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|  | **Rescue, rehabilitation and re-homing of cats  and kittens in the South Peninsula**  Welcome Glen, Fish Hoek, Capri, Simon's Town, Noordhoek and Sun Valley (Cape Town)  **NPO Number: 260-746** |

**General Tips for introducing a New Cat to a Dog**

**RULES:**

* Always carry out new introductions by adults, never leave to children to carry out introductions
* Never leave kittens alone with dogs until you are 100% sure that the dogs are not interested in the kitten. Even if kitten is no longer in the safe house, when you go out, lock the kitten away.
* Take things as **SLOW** as possible, things go wrong when people rush introductions. There is no need to rush things.

1. **Keep the animals in separate rooms for the first few weeks (3 weeks minimum).** You want to start the process slowly by keeping the dog and the cat in separate areas. When you first bring the cat into the house, it's best to have the dog either locked away or out of the home. This way the dog won't jump around the pet carrier and scare the cat as you bring it into the home for the first time.
2. **Touch one animal, then let the other smell the scent on you**. Let the animals get used to each other’s scent before actually introducing them. Pet one of the animals individually, then, without changing clothes, go to the other animal and let it sniff the scent. Do this for each animal so that they can grow accustomed to the scent of the other animal before a real face-to-face encounter. It’s best if you can keep swapping the scent for a few weeks, or until the dog and cat stop acting so interested in the new smell.
3. **Let the animals smell each other underneath the door**. Once both animals have become accustomed to the others’ scents, let them interact from opposite sides of a door. Bring your dog to the outside of the door to the cat’s room and let them sniff each other from underneath the door.
   * If the dog gets too wild or starts digging at the door barrier, you should remove the dog and try again another time when it has calmed down.
   * Don’t move forward to a face-to-face encounter until both animals can smell each other under the door without getting agitated.
4. **Leash the dog and bring it into the cat safe room**, but keep it firmly controlled on a leash. The cat should be allowed to roam free so that it feels comfortable and able to retreat if necessary. Have something high that it can jump on. Allow the animals to sniff each other. If the cat reacts poorly by hissing or hiding, this isn’t unusual. Try to let the animals interact for a couple of minutes, but remove the dog if the cat seems too anxious or upset.
   * Always keep the dog on a leash (or at least hold it firmly by the collar) to control how close the dog can get to the cat.
   * If your dog jerks at the leash or lunges at the cat, immediately remove it from the room.
5. **Keep the initial interactions to a minimum**. It can be quite stressful for both cats and dogs to meet new animals. Try to keep the first few introductions quite short to avoid overloading your pets. Let them see and sniff each other for a few minutes, then separate the animals again.
   * You don’t want to create a negative association for either of the animals, so don’t force them to do anything they don’t want to do.
   * A good rule of thumb is that the animals are ready to take the next step when they stop acting upset/overly interested in the current level of interaction.
6. **Watch both animals’ body language**. During interactions, make sure you monitor both the dog and the cat to make sure they are doing okay. It’s normal for them to be excited, or even a little bit upset, but you don’t want the animals to get too stressed out.
   * Some signs that your cat has had enough include pinned back ears, swishing tail back and forth, and growling sounds.
   * If your dog stiffens, stares motionlessly at the cat, or starts barking uncontrollably, it might be time to separate the animals for the moment.
7. **Use positive reinforcement.** You want to make the introduction experience as pleasant as possible so that both animals will associate the new pet with something happy or enjoyable. Try to give the cat and the dog treats during the introduction process, especially if they are behaving calmly.
   * You should also use a soothing voice and stroke the cat during the introductions. Another person should do the same to the dog. This will also help to create a positive association with the other animal.
8. Once you are happy with the introductions in the safe room, **extend the introductions to the rest of the house**. Again, have complete control over the dogs and have them on leads at all times. If the dog should lunge or try to chase the cats, remove the dogs and try again another time. When you extend the introductions to the rest of the house, be very sure the cats cannot get out. If they should get a fright because of the dogs, you do not want them getting outside, they will run and you wont find them. Continue with this step until you are happy that each animal is not interested in the other. Always return cats to safe room when dogs are unleashed.

Extend the visits each time BUT always be in control.

1. During step 8. **Never leave cats and dogs at home alone together** in the full house. Always return cats to safe room until you get home. Things often happen when humans are not at the house to control the situation.

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