Introducing Dogs and Cats

# **Successful introductions take time!**

DO NOT try to introduce the new cat or new dog to your current cat or dog immediately upon arrival. Rushing introductions may damage the relationship irreparably and initiate fear or aggression. The length of time required to successfully integrate cats with dogs varies depending on the previous experiences of the animals involved.   For example, your dog may have had previous encounter with a cat, or the cat may have had prior experience with a dog. Often, when the cats and dogs are used to being around the other species, integration can be quicker.  Some integrations may proceed faster or slower and integration is dependent on the personalities of the animals involved.

Remember, you know your current animals best and you are only beginning to know your new animal.

If you are bringing a new dog home and currently have a cat, keep your current cat in a separate room or make sure the new dog is confined to a certain area of your home such as a kitchen, and cannot get loose unexpectedly.

If you are bringing a new cat home and have a dog, the best way to start is putting the new cat in a separate room. See other sheet on “Guidelines for Bringing Home your New Cat”!

## **Smell**

* Let “smell” be the first introduction as the animals sniff each other from under a door.
* Within two to four days, begin exchanging the bedding between the new and current animals daily. This helps familiarize the animals with each other’s scents.

## **Switching Spots**

* If there are no signs of aggression from the animals, the next step is switching spots. Let the new dog or cat have free roam of the house for an hour or two each day, while the current cat or dog is kept in another room.

## **They Meet**

* This meeting should only be happening if the new animal is comfortable in their new environment and you’re not seeing signs of aggression through the door.
* Start with having the cat in a room (a large room where they don’t feel cornered is ideal). If possible, have another person the cat is familiar with on the other side of the room to reassure and distract the cat from the dog.
* The dog should be on leash. Walk the dog into the room where the cat is. Make sure you have treats so the dog will listen to your commands.
* Keep the dog seated and focused on you as the leader. Try offering the dog a toy. If the dog focuses on or accepts the toy, reward the dog with a treat. If the dog tries to stand and move towards the cat, correct the dog slightly with the leash and make the dog sit. Reward with a treat.
* “Leave It” is a wonderful command to teach your dog. If your dog knows the command and has reacted towards the cat tell your dog to “leave it”. In the future and with repetition, the dog will begin to understand not to bother the cat.
* If at any point the dog is not responding to your commands or the cat’s stress level appears elevated, remove the dog from the room.
* Keep repeating this process until the dog is responding to you and either ignoring or accepting the cat. This process helps teach the dog that cats are not prey, toys to be chased, or threats.
* If the cat is reacting badly to the dog, keep them separate and keep doing the above steps until the cat gets used to seeing the dog.
* Never leave the dog and cat unsupervised until you are 100% sure they have built up a mutual, trusting and respectful relationship.
* Make sure the cat has some space for alone time. Once the cat and dog are comfortable with each other, cats still like having the option to retreat to a space away from the dog. Place a baby gate across the doorway of a room in the house where the cat likes to hang out or buy a tall cat tower so they can retreat when needed.