



## SETTING UP THE HOME FOR YOUR NEW KITTEN

Bringing a new kitten into your home is a big deal for your resident cat(s)! By following these guidelines, your new kitten is likely to be accepted by your current cat(s) and there will be peaceful coexistence and, ideally, bonding.

### **Confine the new kitten to a small room:**

- Ideally a small space your resident cat does not use.
- Must be kitten proofed: consider plants, cords, elastic, string, things that can get knocked off and break, small spaces they may get stuck in, windows that open, screens that can be pushed out.
- Ensure the room has food, water, safe hiding places, litter box, toys, scratching post, carrier with door removed or propped open, familiar bedding with own scent.
- Make sure you spend quality time with the kitten in the new space and do not rush the introductions to the larger home or other animals.
- Make space inviting: night-light, radio, purring kitty stuffy.
- Playpens with detachable lids are an ideal space for a young kitten, as are crates, during this transition space. We can loan out this equipment if required.

### **Gradually introduce the scent to one another**

- Scent swapping helps cats and kittens become more comfortable before physically meeting.
- Start by swapping bedding from the kitten and the resident cat and place in each other's bed. Monitor for negative behaviours. Return bedding to original cat/kitten to allow further mingling of scent.
- Wipe facial glands (under chin, cheeks, in front of ears) with a soft cloth, and then wipe the glands of the other cat. Proceed with wiping cloth on furniture to continue the scent exchange giving the cats the opportunity to rub their faces on top of the marks and create a communal scent.
- At mealtime, set their food bowls on either side of a closed door (not too close together at first). This lets each cat sense that there's another cat on the other side of the door.

### **Allow exploration of each cat's area**

- If no adverse reactions to the smell of one another's bedding and areas rubbed with scent, allow each cat to inspect the others space.
- Proceed with this step only once resident cat and new kitten are entirely relaxed.
- Confine the kitten to another space while resident cat is exploring its space
- Confine the resident cat in a space that will not cause any distress such as a bedroom, while the new kitten explores more of the home.

## **Allow visual contact**

- Once your cat and kitten get used to each other's scents, allow them to see each other through a pet gate, a screen door, or to sniff under the door of the other cat's "safe room."
- Proceed with this step once resident cat and kitten are fully relaxed in the home and when encountering the scent of each other.
- Engage the cat and kitten in an activity: play, getting fed treats so that the interaction is positive and both are active rather than focusing on each other. If this occurs, quickly distract with a toy.
- If there is more than one resident cat, visual contact should initially occur with one resident cat at a time.
- Keep sessions short and always finish on a positive experience.
- If either cat or kitten shows signs of distress, separate them immediately.
- Consider Feliway pheromones if any conflict arises.

## **Physical access but supervised contact**

- Once the resident cat and kitten are fully comfortable seeing each other through a barrier, remove barrier when both are engaged in activities.
- Monitor for signs of distress and separated cats if any signs of distress are observed. If negativity is observed, replace barrier and go back a stage.
- If they appear relaxed in the company of each other, then physical supervised access can be increased.
- Keep the introductions short, rewarding each with praise and treats. As they begin to tolerate and accept each other, gradually increase their time together.
- As your kitten and cat begin to interact freely, continue to pay close attention to their behavior. Normal, non-aggressive play may include pouncing, running, rolling, batting, hiding, chasing, and competing for toys and attention. Be prepared to separate them quickly should playful behavior evolve into aggressive fighting.

## **Free access with minimal supervision for short periods of time**

- Offer free access visits frequently during the day.
- Keep these short in duration initially and gradually increase duration
- Ensure resident cat and the kitten each has its own resources in separate locations of the home including bedding, perches, litter boxes and food.
- Always return kitten to a space that has been set up to ensure its safety when not supervised. This also ensures resident cats get a much-needed break from kitten energy.