

## **Introducing your new Cat or Kitten to other Pets**

### **Resident cats:**

While you are setting up the room your new cat or kitten will occupy for the first week or two, let your other cats examine the bed, toys, litter box, etc. When you bring your new pet home, allow the others a very brief sniff of the carrier. Have ready a bit of their absolute favorite treat, and give it to them as they sniff; then whisk the carrier into the prepared room.

Whenever you go into the new cat's room, give treats to your old cats, so that they associate the new arrival with good things for them. During the time the new pet is adjusting in his room, switch beds, or blankets, and toys, so the cats become accustomed to each other's scent. Let them have their own space entirely for the first couple of days, and then start introducing the new smells. Feed the cats on opposite sides of the door so that they associate the positive idea of their food with the other cat.

When you are nearly ready to introduce the cats, give the new one a chance to explore the house while you take the old cats into the new one's room and play with them there. Be sure the new cat knows the lay of the land before letting her out to join the others. Use whatever your old cats like best to reinforce their tolerance of the newcomer: if it is a food treat, use it liberally; if it is a game, or ritual, or toy, make sure that they get more of it whenever the new cat is around.

Whenever there are signs of aggression (stalking, hissing, swiping or ambushing), interrupt the sequence with something distracting that won't be taken as a reward (use a squirt bottle; make a loud noise; clang pots and pans together - you get the idea!). Loud noises will be heard by both cats, and therefore both will feel the consequences. This is OK if both cats are at fault in the altercation; but if not, it is probably best to use a different tool. The squirt bottle can be a very effective tool if one cat is bullying the other. When used, only the bully feels the spray, but the other cat isn't affected.

It usually takes cats from a few days to a few weeks to sort out new relationships. Be vigilant that no one is assuming the role of bully, and that every cat can eat uninterrupted, rest peacefully, and get to the litter box without interference. Distracting a cat that is showing evil intent, and rewarding their small gestures of tolerance generally works much better with cats than punishing them. At any point in the introduction process, you can go back to the beginning for a few days, and start over. If you are worried about serious discord, call us! You don't want bullying behavior to become habitual!

### **Resident dogs:**

If your dog is very excitable, or not used to cats, teach him something that will be incompatible with chasing or harassing the cat, such as "down-stay." Have him do it whenever you go into the cat's room, and reward him extravagantly. After the cat has had a day or two to adjust, take the dog into her room with you (on a leash, with the leash dragging) and have him "down-stay." Reward him lavishly for good behavior in the presence of the cat. When you first let the cat out into the rest of the house, it is also a good idea to keep the dog dragging his leash. Have him "down-stay" whenever the cat is close, and continue to reward him. Once the cat is confident and knows her way around

the place, let the dog off the leash and continue to reward the dog for all non-aggressive behavior in the presence of the cat.

If the dog is calm, gentle and tolerant of cats, reward him anyway, whenever the cat is present. Good things should happen to him when the cat is present. For at least the first few weeks, don't leave dogs and cats together unsupervised!