

How to Handle an Unsociable Kitty

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, tells how to deal with a cat who doesn't like visitors.

By Jeanne Adlon

Posted: July 17, 2009, 3 a.m. EDT

Q: What can I do to protect visitors to my home from my "less than friendly" kitty?

A: It's true that some cats only like their human companions, but that doesn't mean your friends need to worry when visiting. In my 30-plus years as a cat sitter, I have cared for many "less than friendly" cats, and some more aggressive ones. I believe these cats react that way out of fear — they are putting up a brave front in a situation they find uncomfortable.

One of my clients has a cat named Fritz who is wonderful and loving with her, but unfriendly to everyone else. Unfortunately, his favorite spot to snooze is a chair by the front door. This makes it impossible for me to sneak in to care for him while his owner is away. Once I open the door, he jumps down and begins lunging at my feet as I sidestep my way into the kitchen.

I want readers to understand I believe Fritz is not trying to hurt me (and I know the difference.) His ears aren't back and there is no biting, growling or hissing. I have been told I am the only cat sitter who is not afraid of him and his issues, which makes me laugh. I think he is just afraid and defending his space. Fortunately as soon as I get Fritz's food bowl down he is much more interested in that than me, so it all works out.

If you have a cat like Fritz I suggest confining him to a separate room with all the essentials — food, water, litter, toys — before guests arrive. If you don't have a separate room, make sure his nails are trimmed. Feed him, play with him and give him extra attention before they arrive to help him relax. If guests ask to see your cat or pet him, I would suggest you say no. It is best that he be ignored while you have your visit so everyone can enjoy the same space without trouble.

As always, I invite readers to comment and share their stories.