

Confused and Anxious

A once-friendly cat now hisses at a family member. Perhaps the pet is experiencing separation anxiety.

Carole Wilbourn

Q. I have a 5-year-old neutered male cat that hisses at my brother whenever he goes to touch him. My cat used to be very close to my brother before he left for college. Now he's only home on weekends. Does my cat act this way because he misses my brother? A. It sounds like your cat's behavior is a mixture of confusion and separation anxiety. He's confused because your brother is home much less and anxious because he misses him. Tell your brother to let your cat come to him and to stroke him gently and briefly - perhaps to a count of three. Very, very slowly your cat will adapt. If the cat's ears go back, its back ripples or the tail swishes, stop stroking him. These are signs of aggravation.