

The Cat Carrier and Travel Calm Plan

Calm trips are built at home, in the days and weeks before you need them. Work through the plan on the left, run the checklist on the right on travel day, and let your vet handle the rest.

BEFORE The two-week carrier plan

- ☐ **Leave the carrier out** where practical, with familiar bedding inside, so it stops predicting a trip.
- ☐ **Build a good association:** treats, meals, or play near the carrier, then gradually inside it.
- ☐ **Progress slowly** from stepping in, to settling in, to brief door closures. Keep every step boring.
- ☐ **Practice short drives** that end back at home, so the car stops meaning a clinic visit.
- ☐ **Try a pheromone spray** on the bedding. It helps some cats, though the evidence is mixed. Let it air out before the cat goes in.
- ☐ **Slow down if your cat eats less, hides more, or overgrooms.** Those signs can also mean illness, so mention them to your vet.

CLINIC Worth asking your veterinary clinic

- ☐ Is there a quieter appointment time for anxious cats?
- ☐ Can we wait in the car until an exam room is ready?
- ☐ If fear stays severe despite carrier work: is pre-visit medication right for my cat? Gabapentin is a prescription option many veterinarians use, and whether it fits is their call.

Where CBD fits: as possible background support only, given consistently and judged over weeks. It is not event medication, and nothing over the counter reliably rescues a cat mid-panic. In one controlled study, a single dose before carrier travel had no overall measurable effect on stress responses.

Safety line: unexpected sleepiness, wobbliness, or any marked behavior change after a supplement is not proof it is working. Stop and contact your veterinarian, and always tell them what your cat receives.

DAY OF The travel day checklist

- ☐ **Familiar bedding in,** pheromone spray applied and aired beforehand.
- ☐ **Cover the carrier** with a towel to reduce visual stimulation.
- ☐ **Secure it low:** on the floor behind the front seats, or per the carrier maker's restraint instructions.
- ☐ **Quiet car, comfortable temperature,** no loud music.
- ☐ **Keep the carrier closed** in the car and anywhere outdoors, even for a crying cat.
- ☐ **Drooling or vomiting on drives?** Ask your vet about meal timing and motion sickness before the next trip.