silver requirements

Washing and disinfecting facilities must be available in the in-patient (hospitalisation) area.

Facilities must be available to maintain body temperature (eg. heated pads) and used where needed

Facilities must be available to provide supplemental oxygen and used when needed

Facilities must be available for appropriate bathing, grooming and drying of hospitalised cats

Equipment, procedures and cleaning/disinfection protocols for in-patients and in-patient areas must ensure the risk of cross-contamination is minimised.

A range of suitable foods and food bowls must be available for hospitalised cats

A range of IV fluids, suitable administration sets and catheters of appropriate size for a range of feline patients (including kittens) must be available. There must be the ability to administer controlled quantities of fluids (eg. either through use of burettes, fluid pumps, or syringe drivers).

Gold requirements

The clinic must include facilities for preparation/cooking and refrigeration of foods. A variety of appropriate foods and food bowls must be available.

Calorie requirements of all hospitalised cats should be calculated and food intake monitored against calculated needs

Facilities to wash and disinfect food and water bowls must be separate from those to wash and disinfect litter trays.

The food storage and preparation area must be separate from the washing/disinfection facilities.

There must be the ability to administer controlled quantities of fluids using appropriate fluid pumps or syringe drivers.



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Operating theatre and anaesthesia

Bronze requirements

An operating theatre and the ability to induce and maintain anaesthesia is not required but an arrangement must be in place with another local clinic to enable surgical intervention when necessary, and those facilities must meet at least the minimum (Silver standard) outlined below.

If anaesthesia is performed within the clinic, facilities must meet the minimum (Silver) standards listed below

Silver requirements

There must be appropriate equipment available to induce and maintain general anaesthesia in a range of feline patients, including kittens. This must include but is not limited to:

- Equipment to administer oxygen
- Equipment to provide resuscitation
- Equipment to maintain body temperature
- A range of appropriate endotracheal tubes including uncuffed tubes and tubes suitable for kittens
- A suitable laryngoscope and topical local anaesthetic for the larynx
- If a vapouriser is used it must be temperature-compensated

Anaesthetic equipment must be regularly serviced and maintained in good working order

Gold requirements

There must be an operating theatre available for conduct of sterile surgery at all times. The operating theatre must not double-up as a consultation room, and must:

- Only contain equipment for surgical procedures ± radiography
- Have easily cleaned surfaces
- Be well lit and have equipment suitable for illumination of surgical sites
- Have an operating table constructed of non-permeable material that is easily cleaned and disinfected and is not used for clipping of patients prior to surgery
- Have a written procedure for cleaning and disinfection
- Have scrub facilities separate from any ward cleaning facilities
- Have a means of displaying radiographs

Equipment that must be available and in routine use for anaesthesia monitoring includes, but is not limited to:

- Pulse oximetry (with a range of suitable feline probes)
- Blood pressure monitor (with suitable feline cuffs)
- An oesophageal stethoscope.

A trained member of staff must be present to monitor general anaesthesia throughout the anaesthetised period. Anaesthetic charts must be filled out (and retained) except for very short (e.g., cat castrate) or emergency procedures and these must include, but are not limited to:

- Date
- Patient identification and weight
- Personnel involved
- Induction and maintenance agents
- Procedure and duration
- Vital signs recorded at regular and frequent intervals
- Any complications

A trained member of staff must undertake post-anaesthesia monitoring, and this must be within a dedicated or designated recovery area.



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Surgical equipment

Bronze requirements

Surgical equipment and the ability to perform surgery is not required, but an arrangement must be in place with another local clinic to enable this when necessary, and those facilities must meet at least the minimum (Silver standard) outlined below.

If surgery is performed within the clinic, facilities must meet the minimum (Silver) standards listed below

Surgical operations for the purpose of modifying the appearance of a cat or for other non-medical purposes must not be carried out, including declawing.

Silver requirements

A range of suitable surgical packs, sutures and sterile instruments must be available

Suitable cleaning facilities must be available for surgical equipment and instruments, including a recognised method of sterilisation

Equipment for sterilization must be regularly serviced and maintained in good working order

Sterile gloves and gowns must be available, and must be used wherever appropriate.

Gold requirements

Appropriate indicators must be used on all packs to confirm appropriate sterilisation has occurred

Sterile packs must be dated, and there must be a written policy for re-sterilisation of older unused surgical packs

Dental equipment

Bronze requirements

Dental equipment and the ability to perform dentals is not required at this level, but an arrangement must be in place with another local clinic to enable this when necessary, and those facilities must meet at least the minimum (Silver standard) outlined below.

If dentals are performed within the clinic, facilities must meet the minimum (Silver) standards listed below

Silver requirements

A selection of scalers, curettes, periodontal probes, elevators and/or luxators suitable for feline use must be available, and instruments must be sharp and properly maintained.

Protective equipment for dentals must include aprons, masks, goggles and disposable gloves and must be used where appropriate.

Gold requirements

Proper dental records and charts must be maintained.

Dental radiography must be available – specific dental radiographic equipment is ideal, but alternatively high-resolution imaging using intra-oral non-screen films or digital facilities must be available.



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Facilities must be available to scale and polish teeth, to section teeth and to perform extractions. Ultrasonic and high speed air driven dental units are recommended and suitable cooling water must be available.

Dentistry must never be performed in the operating theatre

Diagnostic imaging

Bronze requirements

Equipment to perform diagnostic imaging is not required at this level, but an arrangement must be in place with another local clinic to enable this when necessary, and those facilities must meet at least the minimum (Silver standard) outlined below.

Silver requirements

Diagnostic quality radiography equipment must be available in the clinic along with a range of plates/cassettes suitable for cats and kittens.

There must be sufficient provision for non-human restraint of cats such as sedation, anaesthesia, blocks, cradles, wedges, sandbags and supports to allow radiography without manual restraint whenever needed

A record of all radiograph exposures must be kept.

The X-ray machine must be regularly serviced and maintained in good working order and must include a light-beam diaphragm

Appropriate protective equipment (e.g., aprons providing radiation protection) must be provided wherever needed

Gold requirements

Radiography records must include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Date
- Patient identification
- Area exposed
- Exposure factors
- Type of film/grid/screen
- Quality of radiograph
- Names of people present

Ultrasound equipment must either be available at the clinic, or arrangements must be in place to have easy access to ultrasound when necessary (either on-site or nearby)



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Laboratory facilities

Bronze requirements

The clinic must have at least basic laboratory equipment that must include but is not necessarily limited to:

- Appropriate equipment to measure blood glucose concentration
- Appropriate equipment to perform basic urine chemistry analysis (eg. urine strips)
- A refractometer suitable for use with both urine and serum/plasma
- Facilities to prepare blood smears and smears of fluids/tissue impressions

Arrangements must be made for more extensive laboratory investigations, either on-site or through a suitable external laboratory.

Silver requirements

The clinic must also have:

- A good quality clinical microscope
- A centrifuge to assess PCV, separate blood, and sediment urine samples

Suitably trained personnel must undertake all laboratory procedures, and these must be performed in a designated area suitable for that purpose (e.g., with an impervious bench and with hand washing facilities).

Quality control checks must be performed regularly for in-house equipment.

Any post-mortems must be performed in an area not being used for any clinical work at that time, or must be undertaken elsewhere (i.e. at other premises)

Gold requirements

There must be in-clinic facilities for:

- Measurement of blood electrolytes including Na, K and Ca
- Measurement of blood urea, creatinine, and total protein
- Stains (eg Diff Qwik, Sedistain etc.) for use with slide preparations of blood, fluid, tissue and urine
- Appropriate equipment to assess feline blood types

Medicinal products

Bronze requirements

The clinic must notify adverse drug events to the appropriate authority(ies)

Medicines must be:

- Recorded and stored in a clean and tidy location according to manufacturers recommendations and statutory requirements
- Labelled with the date they are opened
- Prescribed and dispensed according to current guidelines and statutory regulations
- Disposed of appropriately if out of date

Silver requirements

No additional requirements at Silver level

Gold requirements

The clinic must be able to access help from a service offering specific advice on the management of poisons



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Health, safety and legal requirements

Bronze requirements

All applicable health, safety and legal regulations that relate to the veterinary clinic must be adhered to, these include but are not limited to:

- Regulations regarding scavenging monitoring of waste anaesthetic gases
- Regulations relating to use of ionising radiation
- Regulations regarding the storage and use of hazardous chemicals
- Regulations relating to Data Protection
- Regulations relating to employment
- Regulations regarding the purchase, storage, dispensing and use of medicines

Silver requirements

No additional requirements at Silver level

Gold requirements

No additional requirements at Gold level

For the accreditation process, clinics are also requested to:

- Provide details of sizes of hospitalisation cages
- Provide details of certain equipment in the clinic
- Provide details of structure of the waiting room
- Provide photographs of all aspects of the clinic



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