

Best Practices for Sanitation of Cat Housing

Sanitation is the combination of cleaning, disinfection and drying to remove dirt and destroy pathogens in the environment and on surfaces. Proper sanitation of cages is essential for the health and welfare of cats in a shelter. If cleaning and disinfection is not done properly, multiple diseases can spread rapidly, resulting in the loss of life-saving capacity for a shelter.

Cleaning is the removal of organic debris from a surface with a chemical that has detergent properties.

Disinfection is the inactivation of potential pathogens by a chemical that does not necessarily have any cleaning properties. Most disinfectants require clean surfaces for proper killing activity.

The order of cleaning is healthy cats in adoption first, followed by cats in stray holding areas, then sick cats in isolation areas.

Sanitation of Vacated Cages

Vacated cages must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to placement of a new cat. All items should be removed first, followed by cleaning all cage surfaces, including the door, with a detergent solution. A commonly used detergent is Dawn dish detergent. Properly diluted disinfectant is applied to the clean surfaces. The surfaces can be allowed to air dry or wiped with a damp cloth after 10 minutes. Fresh sanitized items (litter box, food/water bowls, bedding, hide box, toys) are added after the surfaces are dry.

Sanitation of Occupied Cages

If the cat is remaining in its cage, spot cleaning is the best practice for daily cleaning that is low stress for the cats. Cats are very stressed by moving in and out of its cage and handling during cleaning. Spot cleaning allows cats to stay in their familiar housing environment with minimal handling to reduce stress and potential spread of disease.

Spot cleaning is simply tidying up the cage without removing the cat. The used litter box and food/water bowls are replaced with new ones, but other items remain in the cage and are only replaced if soiled by urine or feces. Soiled surfaces can be wiped with rags sprayed with soapy water or disinfectant, but application of a disinfectant to all surfaces with proper contact time is not necessary since the same cat is staying in the cage.

Spot cleaning is performed for occupied single compartment cages, double compartment cages, and group housing rooms.

Recommended Disinfectants for Cat Housing

1. **Bleach** (sodium hypochlorite)
 - a. Effective against all feline pathogens, including panleukopenia and caliciviruses.
 - b. No detergent properties and must be applied to pre-cleaned surfaces.
 - c. Must be made fresh in an opaque spray bottle daily.

- d. Recommended dilution is 1:32 (4 oz/gallon water)
 - e. Minimum contact time is 10 minutes.
2. **Wysiwash** (calcium hypochlorite)
- a. Effective against all feline pathogens, including panleukopenia and caliciviruses.
 - b. No detergent properties and must be applied to pre-cleaned surfaces.
 - c. Must be made fresh in an opaque spray bottle daily.
 - d. Recommended dilution is 1:32 (4 oz/gallon water)
 - e. Minimum contact time is 10 minutes.
3. **Trifectant** (potassium peroxymonosulfate)
- a. Effective against all feline pathogens, including panleukopenia and caliciviruses.
 - b. Has some detergent activity and can be applied to surfaces with mild organic debris. Heavily soiled surfaces must be cleaned first.
 - c. 1% solution - stable in spray bottles for up to 7 days
 - d. Minimum contact time is 10 minutes.
4. **Accel/Rescue** (accelerated hydrogen peroxide)
- a. Effective against all feline pathogens, including panleukopenia and caliciviruses.
 - b. Has some detergent activity and can be applied to surfaces with mild organic debris. Heavily soiled surfaces must be cleaned first.
 - c. Recommended dilution is 1:32 (4 oz/gallon water). Solution is stable for 3 months.
 - d. Minimum contact time is 10 minutes.
 - e. Can use a 1:16 dilution for a contact time of 5 minutes.