



Assessing the suitability of cats for rehoming

Why do behaviour assessments?

Behaviour assessments necessary to

- Meet needs whilst in shelter – welfare considerations
- Ensure safety of shelter staff
- Assess options for live outcome
- Determine type of placement or adoptive home
- Provide support following placement
- Ensure resources available to meet the cat's needs

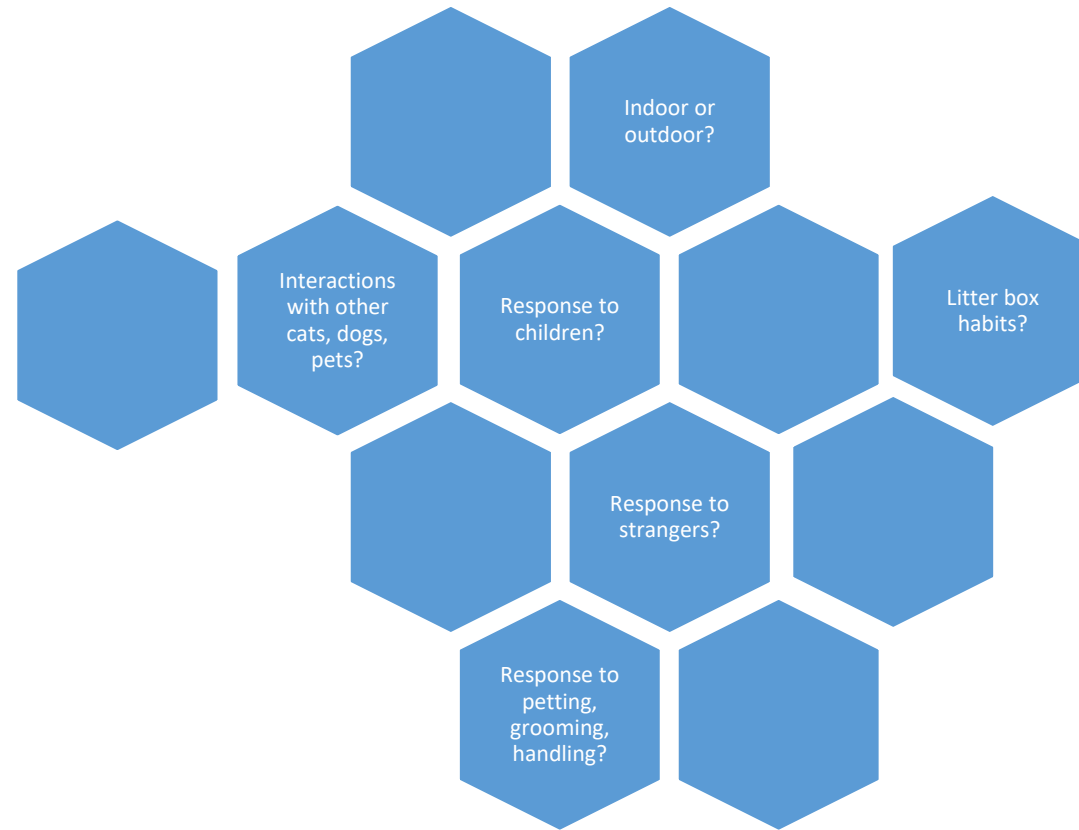
Requirements for behaviour assessments

- Historical information – prior to admission (previous owners, finders)
- Medical history and assessment
- Daily behaviour observations in shelter
- Observations during assessment protocols

Behavioural history

Personal interviews
Questionnaires

Finders
Foster carers
Previous owners



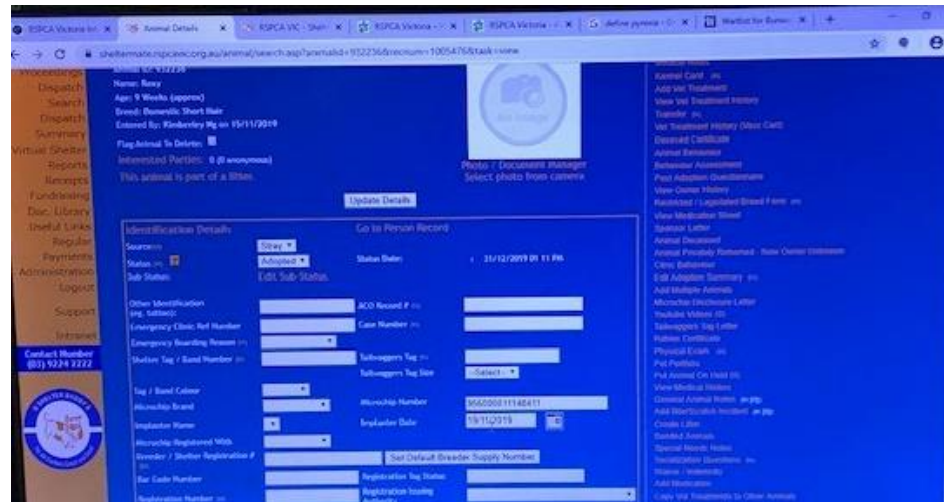
In shelter observations

Good record keeping

daily observations

record good, bad and neutral

objective descriptions of body language, behaviour and situation



The image shows a screenshot of the RSPCA Victoria Animal Details web form. The form is titled "Animal Details" and contains various fields for recording information about an animal. The fields are organized into sections:

- Identification Details:** Includes fields for Source, Status, Sub Status, Other Identification, Emergency Clinic Ref Number, Emergency Boarding Number, Shelters Tag / Band Number, Tag / Band Colour, Microchip Brand, Implantation Water, Microchip Registered With, Breeder / Shelter Registration #, Ear Color Number, Registration Number, Status Date, Case Number, Submitters Tag, Submitters Tag Bar, Microchip Number, and Implantation Date.
- Animal Details:** Includes fields for Animal Name, Breed, Entered By, Flag Animal to Delete, Informational Parties, and a note "This animal is part of a litter".
- Animal History:** Includes fields for Animal Status, Previous Assessment, Animal Description, Animal Possibly Returned, Color, Color Band, ECG Anesthetized Summary, Add Multiple Animals, Microchip Enclosure Label, Youkuhi, Youkuhi ID, Microchip Tag Label, Rabies Certificate, Physical Exam, Pet Profile, PM Animal On Hold, View Medical History, General Animal Status, Add Short/Quick Incident, Create Label, Animal Address, Animal Intake Home, Vaccination Schedule, Microchip, and Add Microchip.

Behaviour assessments

There is no standard test that

- is quick and easy
- requires minimal training and expense
- is safe and humane
- poses minimal risk of disease transmission
- reliably predicts behaviour in different situations
- provides definitive information for decision making

‘Meet your Match Feline-ality’

- day 3
- history notes
- test

Not suitable for cats showing aggression



What behaviours owners want in cats

Human animal bond

Important factor is social bonding



What determines potential for social bonding?



Genetics



Socialisation

Socialisation

Kittens raised with rats don't kill rats (of that strain),
and will show social behaviour towards them



What determines potential for social bonding?



Genetics



Socialisation



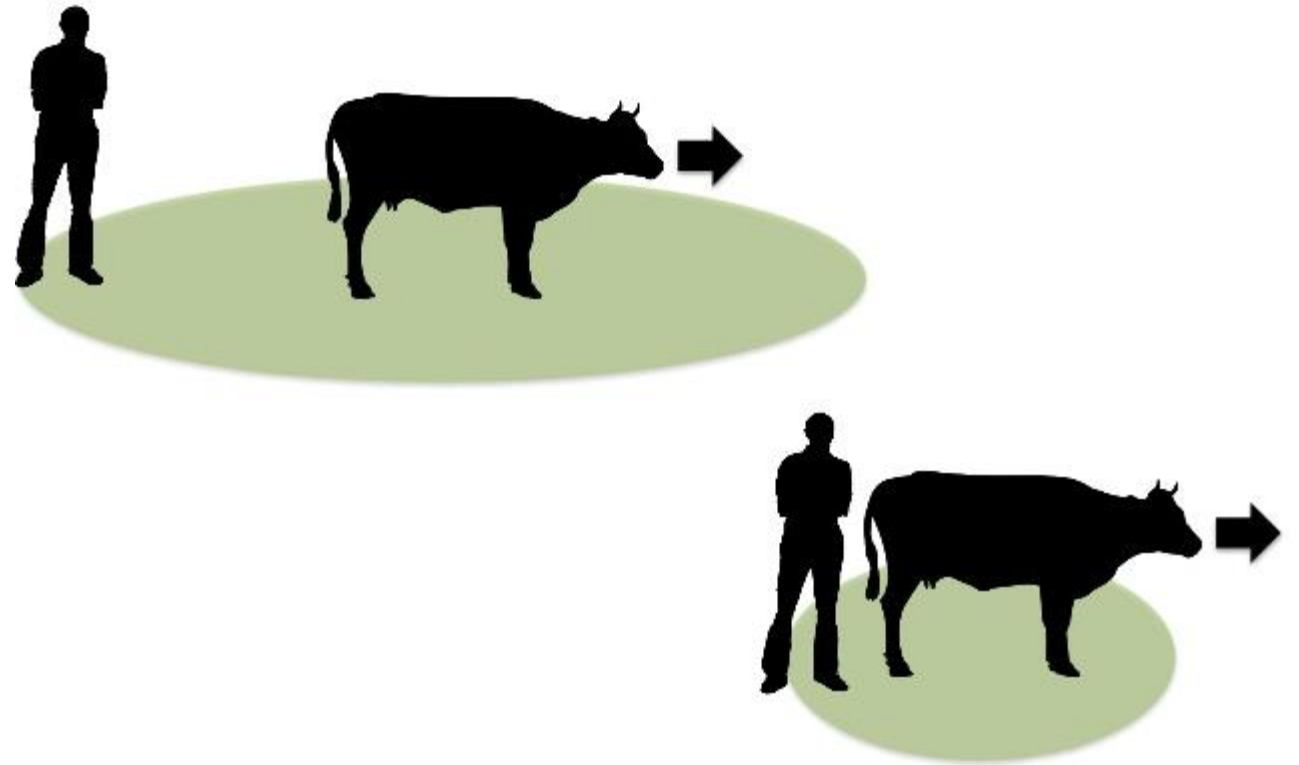
Taming

Taming

Reducing the flight distance

Relatively tolerant of people

Does not result in social bonding



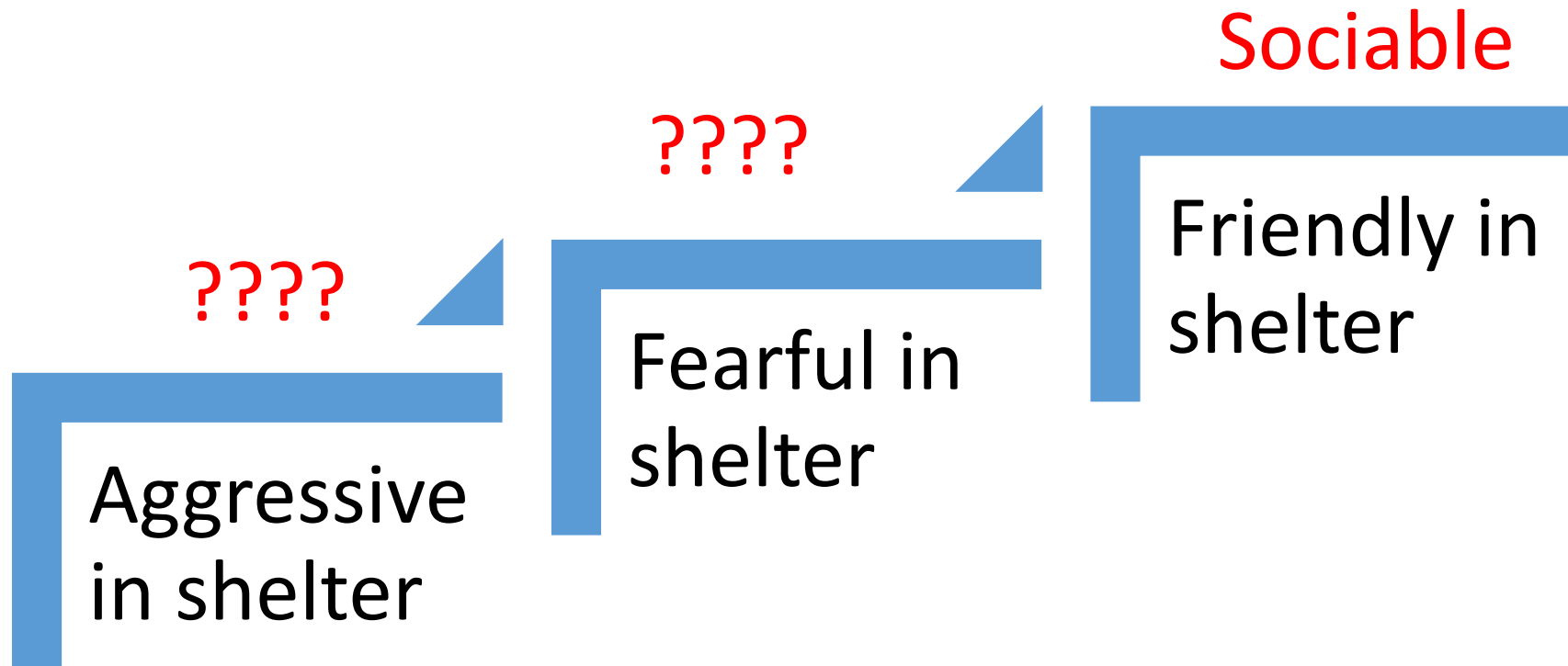
Which cat is socialised?



How do you determine fear of people versus fear of shelter?



Sociability



Cats and 'shelter' stress

Cortisol (stress hormone) remains high for the first 3 days

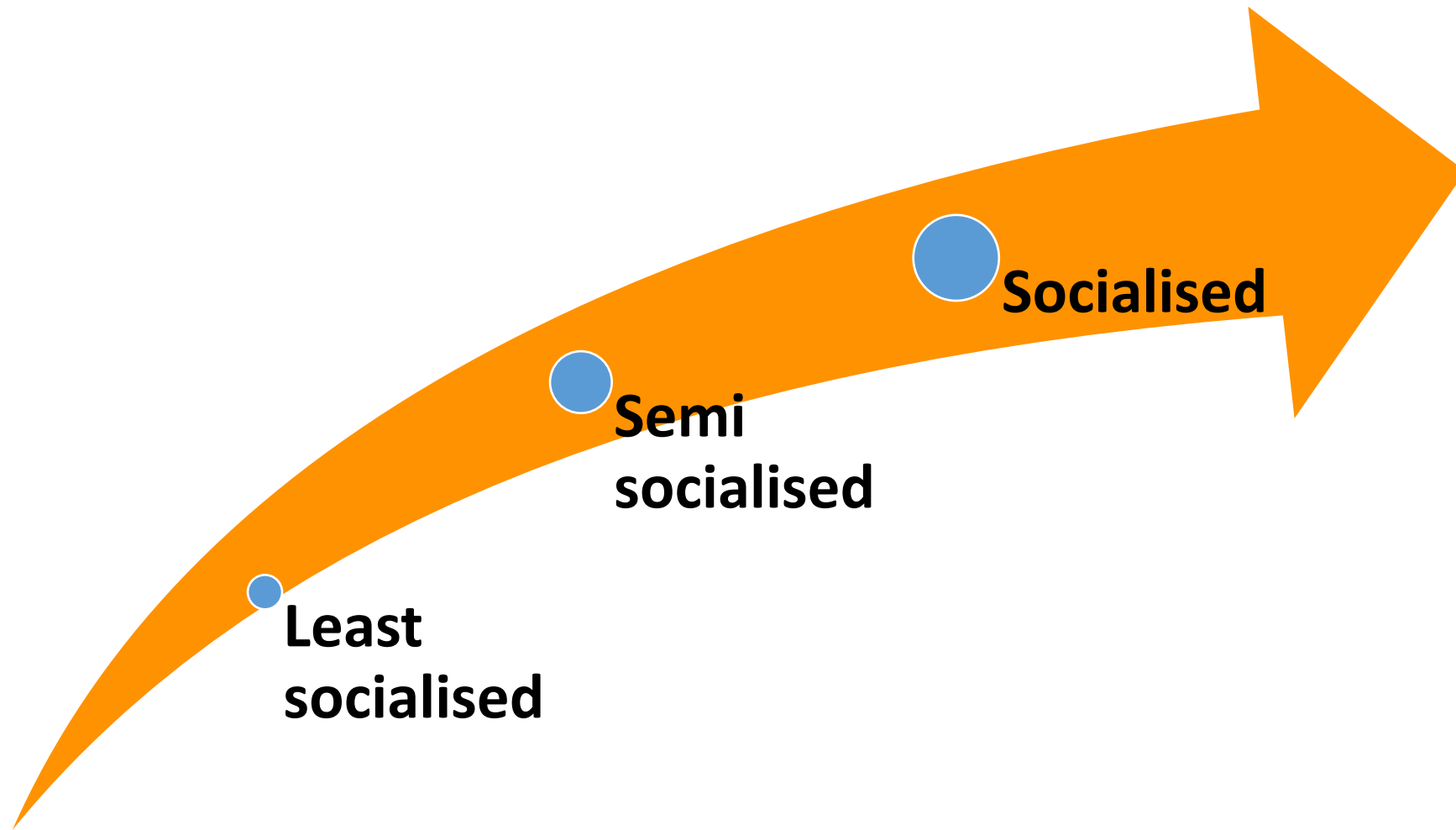
Most adjust well in the first two weeks, although some never show decreased stress

Behavioural signs may include

- Increased sleep
- Decreased activity
- Hiding



Spectrum of socialisation



How to pick a socialised cat

- **Meow and Purr**
 - With rod stroke
 - More socialised
 - Improve over time



How to pick a socialised cat

- Chirp, Rub, Knead, Touch, Play
 - Socialised
 - Even if only do **once**.
 - Even if touches **toy**



How to pick a socialised cat

- Tail Up
 - **Always** socialised



How to pick a socialised cat

- Spend time in the front 1/3 of the cage
 - Socialised



Socialised

Summary: social behaviours during assessment

Play
Touch (even toy)
Rub
Chirp
Knead
At front of cage
Tail up

Any one of these
behaviours
= likely to be socialised

IMPORTANT

NOT all socialised cats do these behaviours

Shy cats may not be bold enough to demonstrate

Behaviours seen in socialised **and** unsocialised cats

- **Growling / Hissing**
 - Both groups do
 - Not specific



Behaviours seen in socialised **and** unsocialised cats

- **Blinking**
 - Both groups do
 - Not specific



Behaviours seen in socialised **and** unsocialised cats

- Not eating or using litter tray during the day
 - Both do
 - Not significant



Feline Spectrum Assessment

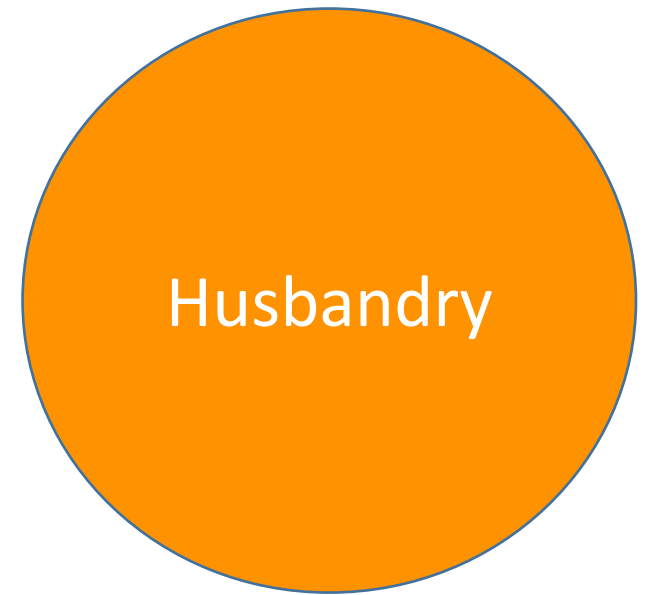
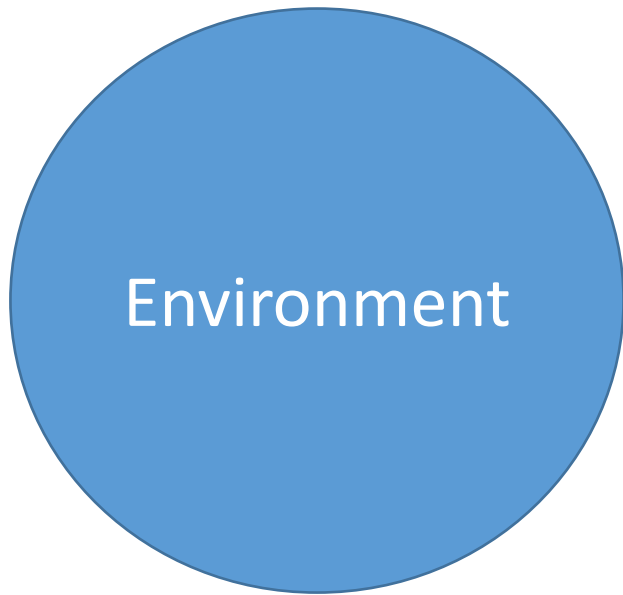
- <https://www.aspcapro.org/research-feline-spectrum-assessment/implement-fsa-your-shelter>
- For cats that are not obviously socialised
 - Validated
- To be used in **addition** to information from
 - Care givers (animal attendants)
 - Volunteers
 - Foster parents
 - Veterinary reports
- Helps inform decisions
 - Euthanasia
 - Rehoming
 - Behaviour modification
 - Foster

Only for cats that aren't obviously social.

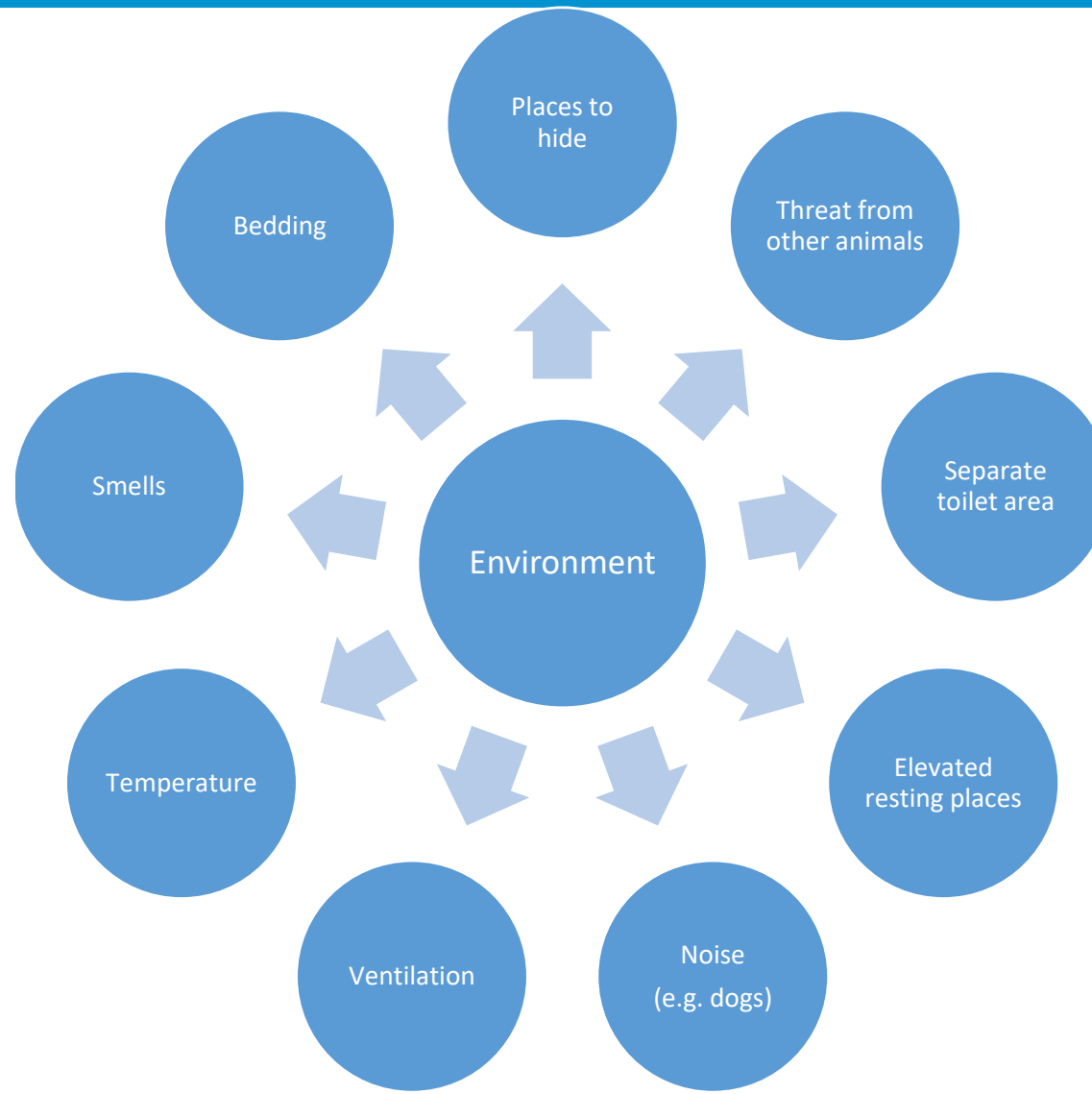


Maximising the chance of observing social behaviour.

Reducing fear and stress



Introduction to environmental management



Minimal cage requirements

Separate function areas for

- Feeding
- Resting
- Perching
- Hiding
- Elimination
- Play
- Scratching

Lower stress with

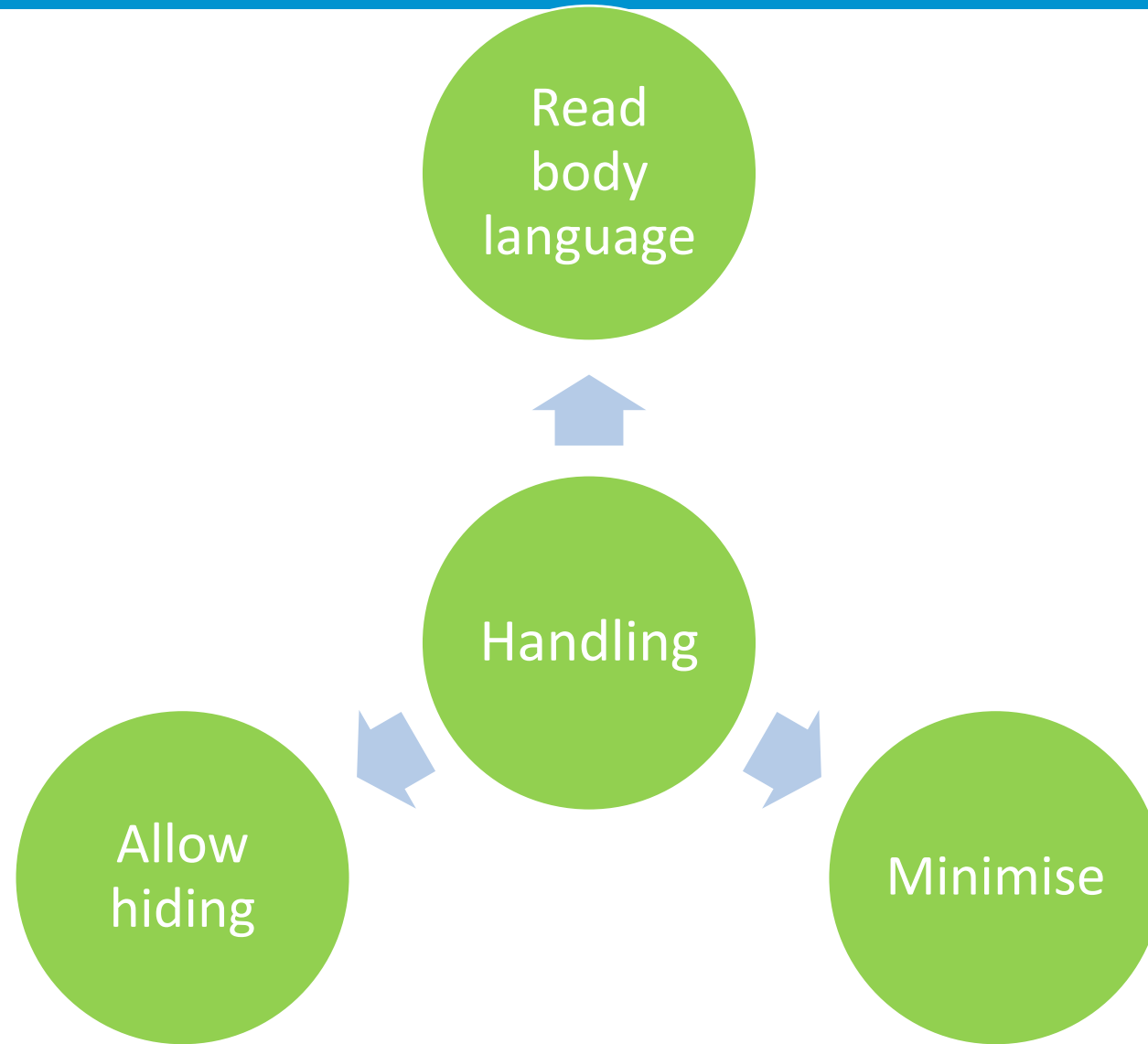
- Soundproofing
- Exposure to natural light (windows)
- Cages elevated off the ground
- DO NOT HOUSE WITH DOGS



Foster care



Introduction to Handling.



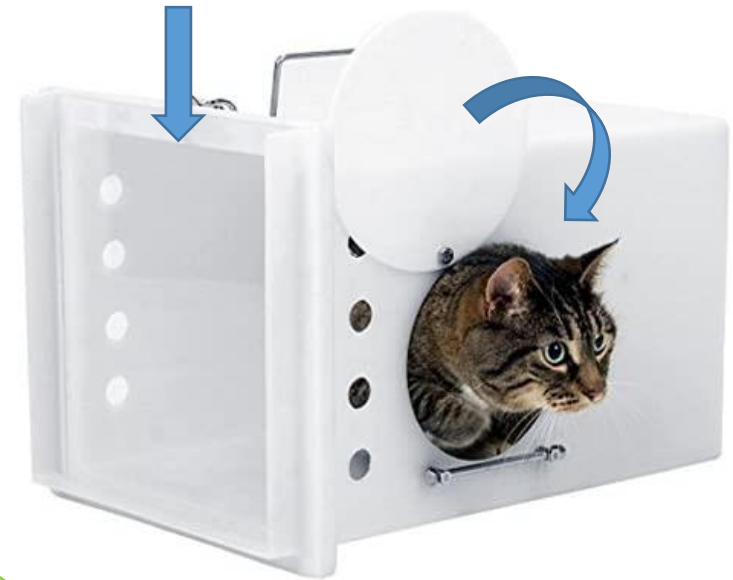
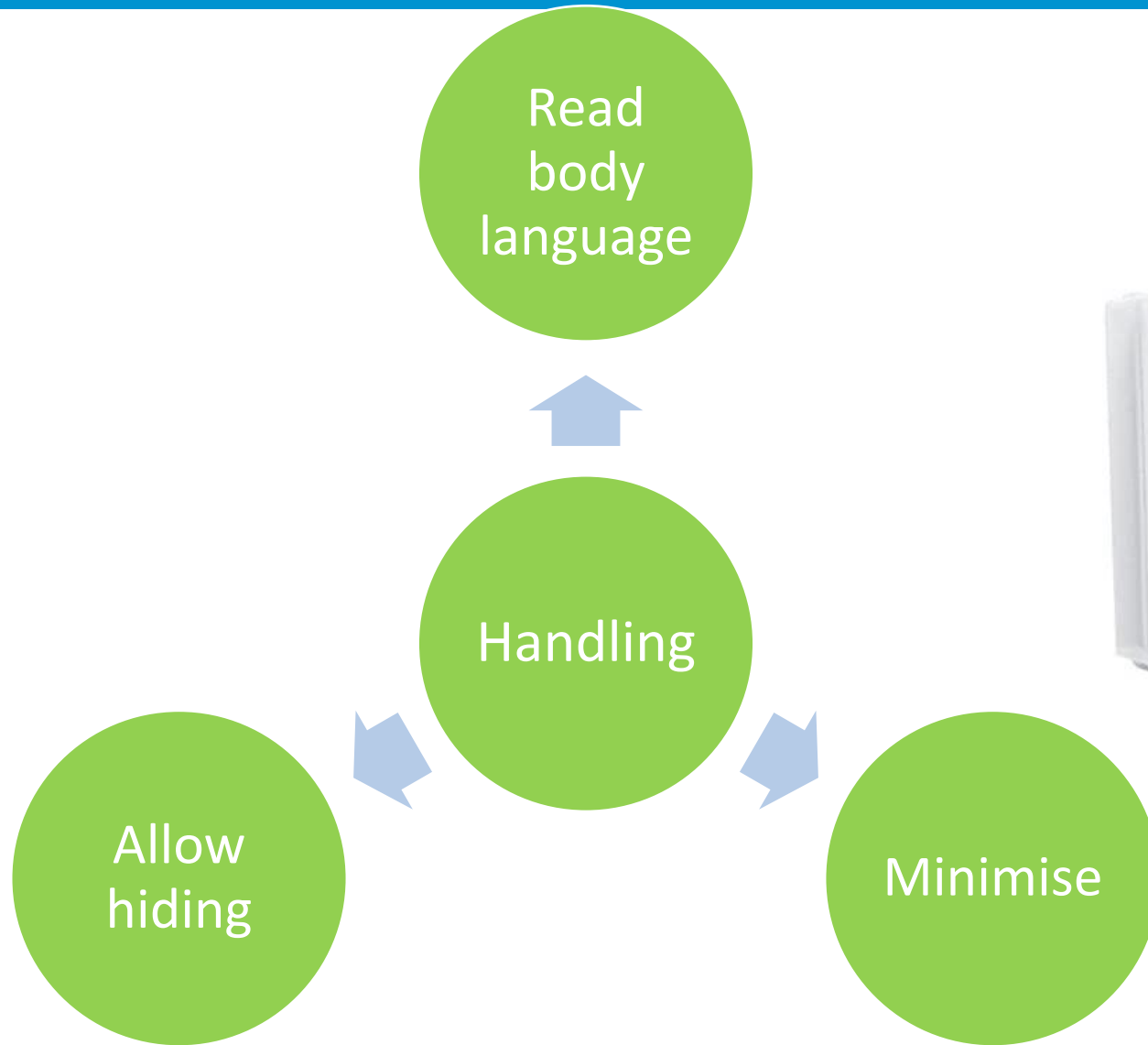
RSPCA Vic body language online learning module

Email: education@rspcavic.org.au



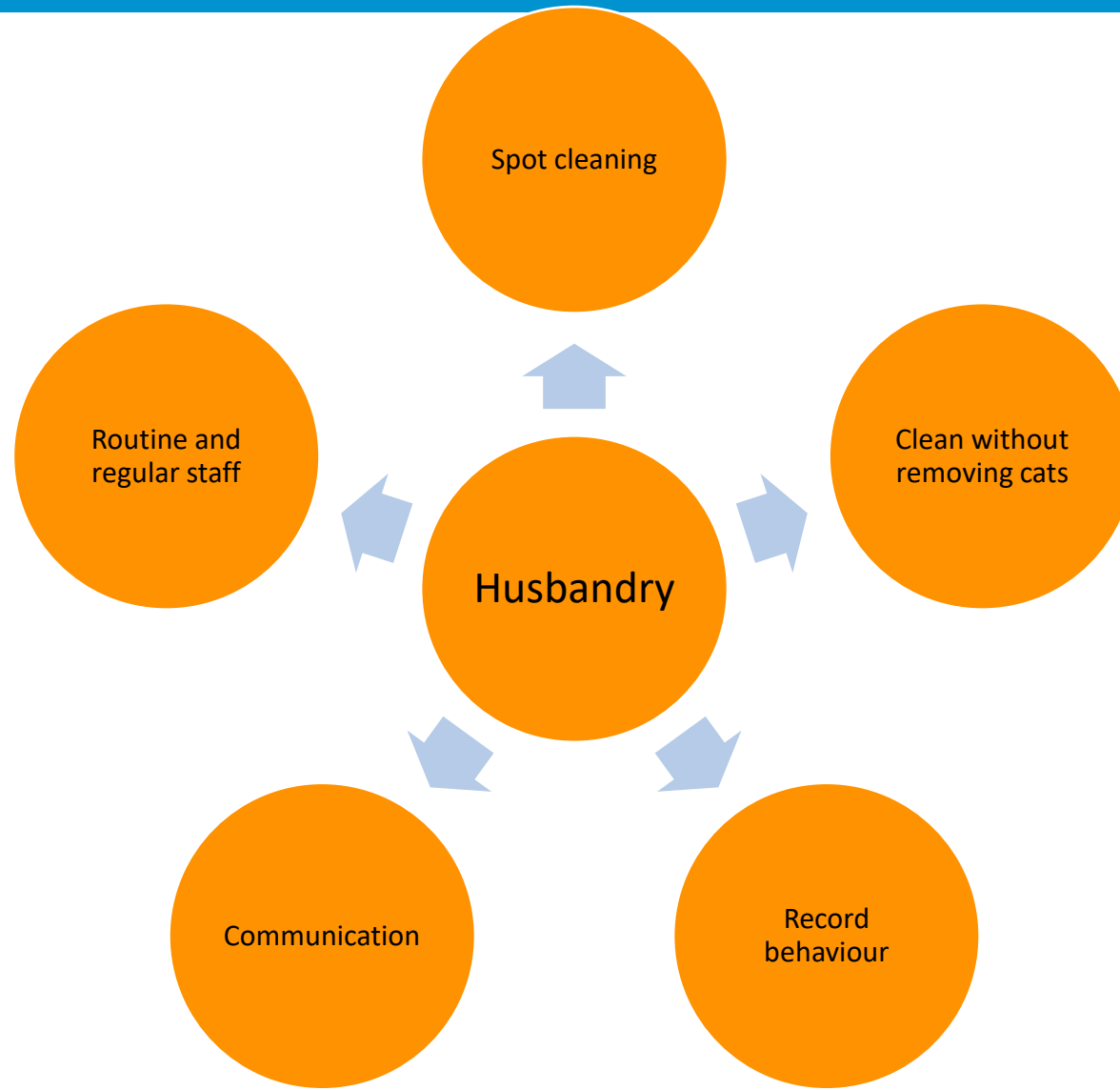
The screenshot shows a landing page for an online learning module. The background features a close-up photograph of a sleeping ginger and white cat. The page has a green header with a white hamburger menu icon in the top right corner. The main heading is 'CAT AND DOG BODY LANGUAGE' in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the heading, the text 'SELECT THE BUTTON BELOW TO BEGIN.' is displayed in a smaller font. A prominent green button with the text 'START MODULE' is centered below the text. In the bottom left corner of the page, the RSPCA Victoria logo is visible, consisting of the word 'RSPCA' in blue with a paw print icon, and 'Victoria' in a smaller font below it.

Introduction to Handling.



Examining a fearful cat

Introduction to Husbandry



Intake

Stress is likely to be exacerbated by

Rough handling

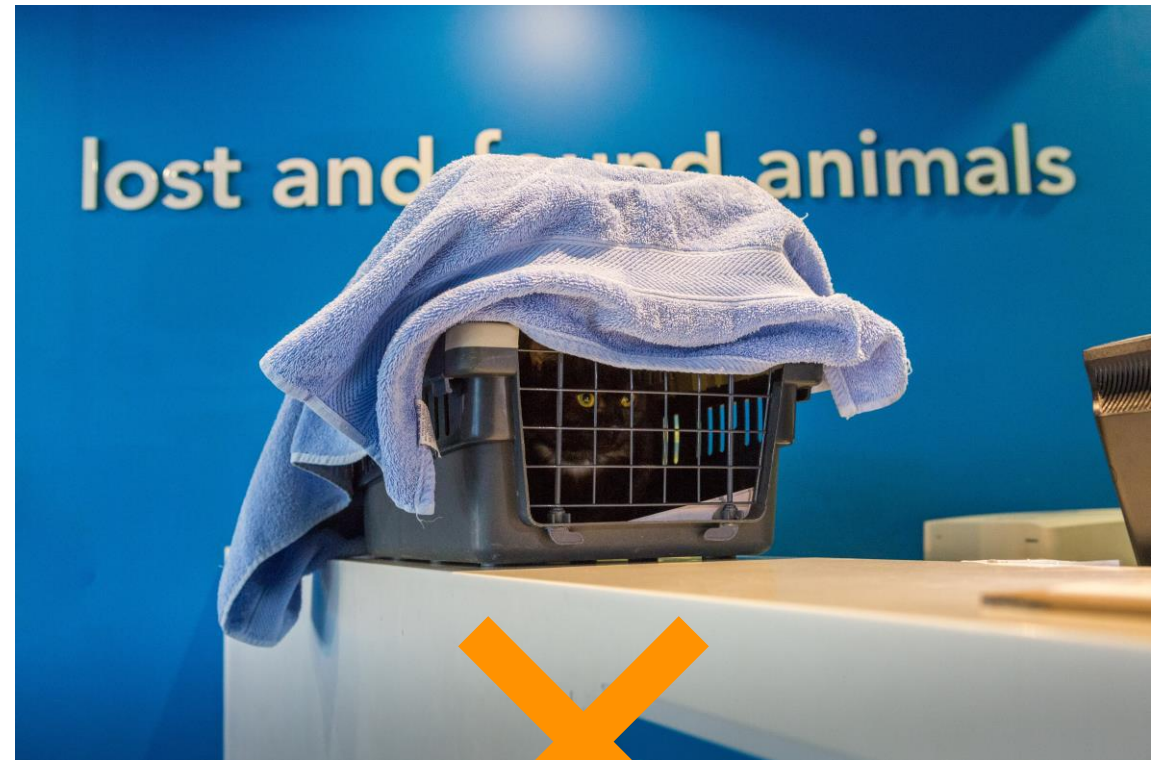
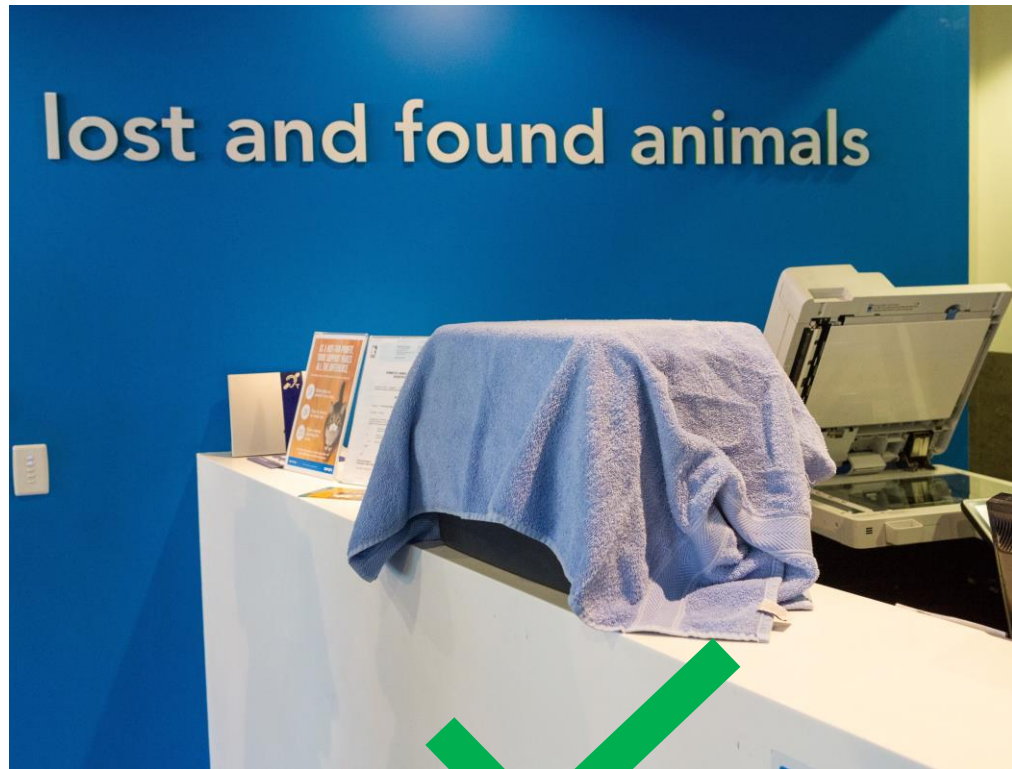
Lack of hiding opportunities

Long travel times

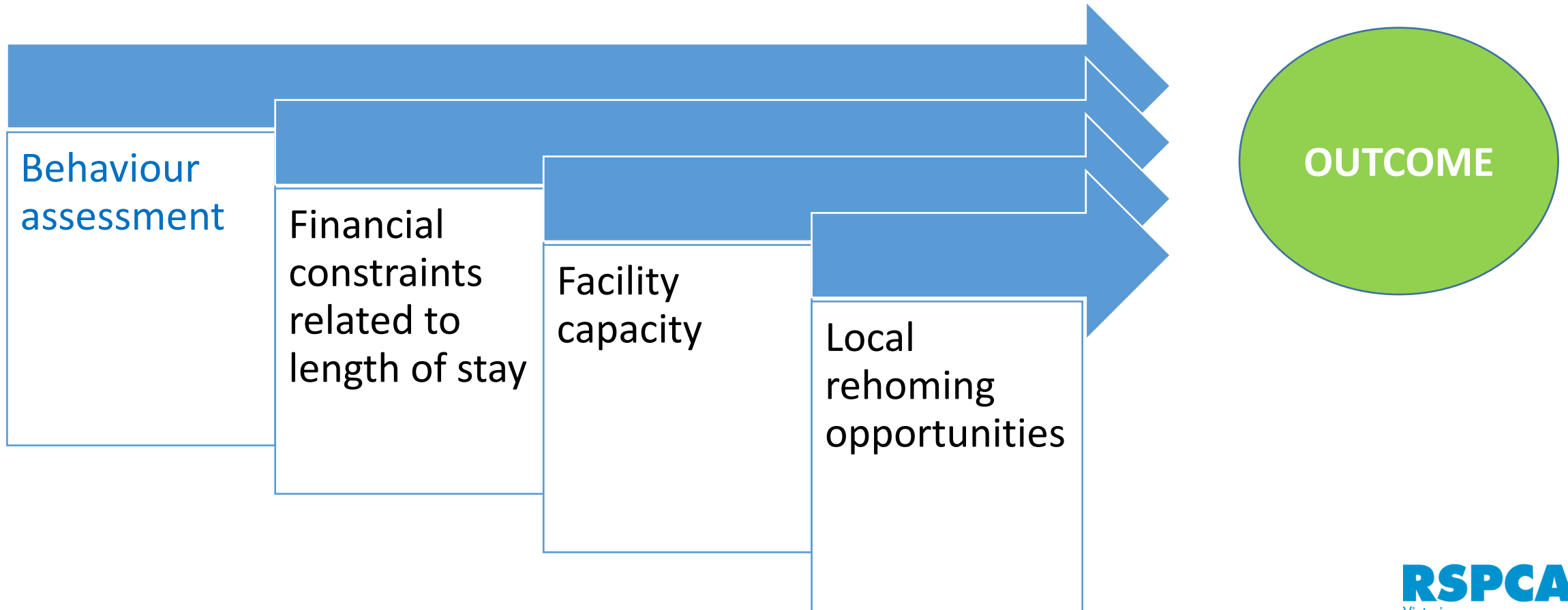
Proximity to other cats/dogs

Time waiting to be placed in a cage

Quality of housing



Decision making



Questions

