

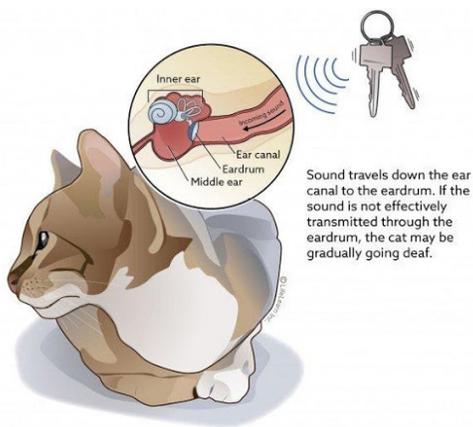
# Boroughbred Behavior Resources



## Issue: Caring for a Deaf Cat

Cats can become deaf over time, usually as a result of aging or chronic ear infections, or they have a condition called congenital deafness in which they were born deaf. When adopting a deaf cat, it can be helpful to know if they've recently lost their sense of hearing because it may have an effect on how they adjust. Cats who were born this way have known nothing else so they don't need to get adjusted to having hearing loss, whereas cats who are going deaf will likely need more adjustment time. Most cats are resilient, however, and will adapt to having hearing loss.

Congenital Deafness is usually pigment related. White cats with blue eyes are usually (80%), but not always deaf. White cats with a single blue eye are frequently (30-40%) but not usually deaf, and all white cats without blue eyes are sometimes (10%) deaf, a rate still much higher than the average cat.\*



Determining if your cat is deaf can be challenging, particularly if it's happening over time. A deaf cat will usually sleep more soundly and may startle more easily. They may stop coming when called or stop greeting you when you come home as a result, assuming they used to in the past. The easiest way to tell if your cat is deaf is to rattle some keys when they are turned away from you. You can alternatively tear paper, crunch tin foil, and knock on a cardboard box to test different frequencies. A cat who is in the process of going deaf typically lose higher frequencies first. When testing your cat, make sure that your actions don't cause air currents that they can sense, especially on their whiskers. If they don't face you but their ears tilt sideways, it's possible they can hear you but may just be ignoring you (as some cats do).

Deaf cats pay a lot of attention to what they see and feel to be aware of their surroundings. To communicate with them, use a visual and/or vibration-oriented approach. You can use a laser pointer to bring their attention to something, like their food bowl at meal time. Flicking an overhead light switch can be associated with another action on your part (i.e. alerting them whenever you've entered a room). Deaf cats are usually sensitive to vibrations so tapping hard on the floor can get their attention. You can teach your cat to approach you by offering a treat after you've crouched down and tapped on the floor. Some deaf cats can also sense air currents when there is movement in the room.

Take care not to startle your deaf cat. Some deaf cats do not like to be woken with touch, so if you have an urge to wake them from their slumber, do so by tapping softly next to them or gently blowing on their fur. Touch is an important part of communicating with your cat, so letting them feel you "purr" during cuddle sessions can be soothing to your deaf cat.

### Tips for living with a deaf cat include:

- Never allow them outside unsupervised. They can't hear horns, cars, or barking dogs. If you and your cat are up for outdoor adventures, start first by harness training them indoors. <https://www.adventurecats.org/backcountry-basics/train-your-cat-to-walk-on-a-leash/>
- Engage in plenty of playtime using toys your deaf cat can chase. Wand-type toys with a feather on the end are great.
- If you sense your deaf cat is lonely, consider getting a well-adjusted cat friend. Having a companion can also allow your deaf cat to pick up cues from the other cat, like when someone is at the door.
- Let them know when you enter or leave a room by touching them if they are awake.
- Make time to cuddle, pet, and play with your deaf cat daily. Physical interaction is very important in building a bond with your cat.
- Give them vertical space by providing shelves, cat trees, and other perches to help them feel secure.
- Deaf cats can meow loudly because they cannot hear themselves. Be prepared for this. Try to become familiar with the different ways they meow to learn the meaning behind them.
- If you have trouble locating your cat, get a small key finder and attach it to their collar. It's an easy way to locate your cat.

The most important thing to know is that deaf cats can still make great and happy pets. Hearing loss is a normal part of aging, so as long as you can offer consideration and attentiveness, your deaf cat should have a happy and fulfilling life with you. We hope you have a great life with your deaf cat!

### Resources:

\*<https://www.petful.com/pet-health/symptoms-deafness-cats/>  
<https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/living-with-a-deaf-cat>  
<https://www.thesprucepets.com/help-for-a-deaf-cat-553945>  
<https://network.bestfriends.org/filebrowser/download/697>

### For more information:

International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants: <https://m.iaabc.org/>  
Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists: <http://corecaab.org/>