

# START A CATTERY

FROM FIRST IDEA TO  
FIRST CUSTOMERS IN  
FIVE SIMPLE STAGES



[WWW.THECATTERYCLUB.CO.UK](http://WWW.THECATTERYCLUB.CO.UK)

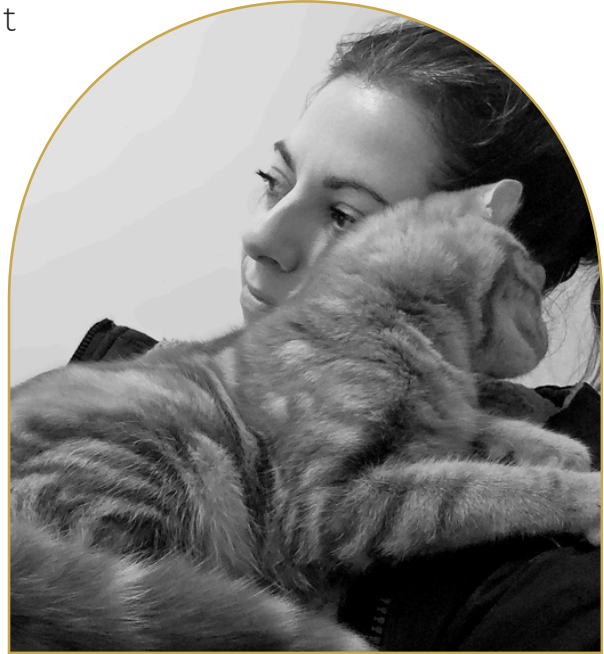
# WELCOME

Running a cattery isn't just about cuddling cats all day, (although that is part of it).

Like any other business, it takes hard work, time, dedication and patience - especially if you're juggling family life too.

But the good news is that it's absolutely worth it!

*How do I know?*



Well, I had the same dream back in 2007. Well actually I'd probably had the first idea when I was a little girl. We used to leave our cat in a lovely cattery, the owner always made a fuss and we felt like she loved our cat as much as we did!

However, as an adult I struggled to find the same level of care when it came to finding a holiday home for my cat and I thought 'If I had a cattery...!'

Ten years later, I turned my dream into a reality!

Over the years, I've made mistakes, navigated difficulties with licensing and customers, set up systems to help me as a solo cattery owner, maintained 5-star standards at every inspection and built a profitable business from scratch.

And now, **I'd love to help others with their journey.**

If you've ever thought, *"I'd love to start my own cattery,"* or *"That's my dream job — I'd love to do that,"* then keep reading!

Whether you're just curious to see what it takes to make your dream happen - or if you're wondering whether starting a cattery is right for you then you're in luck!

I'm sharing the stages I went through, as a 5-star cattery owner, that will turn that idea in your head into something real.

**1**

**The Vision** - We'll get clear on what your dream cattery would be like and what being a cattery owner means for you.

**2**

**The Numbers** - Once you have a clear vision you can start to dig into the numbers needed to create a sustainable business?

**3**

**The Build** - Here's where your vision and numbers come together and your initial idea gets closer to becoming reality.

**4**

**The Admin** - Now the focus shifts to the systems needed to run a cattery business, including preparing for your first inspection.

**5**

**The Marketing** - As your cattery gets closer to opening it's time to focus on attracting your first customers to generate bookings (and an income).

So, grab a cuppa, find a quiet moment, and let's begin turning that dream into something real — one practical step at a time.

# THE VISION



**You dream  
about having  
a cattery...**

...But could  
you make it  
your reality?

## STAGE 1

# THE VISION

Before anything else, take time to shape your vision.

Imagine how your cattery would feel and check if it's something that works for you.

Before you move onto the next stage, you'll have a simple, clear idea of what you want to work towards.



Your first task is to look at other catteries for inspiration.

Create a vision board or set up a folder to save photos, and make a note of the features you like or would want your cattery to have.

There's no right or wrong choice; this is your dream cattery. So, forget about potential costs or limited space – we'll explore the practicalities later.



Do an online search for catteries in your area, or further away. Use different search terms to see what comes up e.g. best catteries, cats only catteries, luxury catteries, small catteries.

Note down the things you like, or don't like from the internal layout, colours, themes, external view/construction etc.

Write down your thoughts and ideas about starting a cattery. How does it make you feel? What worries do you have? What are you hoping it will mean for you?

Writing it down can help it become real. And if you feel ready, talk your ideas through with someone, or email me, I'd love to hear your plans.

Think about:

- Why do you want to start a cattery?
- How would you describe your cattery to others in one or two sentences?
- What would your day as a cattery owner be like?
- What makes your cattery different from others in your area?
- Why would cat owners choose your cattery?
- How big would your cattery be — how many cats would you care for at one time?
- Where would your cattery be located (garden, outbuilding, converted space)?
- What would each cat's space be like — what would you want them to have or experience?
- What would you like people to say about you and your cattery after they've used it?



Imagine, you're about to open the doors to your new cattery for the very first time. A customer is walking up the path with their cat carrier.

- What do they see?
- How does it feel?
- What do you want them to notice and say afterwards?

Building up a clear vision will really help you move onto the next stage.

# NUMBERS



**How much  
will it cost?**

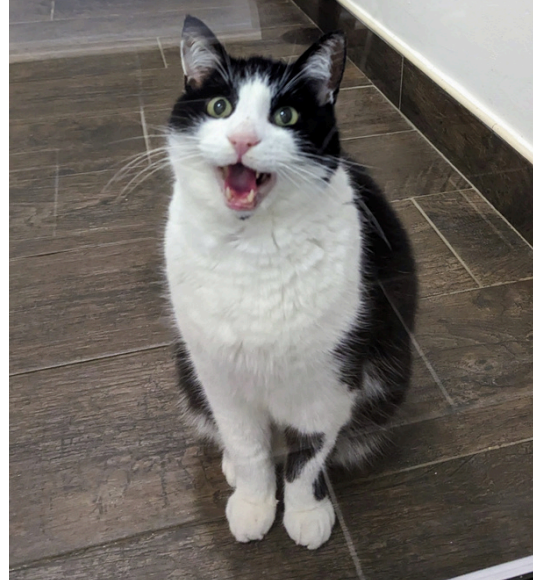
...And will it  
be profitable?

## STAGE 2

# THE NUMBERS

At this point, you've explored what your dream cattery could be like. You have a clear goal that you want to work towards, which makes it easier to look at the numbers.

Now, you're going to put some rough numbers around that vision so you can see whether it's realistic (or needs adjusting).



The costs involved in starting a cattery will vary, not just on your chosen construction material but also depending on your location.

Your next task is to research building companies. Some cattery owners prefer to use dedicated cattery construction specialists who will build your cattery according to the regulations and support with planning.

However, your dream might be to convert a garage or out building and you'd prefer something more bespoke rather than a standard cattery.



Don't forget, along with the build there may be costs for planning permission, an architect, building inspector or even landscaping after the build.

Play around with the figures, look at your budget, and work out what will you need to charge to make it viable?

At the moment, we're still exploring possibilities; these numbers don't need to be perfect or final. At this stage you're just checking whether your dream cattery could realistically pay for itself and replace (or supplement) your income instead of being an expensive hobby!

Think about:

- What's your income goal, or what do you need to earn each year/month?
- What does fully booked look like to you? How many cats?
- What is your realistic budget for the build?
- What would you need to charge per cat, or per chalet/pen, to reach your income goal?
- Will you charge by day or by night? (£10 per day means that an overnight stay is £20 - 2 days, instead of £10 for 1 night)
- Will you include food and litter in your rates, or charge extra?
- Who might build your cattery? (Start gathering quotes from companies.)
- What does your local authority currently charge for a licence?
- How much are you likely to pay for insurance each year?
- How many bookings/cats would you need each month just to cover your costs?



Once you've had a look at these numbers, you'll start to see whether your original vision needs tweaking. Do you need to realistically have more or less cats/pens to make it work? Would a different type of construction give you different options? Or would you initially start small with the idea to expand at a later date?

When the numbers look good and you can see the potential then you're ready to move onto the next stage.

# THE BUILD



**It starts to  
become real...**

... make sure  
you're happy  
before it's too  
late to make  
any changes.

## STAGE 3

# THE BUILD

Now it's time to see what's actually possible.

This stage is when it finally starts to feel real — but it might also move more slowly than you hoped.

This is where you need to stick to your vision and make sure that your cattery will meet the regulations.



Every cattery in England is licensed and you will have to be too.

Each local authority will have a dedicated licensing team that will be able to help you. Many authorities will want to know if you're planning on building a cattery, they may want to see your plans beforehand to make sure that you're meeting the regulations. Your build has to meet the Animal Activities Licensing (AAL) standards for boarding catteries in England, so it's important to involve your local licensing team early and check your plans against their guidance.



Your task is to look at [Cat Boarding Licensing: Statutory Guidance](#) and make sure that your build meets the regulations outlined in the guidance.

Contact your local authority's licensing team and let them know your plans.

You're almost ready to get your dream cattery built, but before you give the go ahead check that everything is in place.

Think about:

- Do you have planning permission to build your cattery?
- Have you notified your local authority licensing team that you're planning to build a cattery?
- Does your builder understand the licensing standards you're working towards?
- Will the walls and floors be suitable for cleaning?
- What's the estimated time frame to completion?
- Will the local authority visit mid-build to check progress?
- Have you applied for your licence (or agreed when you'll apply)?
- Have you arranged business insurance ready for when you open?
- Do you need to do anything once the build is complete - e.g. painting, adding fixtures?
- Are the interiors as you hoped, or do you need to add or change anything?
- Have you checked your plans against the licence requirements?
- Have you contacted the Valuation Office/your council about business rates?



Now is the time to get everything in place before you actually start the build. As soon as your cattery is built there's no going back so make sure everything is just how you imagined it.

# THE ADMIN



**Systems and  
paperwork**

... will make  
your day-to-  
day go  
smoothly.

## STAGE 4

# THE ADMIN

Whilst the build is underway, it's time to think about preparing for your first customers.

The systems you set up now will make your day-to-day life far less stressful once you're open.

You'll also need to show your systems to your local authority, they will carry out an inspection before you can open.

During your initial inspection you'll be asked to show how you carry out key tasks, keep records and run the cattery. Full details are set out in the [Cat Boarding Licensing: Statutory Guidance](#).

Some cattery owners choose online systems that handle bookings and paperwork for them. Others prefer paper and pen, keeping track of bookings in a diary. There's no right or wrong way—pick what feels natural for you. You might start with a simple handwritten method and move to something digital once things feel more settled.



★ Research companies that help boarding catteries with their bookings or ask other cattery owners what they use. Most offer a free trial.

Or create your own systems. Even a simple spreadsheet is fine to start with - it doesn't have to be perfect!

The way you operate, organise your business will change over time, with experience you'll adapt. But these questions (although not exhaustive) should you give you a head start!

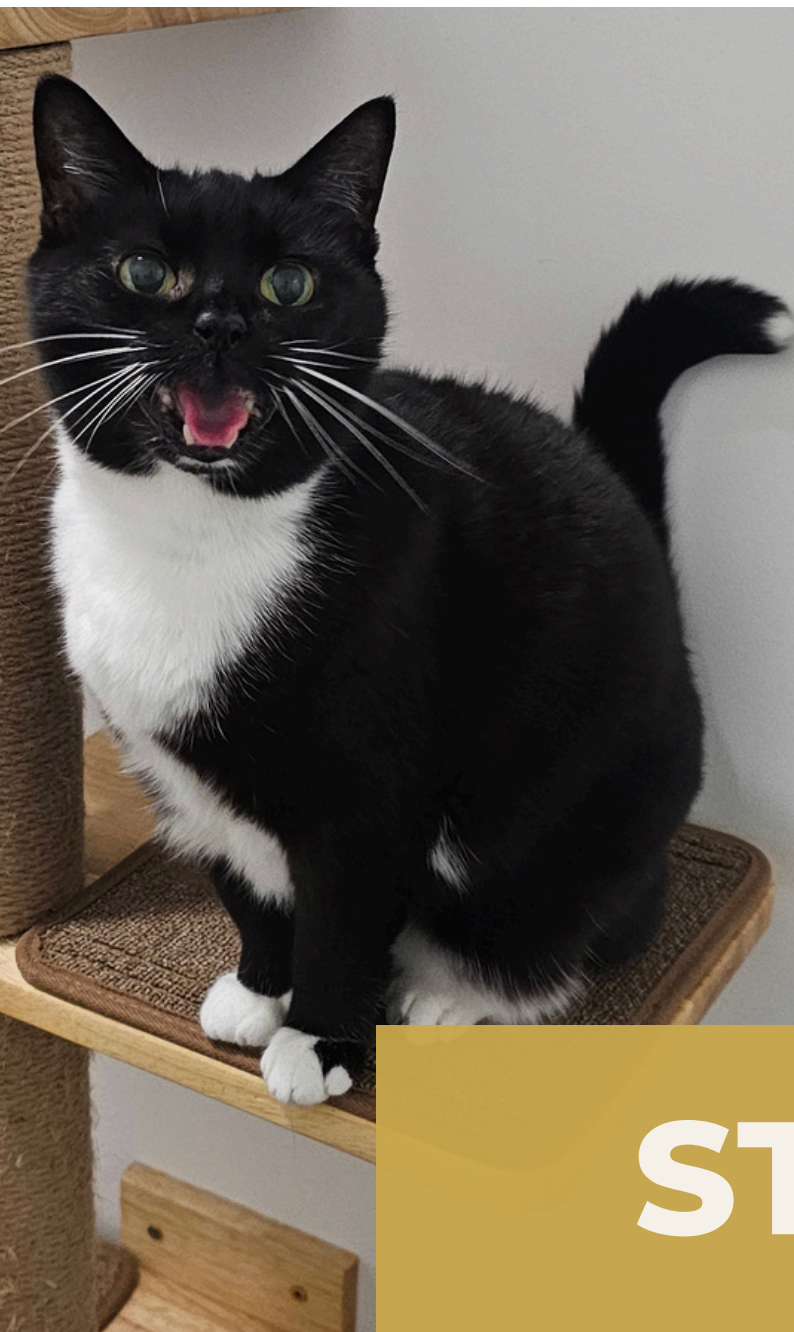
Think about:

- When will you be open and closed for arrivals, departures and visits?
- Will you close for any periods (for example family holidays or quieter months)?
- How will you handle a cat's arrival and departure (check-in, paperwork, payment, handover)?
- What will happen if a cat becomes unwell while staying with you?
- Who will look after the cattery if you are unwell or need time off?
- If you have staff, what will their roles and responsibilities be?
- Will you allow people to visit and look around before they book?
- What can customers expect from you and your cattery?
- What will happen in the event of an emergency (fire, flood, evacuation)?
- How will customers make a booking (phone, email, online system)?
- How will you take payments (a business bank account will be needed especially if you want to take payments online)
- Will you take deposits to secure a booking?
- What will you do if you get a cancellation? Will you refund and if so do you need any notice?



Start to put together an inspection file to show how you do or will meet each standard, you can add your policies and operating procedures along with any other evidence.

# MARKETING



**The doors are  
open...**

...but no-one  
knows you  
exist - yet!

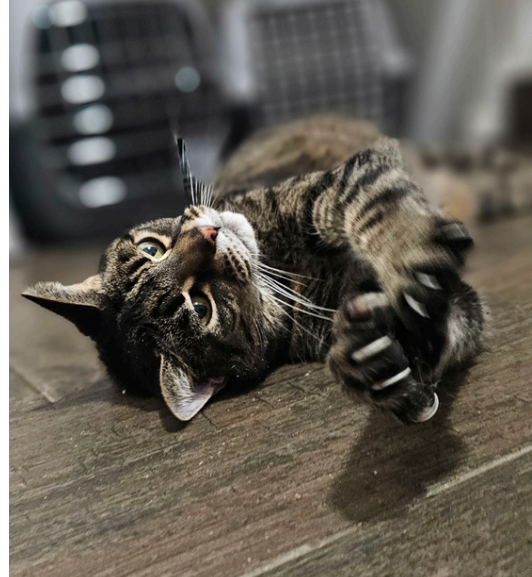
## STAGE 5

# MARKETING

This stage is about getting your first bookings.

At this point we're not building a huge online following or becoming a marketing expert.

You only need a small number of the right customers to get started. Word will soon spread that there's a new brilliant cattery in town!



One mistake I see cattery owners make is trying to cater to every cat owner - and you can't. Cat owners, like cats are all different, for some people their cats are just that, a cat. While for others they are a treasured member of the family. If you want to attract those who treat their cats like a king or queen then you need to speak directly to them through your marketing.



Get clear on who your ideal customer is - think about what they would need to see, feel or hear in order to want to use your cattery over any other.

Once you know what they are looking for it's easier to speak to them through your marketing (website, social media posts, etc)

Think about:

- What does someone need to see, hear or feel to trust you with their cat?
- Who is your ideal customer? What are they looking for in a cattery?
- How will customers find you - online and offline?
- Will you have any physical signs outside your cattery?
- Will you advertise locally — leaflets, feature in the local press?
- Will you have a website?
- What will you put on your website - a static page directing them to book? Pictures of your cattery? Reviews?
- Will you use social media? If yes, which platforms?
- Who will maintain/update your website or social media platforms? (Will you do it yourself?)
- Will you give customers an incentive to try your cattery (intro offer, referral bonus) (does it still work with your numbers - don't make a loss before you've started)?
- How will you reward loyal customers? (Again, without discounting yourself into a loss)
- How will you celebrate your first bookings and milestones? (because you definitely deserve it.)



Here are some simple steps to get you started:

- Create a free Google Business Profile.
- Tell local vets, groomers and pet shops you're open and ask them to display a poster about your business or some leaflets.
- Plan an open day so people can see the cattery.
- Ask your very first customers for a short review on (Google as soon as they've collected their cat.



# CONGRATULATIONS!

You've now walked through all five stages — from the first spark of your cattery dream, right through to welcoming your first customers.

You should have:

- ✓ A clearer vision of what your cattery could look like
- ✓ Rough numbers to see if it's realistic for your situation
- ✓ Awareness of the build, licensing and admin that comes next
- ✓ First ideas about how to attract your ideal customers.

★ If this has got you thinking about your own cattery, I'd genuinely love to hear about it.

What stage do you feel you're at right now — the idea, the planning, or already taking steps?

Just hit reply and tell me. I read every message and I'll always do my best to point you in the right direction.

You don't have to have it all figured out — sometimes just saying it out loud is the first real step.

I'm so proud of you for taking this first step! And I'm wishing you lots of luck with your journey!

Best wishes and kitty kisses

*Jenny x*

PS. Even if your idea still feels a bit messy or unfinished — that's exactly the right time to reach out.