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Cat Tree OEM Quality Inspection Checklist

30-Point Engineering & Material Standard · aitakon.com

Don't wire your deposit until you've vetted your supplier against our professional engineering standards.

Our 30-point checklist is the exact framework we use at Aitakon to reduce client return rates from 18% to 4%. It covers structural specs, compliance verification, logistics/CBM audits, and 5 factory red-flag questions.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Send this to every supplier before approving a golden sample. Require written confirmation for each point marked PASS. Items marked FAIL or N/A must be resolved before any deposit is transferred. A factory that cannot clearly answer these 30 points is not ready to be your OEM partner.

SECTION 1 — Structural Specs: Board Thickness, Post Core Materials & Fastener Types

[ ]	1	**Base Board Thickness ≥15mm** MDF ≥15mm or multi-layer plywood. Request material cert confirming actual thickness. Reject particle board substitutions without prior written approval.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	2	**Board Species & Grade Declaration** Factory must declare the exact board species and grade (e.g., HDF, E1-grade MDF). Downgrade from approved grade to cheaper particle board is the #1 bulk-order switch.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	3	**Vertical Post Core Material** PVC core or solid-wood center posts only. Hollow cardboard-core posts crack and lean under repeated jumping impact. Request a cross-section cut photo before approval.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	4	**Post Diameter & Wall Thickness** Minimum 9cm diameter for towers over 120cm tall. Thin-wall posts wobble under cats over 5kg. Specify in the golden sample spec sheet.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	5	**Platform Fastener Type** Metal bolt + recessed nut at every platform joint — not wood screws alone. Wood-to-wood screw joints strip within weeks under a 10kg+ cat. Request assembly hardware spec.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	6	**Platform Thickness & Core** Platform boards ≥12mm MDF or plywood. Hollow platforms flex and crack under repeated impact, especially on elevated tiers.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	7	**Load-Bearing Test Documentation** Factory must supply a static load-test report or video: minimum 50kg on the top platform, held for 60 seconds, with documented pass/fail criteria. Standard SKUs should have this on file.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	

SECTION 2 — Compliance: CARB P2, FSC & Related Certifications

[ ]	8	**CARB P2 Certification (US Market)** Required for Amazon.com and US retail. Must cover the specific board grade used in your production run — not a generic factory-wide certificate. Verify via the CARB online database at arb.ca.gov.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	9	**FSC Chain-of-Custody (EU / UK Market)** FSC certification required for EU retail channels and increasingly demanded by UK buyers. Request the FSC certificate number and verify at info.fsc.org.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	10	**Formaldehyde Emission Test Report** Request a third-party lab report (SGS, Bureau Veritas, or equivalent) for the specific board used in production. Factory certificates alone do not satisfy Amazon or EU retailer audits.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	11	**Prop 65 Compliance Declaration (California)** If selling in California, require a signed Prop 65 compliance statement covering heavy metals in fabric dyes and formaldehyde levels. A signed declaration is sufficient — a full test report is not required for initial orders.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	12	**RoHS / REACH Compliance for Fabric Dyes (EU)** Fabric dyes must comply with REACH restricted substances list. Request a dye test report for each fabric color from a third-party lab. This is required for EU e-commerce and retail channels.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	13	**EN71 Toy Safety (if marketing to households with children)** If your product listing targets households with children, EN71 chemical safety compliance for dyes and surface coatings is strongly recommended and required by some EU retailers.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	

SECTION 3 — Logistics: ISTA 3A Drop-Test Standards & CBM Optimization Audits

[ ]	14	**ISTA 3A Drop-Test Certification for E-Commerce Cartons** Carton must pass ISTA 3A (e-commerce simulation) drop-test protocol. Damaged-product photos are the leading source of Amazon 1-star reviews. Request the test report before production approval.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	15	**Carton Double-Wall Construction** E-commerce cartons must use double-wall corrugated board (≥5-ply). Single-wall cartons fail corner drops in transit. Verify board spec on the carton material declaration.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	

[ ]	16	**CBM Per Unit (Assembled vs. Knock-Down)** Request packed CBM figures for both assembled and knock-down configurations. A standard 40HQ carries 350–450 units. KD design typically reduces CBM by 15–20%, directly cutting per-unit freight cost.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	17	**Knock-Down / Foldable Design Availability** Confirm whether the SKU supports disassembled shipping. Platforms and posts shipped flat reduce CBM by up to 20%. Ask for a KD packing demo video before approving the carton design.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	18	**Vacuum-Compressed Fabric Option** Fabric components (platforms, hammocks, tunnels) can be vacuum-compressed before boxing, saving a further 10–15% CBM. Confirm this is supported and that fabric recovery quality is unaffected.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	19	**Stacking Optimization & Container Loading Plan** Request a container loading plan (CLP) showing unit count per 40HQ and stacking configuration. Factories with experienced logistics teams provide this as standard. No CLP = likely no container optimization.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	20	**Pre-Shipment Inspection Protocol** Confirm the factory's PSI standard: inspection sample size (AQL 2.5 minimum), defect classification (critical / major / minor), and whether you receive a written report before the container is sealed.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	

SECTION 4 — Factory Vetting: 5 Red-Flag Questions for Factory Audits

[ ]	21	**RED FLAG Q1: In-House Production Ratio** Ask: 'What percentage of this product's fabrication do you control in-house?' Answer below 60% signals a trading company. Real OEM factories control cutting, assembly, and QC under one roof.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	22	**RED FLAG Q2: Engineering Problem-Solving Test** Ask: 'Describe a significant challenge on a recent custom cat furniture project and how your team solved it.' Real factories give specific engineering answers (e.g., post wobble fixed by adding a cross-brace). Trading companies give PR answers.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	23	**RED FLAG Q3: Production Floor Verification** Request a live video walkthrough of the production floor — not a pre-recorded factory tour video. Focus on the cutting area, assembly station, and QC holding area. If they refuse or deflect, treat this as a hard red flag.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	

[ ]	24	**RED FLAG Q4: Raw Material Substitution Policy** Ask: 'If your primary board supplier is out of stock mid-production, what is your substitution policy?' Correct answer: written buyer approval required before any substitution. Any other answer is a red flag.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	25	**RED FLAG Q5: Brand References You Can Contact** Request two brand references you can contact directly — not testimonial quotes on their website. A factory working with established international brands will have references willing to take a 10-minute call.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	

SECTION 5 — Material Consistency, QC Controls & Repeat-Order Safeguards

[ ]	26	**Sisal Rope Diameter & Wind Density** Minimum 8mm diameter natural sisal, tightly wound with no visible gaps. Thin or loosely wound rope shreds within 30–60 days of use. Request a close-up photo of a finished post before bulk approval.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	27	**Sisal Adhesive Type for Climate Compatibility** Adhesive must be rated for humidity variation (RH 30–80%). Water-based PVA adhesives fail in humid warehouses and during sea transit. Confirm adhesive spec matches your target market's climate profile.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	28	**Fabric GSM Specification Lock** Each SKU must have a locked GSM specification (e.g., 280gsm plush). Request the raw material spec sheet and verify against a physical swatch pulled from bulk production — not just the sample roll.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	29	**Incoming Quality Control (IQC) Process** Factory must have a dedicated IQC team inspecting raw materials on arrival before production begins. Request a sample IQC report from a recent batch. No IQC documentation = no QC process.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	
[ ]	30	**Material Batch-Locking for Repeat Orders** Factory must commit in writing to locking the same raw material source, grade, and supplier for all repeat orders of a given SKU. This prevents the single most common repeat-order quality failure: unannounced material substitution.	PASS	FAIL	N/A	

This checklist is provided by Aitakon (aitakon.com) — B2B Sourcing Intelligence for Pet Product Brands. Using this framework reduced client return rates from 18% to 4% across verified OEM factory transitions. For sourcing assistance, factory qualification, or pre-shipment inspection, visit aitakon.com.