

WHAT ABOUT KITTENS?

Be sure to carefully supervise a kitten introduction. Intervene if your adult cat(s) attack the kitten. In instances of extreme aggression, keep them separated until the kitten is at least five months old and can defend itself.

WHAT IF THEY DON'T GET ALONG AS WELL AS I'D LIKE?

Owners should also be ready to accept their cat's final relationship. If you adopted another cat to provide a companion or "pal" for your current feline, you will most likely be disappointed. Some cats do become pals that play & sleep together and enjoy each other's company. But many cats get along simply by establishing daily routines that allow them to avoid each other.

Many people then worry that they adopted the "wrong" cat. Chances are, the situation would be the same no matter what cat you adopted. Kittens are usually accepted more readily than adults, but social problems arise when the kitten reaches 6 - 10 months of age. Be prepared to accept your cats' ultimate arrangement.

Once an amicable arrangement is made, aggression will decrease. The cats may continue to have occasional spats (a few times a month). This is not unusual.

THIS IS A STRESSFUL SITUATION!

The initial aggression between cats can be *most* stressful for the owner. It is important to understand that aggression is a *normal* part of an introduction that lasts weeks or months. By following the guidelines above, you will speed the process of establishing territory and relationships among your feline friends



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AGGRESSION BETWEEN CATS



- **Why are Cats Aggressive Towards Each Other?**
- **What Will Happen When I Bring Home A New Cat?**
- **How Can I Introduce A New Cat?**
- **What About Kittens?**
- **What If They Don't Get Along?**

WHY ARE CATS AGGRESSIVE TOWARDS EACH OTHER?

Aggression is a normal form of communication between animals. It is used to establish the boundaries of a relationship. Cats are very territorial creatures. Introducing a new cat into an existing cat's territory is very stressful and always results in aggressive interactions between the cats.

Since cats do not live in highly structured social groups like dogs and humans do, aggression between cats is used mainly to establish control over available resources (food, choice sleeping spots, affection from the owner, the litterbox, etc.). Generally, there is no single "top cat." In a multiple-cat household, one cat may be dominant over a sunny sleeping spot on the back of the couch, while another cat may be dominant over the food bowl. Yet another cat may commandeer the scratching post or kitty bed. Cats use aggression to establish their claim on things.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT WHEN I BRING MY NEW CAT HOME?

When introducing a new cat into your household, there will be aggressive displays, spats and occasional fights. Aggressive displays include hissing, spitting,

growling, raising hackles, crouching as if ready to pounce, etc. Spats include all the above, plus batting with front feet, chasing, screaming, pouncing and "wrestling" that lasts a few seconds. Fighting includes all the above, plus "wrestling" that lasts more than a few seconds. Prolonged fighting may result in injuries.

HOW SHOULD I INTRODUCE THE CATS?

Gradually introducing the cats is the least stressful way to integrate a new cat into the household. Start by confining the new cat in a closed room. Provide him with food, water, a litterbox, and your attention. The next day, put the new cat and her supplies in a different room and allow your resident cat(s) to have access to the first room. Continue to rotate rooms for a few days. Then, confine your resident cat(s) to one room and allow the new cat to have the run of the house for a day. Allow her to investigate everywhere to find litterboxes, food dishes, hiding & sleeping spots, etc. Then you can allow the cats to meet.

Some other helpful hints: Have at least as many litterboxes as you do cats. A cat may be territorial over a litterbox and ambush other cats trying to use

it. If cats are fighting at the food bowl, have more than one in different locations. Also, make sure there are plenty of acceptable places for your cats to sleep and scratch.

Aggression between cats is usually upsetting for owners. It may be tempting to intervene by breaking up spats, trying to calm and soothe the cats with petting, etc. This tends to prolong and aggravate aggression and should be avoided. The best thing for the owner to do is allow the cats plenty of time to adjust. It may take weeks or even months for cats to work out their relationships and establish territories. Again, most attempts at intervening will only worsen the situation.

In rare cases, cats that are *extremely* aggressive towards each other will fight and injure each other. This usually is the result of extreme fear or "competition" between cats of the same sex. In this situation, keep the cats separate and call a behaviorist (for a list please call our Education Department)

