

## CASE STUDY: LARGE SUITE ACCOMMODATION



Organisation: Oakdale Boarding Cattery  
 Location: UK, Cheshire  
 Cattery Type: Indoor  
 Cattery Function: Boarding, 29 Units  
 Unit Size Sleep: 1000 x 1870mm (3'3" x 6'1")  
 1300 x 1870mm (4'3" x 6'1")  
 Unit Size Exercise: 2750mm/9ft long  
 Date Built: 2004

[www.oakdalecattery.co.uk](http://www.oakdalecattery.co.uk)

A NEW, RURAL BOARDING CATTERY WITH LARGE 12FT/4.5M SUITES, ENJOYING THE SUCCESS OF BEING A SMALL BUSINESS WITH A VERY HOME-LIKE FEEL, THE CATTERY IS IN A BEAUTIFUL LOCATION WITH LOTS OF ANIMAL LIFE FOR THE CATS TO WATCH

## OAKDALE BOARDING CATTERY

### LOVING THE LIFESTYLE

Zoe Gallagher, owner of Oakdale Cattery couldn't be happier with her boarding cattery business. She talks joyfully of the pampered cats who become 'hers' once in the cattery, and her lovely clients. The cattery is a converted stables and it is amazing the difference adding a clock tower, porch and external features has made to the building, set in a lovely rural environment on a farm full of other animals for the cats to watch.

### FAMILY-RUN & HOME-LIKE

Zoe and husband Noel purchased the derelict farm 11 years ago and lived in a mobile home while the farm was being rebuilt. Their 7 year old daughter Kitty (!) has now developed a certificate scheme for the cats, and pointed out Shadow, one of her favourites who has been given a 'cute & chubby' certificate! You immediately 'get' the feeling on the farm, which is very much a family-owned and much-loved place. In particular, Zoe enjoys her night-time rounds, with the soft string lights glowing and the red floor, it feels quiet, cosy and relaxing.

### HOW THE CATTERY STARTED

Zoe originally wanted to work from home to be with her favourite animals, and after a year of planning and research, the planning application was submitted and granted. Her primary reason for creating a cattery (apart from her love

of cats) was to provide a better cattery than she had seen. Having visited several catteries, Zoe was appalled at the standard – especially where owners were not even allowed to see the cat accommodation for themselves. The reasons often quoted were 'it will upset the cats' or 'for health and safety reasons' and one cattery even used small, dark, stacked rabbit hutches! Naturally, seeing this motivated Zoe to build larger than normal 'suites' of over 4.5m/12ft long to provide much more space – she just knew she could do better!

### SETTLING CATS IN

Having been introduced to the feline facial pheromone by one of her clients, Zoe now uses the spray (if required) and plug-ins permanently, as the effect on the cats is so noticeable, especially on arrival when cats need to settle in and feel calm and comfortable. Zoe also feels that the more home-like feel of 'solid' walls and large suites with lots of daylight also helps to settle the cats in well.

There is plenty for the cats to watch as inside the cattery in the spacious 3m/10ft corridor, there are large cages with a chipmunk (constantly on the go!) budgies and finches. From the deep shelf in front of their own window, the cats can watch rabbits, chickens, ducks, pheasants, wallabies, donkeys, pygmy goats, llamas, their horse Toby and the farm cattle.





OAKDALE CATTERY



## PLENTY TO WATCH

### CAT COMFORT

Particularly noticeable is the amount of hiding places and variety of beds for the cats to choose from. Zoe feels strongly about allowing the cats the freedom to use all of the suite at night too, having seen many semi-outdoor catteries 'lock in' the cats at night. She likes to give the cats as much freedom as possible in her indoor cattery.

### ADDING EXTERNAL RUNS

Although currently an indoor-only cattery, there will be an additional outdoor covered space added for the cats directly from the round 'port-hole' instead of the usual cat flap, which are currently being built. This will allow two indoor rooms, plus an outdoor area overlooking one of the ponds.



### What are you most pleased with?

Thoroughly enjoying the challenge of the business, and of course our cat boarders and their owners who are lovely. Zoe was delighted to recently have been told by the licensing officer that Oakdale Cattery is the best in the area, and that her website is used as a referral for people thinking about setting up a cattery!

### MAKING IT EASY TO LIVE WITH

Zoe wondered if having larger units would make cleaning more of a chore, but in fact the opposite is true. With so much space to move around in, (being large suites that are full-height), cleaning is easy and not an onerous task like some of the timber or smaller catteries she has seen where there is barely enough room to turn around inside. The roof is ventilated and there are sky lights and windows, so the cattery feels bright and fresh. A building like this would be too large to completely heat, so all the sleep areas are heated by radiators.

### BEING SUCCESSFUL

After initial concerns about how successful the venture would be, Zoe now realises she need not have worried. A good proportion of customers find her on the internet, or from veterinary and customer recommendations, but this has increased lately by adding signage on the busy main road, so passing traffic has become more important as more people are now aware of the cattery. Zoe remembers every cat and when the owner phones, she says 'ah, Jamie's Mum!' Another asset to the business is the booking software she uses to keep the paperwork down and prepare notes for the day ahead.

With 400 customers already within her first year of opening, with such success she needs to be organised!



### What would you do differently?

The floor paint scratches and flakes, so it needs to be repainted, so we will be tiling it in the near future. We originally intended to fit UPVC doors, but ultimately did not because of the extra cost, and not knowing whether we would be successful. However, UPVC would have been a better option in the longer-term maintenance aspect, than timber doors.



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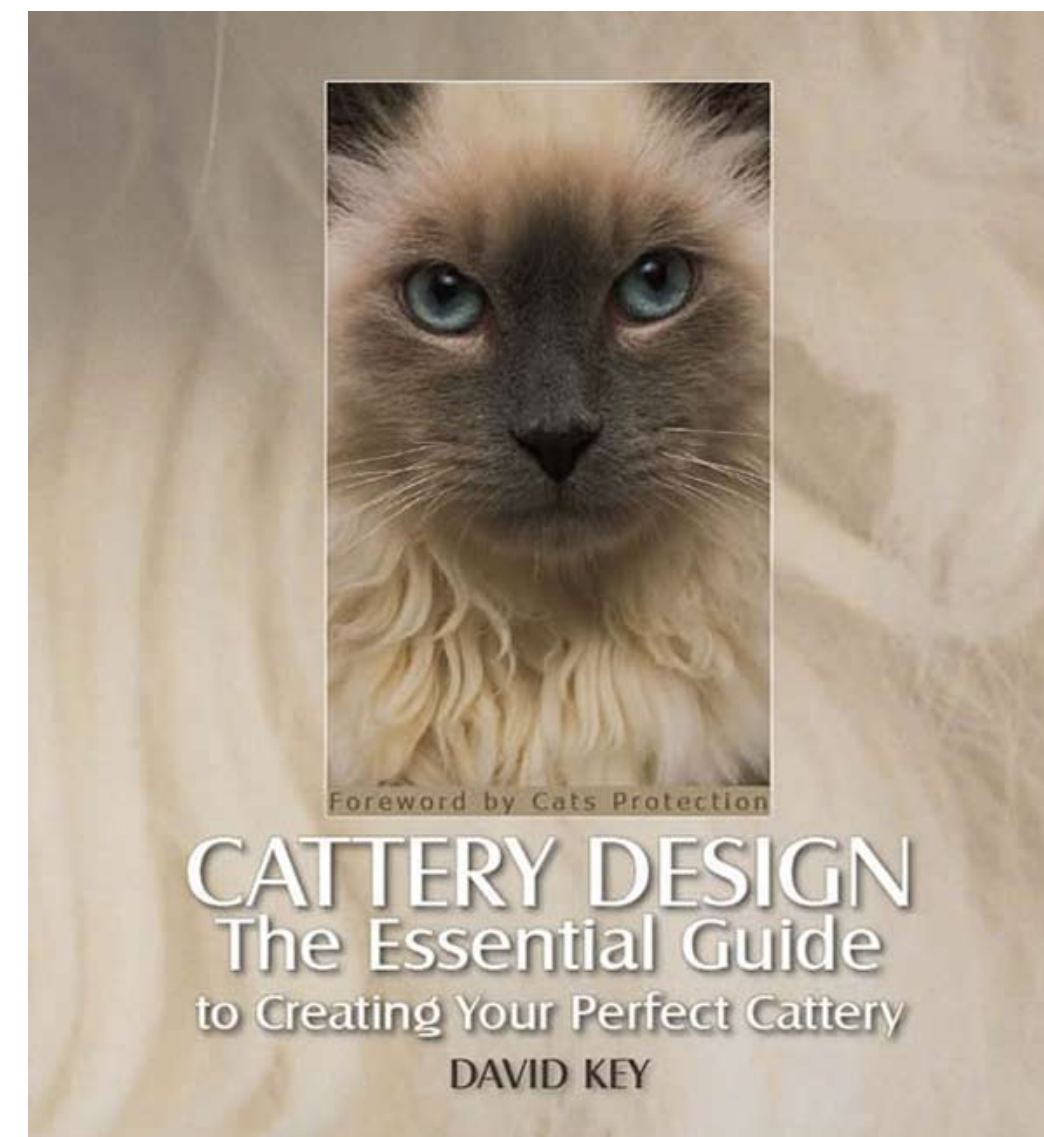
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