

# Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Pets

## Steps for Successful Introductions:

- 1. Confine your new cat:** Pick a quiet room in the house with the litter box at one end and food, water, toys, scratching post and bed at the other. Give food treats or wet food to your resident pet and the newcomer on each side of the closed door to this room, starting at a distance where both will calmly eat. This will help them associate something enjoyable (eating) with each other's presence. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until they can eat calmly, directly on either side of the door. Next, use two doorstops to prop open the door just enough to allow the animals to see each other, and repeat the whole process. Make sure neither animal is able to push the door open. Bonus: this initial room confinement will also help with litter box training!
- 2. Switch scents:** Gently rub a towel on one animal and put it underneath the food dish of the other. You should do this with each animal in the house.
- 3. Switch Living Areas:** Once your new cat is using her litter box and eating regularly while confined, let her have limited and supervised access to more of the house. Let your other animals inside your new cat's room and close the door. This switch allows free investigation of scents and it also allows the newcomer to become familiar with her surroundings without being frightened by the other animals. Keep your dog on leash if the new cat is out.
- 4. Supervised Meetings:** As long as the animals are calm with the above, try a supervised meeting. Choose a time when your pets are relaxed and keep the meetings short. If you have more than one resident pet, be sure to introduce the newcomer to each resident individually before allowing them to mingle as a group. If any animal becomes uncomfortable, separate them and go back to the gradual steps outlined above.

**Precautions:** If one of your pets has an injury or medical problem, this could stall the introduction process. Check with your veterinarian to be sure that all of your pets are healthy enough to meet a new pet.

## Living with Multiple Cats

To increase the chances of a peaceful multi-cat household provide an environment of plenty. Provide one litter box per cat **plus one**, food and water in various locations, lots of toys, many safe resting spots (both in low and high places), multiple scratching posts and plenty of interactive time with you.

If spats occur between cats, make a loud noise, gently throw a pillow or towel, or use a squirt bottle with water to separate the cats. Carefully put one in a different room entirely and wait until they are both calm before re-introducing them to each other. Going back to the gradual steps outlined above may be of benefit.

## Cat and Dog Introductions

- 1. Control Meetings:** After your new cat and resident dog have become comfortable eating on opposite sides of the door, and have been exposed to each other's scents, try a supervised meeting. **Keep your dog on-leash** and use treats to help him sit or lie down and stay. Once your dog is settled, someone else should allow your new cat into the room. They should quietly sit near the cat, but not physically touch her, and offer her some special treats or wet food. At first, the cat and the dog should be on opposite sides of the room and the visits should be very short and end on a positive note. **Allow your cat freedom:** Once both animals seem to be relaxed, allow your cat freedom to explore your dog at her own pace. Still keep your dog on-leash. Make sure you give your dog treats and praise for calm behavior. If your cat runs away or if either loses their calm demeanor, go back to the previous steps.

**2. Continue to supervise all interactions between your dog and cat.** Even with positive introductions completed, keep your dog and cat separated when you aren't home until you are sure they are safe to leave alone.

**Positive Reinforcement:** Be sure to continue to reward your dog for sitting, coming when called, and being calm around the cat. Avoid punishment – we want your dog to have a very positive, calm association with the cat.

**Precautions:** Many dogs like to eat cat food and eat out of the litter box. The best solution is to place the litter box and food where your dog can't access them: depending on your dog and cats agility level you can try behind a baby gate, in a closet or room with the door anchored open from both sides and just wide enough for your cat, or inside a room with a cat door in the bottom. There are many solutions to this problem so please call for more advice.

### **Kittens and Dogs**

Kittens are so much smaller and more fragile so take care to prevent accidental injury from larger animals.

### **When to Get Help**

Conflicts between pets in the same family can often be resolved with professional help. Please contact us for guidance.

**Need help? Call our free pet behavior help line at (503) 416-2983.**