

## **Best Paw Forward**

### **Step Up for Cat-Friendly Feeding**

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Pedal Bowl is an innovative product that has been specially developed in response to the way cats like to feed. Cats with their highly selective taste buds prefer fresh food and, if given the choice, would rather eat small snacks through the day; each meal providing the equivalent amount of calories as a small mouse! Pedal Bowl allows a cat to follow its natural feeding pattern while keeping food fresh within the sealed bowl. At last, cats can feed when and how they want to!

Pedal Bowl is a completely new concept and an individual cat's response to anything new depends on many factors such as the cat's age, upbringing and personality. Some cats love to explore, taste and smell new things. When you first show these cats the Pedal Bowl they will usually take to it straight away and, with no training, be using the new bowl easily within a few hours. Kittens often respond particularly well to Pedal Bowl, as they are very open to investigating new things up until the age of 9-11 weeks.

Other cats may be slower to learn new skills, or are naturally more cautious by nature and you may have to build up their confidence in the bowl before they will fully accept it. Even older cats will happily enjoy using the bowl if you can devote a little time initially to helping them understand how they can operate it.

### **Our Top Tips**

#### *First Steps*

- Place the Pedal Bowl in exactly the same position as the old feeding bowl.
- Remove the old feeding bowl completely (If, however, after following the training advice your cat refuses to eat from the bowl regardless of how it is presented, do not withhold access to food for more than 24 hours)
- Feed the food your cat is accustomed to initially.
- If you use a feeding mat or any other 'props' your cat will have learned to accept that these must be present when feeding occurs, so don't change anything around the bowl.
- Stay positive about the benefits of the Pedal Bowl- cats are very adept at reading your body language and will pick up on your feelings.

#### *Training: Step by Step*

- Encourage your cat to investigate the bowl by introducing it at the normal feeding time and in the normal feeding place
- Place the cat's paw on the pedal to demonstrate the action

- Continue to encourage the cat to place the paw on the pedal by placement and reward using praise or treats placed in the open bowl. This is called 'Reward Based Training.'
- If necessary prop open the bowl initially, feed the cat from the bowl and then gradually lower the height of the lid over the next few weeks.
- Be persistent, our trials showed that even older, wary cats enjoyed using the bowl within a few short weeks if their owners continued with the training routines.
- For cats that have really found the concept difficult to grasp, or accept, use reward based training to build up your cat's ability to use the pedal step by step.
- The reward can be a favourite food treat, vocal praise, or a pat.
- Rewards must be given as soon as possible and within 2 seconds of the behaviour that you are pleased with.
- Encourage the cat to approach the bowl and reward any move in that direction.
- When the cat repeats the move towards the bowl only provide the reward when the cat gets even closer to the bowl than the last time.
- Each training session should last no more than 10 minutes at a time.
- Eventually your cat will be next to the bowl and you can reward interaction with the pedal.

### *Confidence Builders*

If your cat is having difficulty with a specific aspect of the pedal bowl operation our confidence building techniques may help....

- If your cat is very timid and reluctant to even approach Pedal Bowl....  
Try smearing the pedal with the liquid from a can of tuna in water (not brine), or oil from tins of sardines or pilchards. Do this when there has been a sufficiently lengthy period from the last meal. Do not expect the cat to operate the bowl at this stage- just provide a quiet environment and time to build up confidence in the bowl.
- If your cat cannot operate the pedal...  
Encourage your cat's curiosity by making the pedal more interesting. Place a morsel of food on the pedal, or smear attractively smelling liquids on the surface. Alternatively use a toy that the cat enjoys swatting and stimulate the cat to play around the bowl, building up to encouraging them to pounce on the pedal. Remember to keep placing the paw on the pedal and rewarding. Our trials have shown that this is the most important factor contributing to success.
- If your cat doesn't like the noise or motion involved...  
Although it may feel natural to pick up your cat and remove it from the bowl in response to the fearful reaction, this will reinforce the idea for the cat that there is something to be afraid of. You can best help your cat to become less sensitive by moving the bowl to a

more distant point from the cat, but where it can still be seen. Operate the mechanism, provide confident reassurance and reward the lack of fearful response. If the cat shows a fearful response do not discipline it, or demonstrate your disapproval in any way- simple ignore the behaviour and act as if it does not matter to you. In short training sessions over the next few days bring the bowl nearer until the cat does not react even when right next to the bowl. Once you have got to this point follow the training tips.

### *Next Steps?*

Once you've mastered the art of reward based training you can use it to teach your cat almost anything. Another highly successful type of reward-based training that can also be used to introduce your cat to Pedal Bowl is Clicker Training. The cat is first of all taught to associate a clicking noise with a reward. The advantage of this method is that the clicker provides a fast reward that can be timed almost exactly with the cat doing the right thing. There are a number of books about Clicker Training of cats and dogs if you would like to learn the technique.

Whether your cat instantly loves using Pedal Bowl, or needs a little help from his owners, he is sure to benefit. Pedal Bowl offers cats a healthy and natural way to eat, providing fresh, succulent food at the touch of a paw.