



Greater Androscoggin Humane Society

www.SavingPetsinMaine.org

Introducing New Cats to Other Pets

Overall, it's best to select a new pet that matches your current pet's energy level – a playful kitten or puppy may not be the best choice for an aging cat or dog. Even with your best efforts, the pets may never be best buddies. Cats like their own space, and should be introduced to other animals very slowly before they meet face-to-face. Slow introductions help prevent fearful and aggressive behaviors from developing.

Cat to Cat Introductions

When bringing home a new kitty, confine your new friend to a room with her litter box, food, water, toys, and a bed. Feed your resident cat(s) and the newcomer on opposite sides of the closed door to the room. The goal is to have a good association (food!) with the other cats' smell. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until your pets can eat calmly at the closed door. This may take several days.

While the cats are separated, swap blankets or beds used by all the cats so they each have a chance to become used to the other cat's scent. Once your new cat is using her litter box, eating regularly and allows you to hold her, let her explore a few more areas of the house while you confine your other animals elsewhere. One at a time, let them explore the new cat's room. This switch provides another way for the animals to smell each other's scents without a face-to-face meeting. Over several days, repeat the switch, but let the new cat explore more and more rooms to help her become familiar with her surroundings without being frightened by the other pets.

Once these swaps have been done a couple time, and you've returned the new cat to her room, use two doorstops to prop open the door just enough to allow the animals to see each other. You may hear a hiss or growl; that's normal and the cats should not be scolded. Repeat the process over a period of days all while supervised by you or a family member. Gradually open the door wider and wider until the cats can exit and enter at will.

If hissing and growling intensify or either cat gets scared or aggressive, carefully separate them, and start the introduction process again with a series of very small, gradual steps, as outlined above. Note: If the introductions aren't going well or if you're unsure about how they're going, get professional help from a veterinarian or animal behavior specialist right away.

Try to keep your pets' routine as close to what it was before the new cat arrived. Make sure to have at least one litter box per cat in separate locations so that none of the cats are "ambushed" by another while trying to use the litter box, and be sure each cat has a safe hiding place. If small spats (hissing, growling, or puffing up fur) do occur between your pets, *do not put your hands or other body parts between the animals*. Gently use soft pillows, brooms, loud noises (whistles), or water pistols to separate the animals. Get each pet to a separate area of the house if you can do so without being injured. Give the animals a chance to calm down before reintroducing them to each other and before touching them. If they're upset, they may bite you due to stress.

Behavior Helpline: 207-312-5873 or Maria@gahumane.org



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Cat-to-Dog Introductions

Although many cats and dogs do fine together, you'll need to be even more careful when introducing a dog and a cat to one another. A dog can seriously injure and even kill a cat, even if they're only playing. Some dogs are very interested in chasing smaller animals and should never be left alone with a cat. In addition to using the techniques described above to begin introducing your new cat to your resident dog, take these additional steps:

If your dog doesn't already know basic obedience commands, begin working on them right away. Small pieces of food will increase your dog's desire to please you, which will be necessary in the presence of a strong distraction such as a new cat. 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 as described above, you can attempt a face-to-face introduction in a controlled way. Put your dog's leash on and have him either sit or lie down and stay for treats. Have a second person offer your cat some special pieces of food. At first, the cat and the dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Lots of short visits are better than a few long visits. Don't drag out the visit so long that the dog becomes uncontrollable. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other's presence without fear, aggression, or other undesirable behavior. Never force the pets to interact or punish them. Be sure you praise your dog while he's behaving. If he lunges or growls, remove him from the room and ignore him for several minutes. Once your dog has calmed down, you can try again.

Next, allow your cat some freedom to explore your dog at her own pace, with the dog still on-leash and under control. Meanwhile, keep giving your dog treats and praise his calm behavior. If your cat runs away or becomes aggressive, go back to the previous steps. It helps to maintain a 'safe room' blocked by a baby gate that the cat can jump behind to hide if they feel nervous.

Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with your cat is not okay, he must also be taught what is okay and be rewarded for those behaviors, such as sitting, coming when called, or lying down for a treat. If your dog is always punished when your cat is around and never has "good things" happen when the cat's around, your dog may become aggressive towards the cat. Until you're sure your cat will be safe, be sure to keep the two separated when you aren't home.

Kittens and Puppies

Because they're so much smaller, kittens are more easily injured or killed by a young energetic dog or by a predatory dog. Even after the cat is fully grown, she may not be able to be safely left alone with the dog. Usually, a well-socialized cat will be able to keep a puppy in his place, but some cats don't have enough confidence to do this. If you have an especially shy cat, you might need to keep her separated from your puppy until he matures enough to have more self-control.

Animals, and people, can be hurt badly when pets fight, and the longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to correct. Punishment won't work and could make things worse. If introductions don't go well, keep the animals separated and seek professional advice immediately from a veterinarian or animal behavior specialist.

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