

The London Cat Clinic: for nine lives and counting

A purpose built cat-only veterinary clinic that opened its doors in May, the London Cat Clinic has achieved Gold standard accreditation from iCatCare's Cat Friendly Clinic programme. Emily Fowler, freelance writer and cat enthusiast, attended the official launch to discover what it is that makes the clinic so special

The London Cat Clinic in Bermondsey, UK, opened its doors to cats and their owners in May and is the brainchild of Dr Jeremy Campbell – an Advanced Practitioner in Feline Medicine. As soon as you step through the clinic door you can tell this state-of-the-art single-species clinic is something special – from the genuine smiles on every staff member's face, to the air of calm that exists in the clinic. And it's not only the client-facing part of the clinic that's so special, every area from the hospital and day wards to the operating theatre are designed with cats in mind.

Jeremy says, 'Every detail of the London Cat Clinic has been carefully designed for the welfare and comfort of our patients. As cat experts and owners ourselves, we know that cats like to control their environment and they can become easily stressed away from home. At the London Cat Clinic we have created a light, airy, spacious place where cats will immediately feel relaxed, and we can effectively examine and accurately diagnose any underlying signs of illness or disease that are easily hidden if the cat is anxious. From the moment you book an appointment with our friendly receptionist, to the time you leave, our mission is to make sure that you and your cat receive outstanding care.'

One cat that will be benefitting from the clinic's care is celebrity cat Bob (from the bestselling international book/film A Street Cat Named Bob). Bob's owner, author James Bowen, said; 'Bob is going to be a patient here; they've kindly extended an invitation to take care of him so he'll be getting a bit of treatment – get his claws clipped, his teeth cleaned, things like that. The concept of a one species clinic is a really good idea, and you can tell that Jeremy is very dedicated and passionate about cats. I was genuinely pleased when they said they'd like to have Bob as a patient because, as you know, he deserves the best!'

About the clinic

Everything about the clinic and its processes have been designed with feline welfare in mind. Each patient has a longer than average consultation (20 minutes) in one of the expertly designed consult rooms. There are no gaps or spaces behind the plumbing for cats to disappear into if your cat is exploring the room. There are also special 'cat cubbies' in the walls of the consult rooms with steps leading up to them; these are designed to give cats the privacy and enclosed space they need to help reduce any anxiety they're experiencing. As well as being great for making the patients feel comfortable, the



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design of the consult rooms also means owners are more relaxed. Jeremy explained, 'we let the cat come out of the carrier if it wants to, and let it wander round while we have a chat. When I first started doing cat-only clinics I could see people visibly uncoil, and when we started chatting I'd get the information I actually needed, rather than just the information they wanted to give because they wanted to get out of the clinic.' There's even a built-in sofa in the largest of the consult rooms, to give owners a calm and comfortable space to be with their cat in if, for example, the cat had been hospitalised.

The clinic's cutting edge equipment and design, such as the digital radiography system and purpose-built operating theatre, reduce the need for patients to be sent to other facilities for testing and treatment, and every procedure is tailored specifically for a cat's needs. The London Cat Clinic uses state-of-the-art equipment like fibre optic endoscopes that have been produced exclusively to be used by domestic cats. Every area of the clinic, from staff areas and the operating theatre to the hospital and day wards, are climate-controlled and spacious, with lots of natural light (but don't worry, there are tinted doors on some of the accommodation for those cats who prefer their privacy!). Again,

there aren't many places 'behind the scenes' where cats can get stuck, so the staff are able to let in-patients out of their cage to stretch their legs in the clinic instead of keeping them cooped up.

'They can wander in the hospital, they can wander in the lab – we can shut lots of areas off if they want to wander', Dr Jeremy said, 'Sometimes those hospitalised patients need to get out take a breath, so they can go onto some shelves or they can go into some holes, but they can equally just wander around and investigate.'

Keeping cats happy and healthy

The whole ethos of the London Cat Clinic is to make the experience a comfortable and pleasant one for the cats who come through the doors, and every member of the team is dedicated to the same goals:

- Taking pride in their unique service and dedicated to the highest clinical standards and ethics
- Embracing a personalised and holistic approach to help patients live long, healthy and happy lives
- Believing in open client-vet relationships based on mutual trust and respect delivering superior and consistent patient care



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- Committed to animal welfare, caring about their environment and supporting their local community.

Jeremy qualified in New Zealand over 20 years ago, and everywhere he's worked since, from Hong Kong to the US, has built on his passion and commitment to feline medicine. Talking about a cat-only practice he worked at in America, he said: 'The place was spacious, it all flowed, and the staff were happy because it was well lit and they were looked after. The clients were looked after, and more importantly the patients were happy because they had space and they had light. Of course, if you make the patients happy, you make your staff happy, and the cat owners and carers are happy as well because they get that great vibe too.'

He believes really strongly in providing the best possible conditions for every member of the team, because he knows that the levels of happiness and excitement about their jobs they feel will diffuse through to both the feline patients and their owners.

Gold standard care for cats

All of the detail and thought that's gone into opening the London Cat Clinic has really made an impact and, in June, the clinic was

awarded Gold standard in iCatCare's Cat Friendly Clinic (CFC) programme. I asked Sarah Endersby, iCatCare's Veterinary Development Manager, who is responsible for managing the programme, what she thought about the clinic.

'The CFC programme, developed by iCatCare, helps veterinary clinics to be more welcoming to cats and their owners, and reduces the stress of veterinary visits for cats. It is exciting to see the changes being made by so many clinics around the globe in order to improve the whole veterinary experience for their feline patients. Of course, a cat-only clinic is the ultimate way to remove the stressors of sharing the clinic with other species. However, there are still many aspects of visiting a veterinary clinic that a cat will find difficult to cope with. CFCs aim to minimise these aspects as far as possible.

There is a feeling of calm about the London Cat Clinic (detectable just from photos of the practice!) and there were many details that the team at the clinic considered to make the veterinary environment more cat-friendly (and staff and owner-friendly too!) making it a pleasure to award the practice a Gold standard.'

For more information, visit: www.thelondoncatclinic.co.uk



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