

New Cat Competition

A resident cat takes out its aggressions on the new pet. To help alleviate the problem, the new cat needs her own space.

Carole Wilbourn

A 6-month-old feral female cat, named Miss Kitty, joined our household last December. She has been spayed, and our other six cats are also spayed and neutered.

Miss Kitty is very sweet but nervous if taken by surprise. We were able to slowly socialize her but our 4-year-old Pookey continues to chase her. Pookey has always been a very friendly and sensitive cat. We're so unhappy that she's aggressive with Miss Kitty. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

B. Williams

LaSela, Calif. Miss Kitty has become Pookey's tension target. Pookey has a sensitive make-up and Miss Kitty's anxiety agitates Pookey. Consequently, Pookey strikes out against the source of his discomfort. Female rivalry and new cat competition also add to Pookey's aggressive behavior, with an underlying fear that Miss Kitty's presence will mean less love for Pookey.

You should arrange a small room for Miss Kitty with all of her comforts. Once she becomes settled add a screen door or floor to ceiling gate to let the cats observe each other and interact without physical contact. Slowly Pookey will be able to vent her aggression without incident. Mention Pookey's name whenever you enter Miss Kitty's room so Pookey will feel involved.

Eventually you can engage each cat in play on either side of the door so they'll increase their tolerance of each other. Miss Kitty should have short forays out of her security spot. During these times, arrange to have Pookey on your lap and shower her with praise and affection. This will probably be a slow process but should give you a basis to integrate Miss Kitty into your household. Patience is the key!