

Moving In: When Her Cat Meets His Dog

In the February issue of CAT FANCY, you'll learn how to transition to a multi-cat household in six easy steps. Here, CatChannel shows you how to integrate cats and dogs when moving in with a significant other.

By Brenda Stokes

Moving in can be stressful, but can you imagine what it's like for your pets? Now imagine what it's like for the cat about to be introduced to your spouse's or roommate's pet of an entirely different species? Now that's stressful!

Luckily, there are many other people out there just like you, seeking to introduce their unfamiliar pets. The following people have a thing or two to share about just what it takes to keep the peace in your home with two very different animals.

Nico and Peewee Nico and Peewee
Living in a small apartment with her boyfriend, Alex, and female Siberian Husky, Nico, was tough enough for Jen Rome. Nico was 3 years old at the time and very in control of the household.

"I always wanted a cat," Jen says, "but Nico had never been exposed to cats before and she loved to chase small animals." After much debate, Jen and Alex took Nico to a local shelter to gauge her reaction. Nico intimidated several cats until one kitten stood his ground. That kitten became their new pet, Peewee.

"We kept Nico and Peewee separated by a door for a few weeks," Jen says. Both animals were quite curious of one another, and "talk[ed] to each other and stuck their paws under the door to get a better look."

With the help of a muzzle, Nico and Peewee had their first face-to-face, in-home encounter.

"Peewee was scared at first, but then they warmed up to each other," Jen says.

The real bonding began when Jen went out of town. Alex let the dog and cat play together muzzle-free and they became best friends.

"Nico took on a motherly role even though she never had puppies of her own," Jen says. "[Nico] would wash Peewee almost every day, spending ample time licking his ears." Chomp, on the couch, Koshka and Max hanging out together.

Max, Chomp and Koshka
"It's been a mutual toleration from day one," says Liz McGuire, owner of Max (short for Maxine), a cat imported from Russia. Max lived comfortably until one day, soon after Liz's marriage in 2003, the newlyweds decided to adopt two dogs, Chomp and Koshka, which is Russian for cat, ironically.

The key to the peace in her household, Liz says, is to know your first pet before introducing a new one.

"If you can, expose it to other animals and see how it reacts," Liz suggests.

If you primarily have a dog, take it to the dog park and watch interactions. If you have a cat first, introduce it to the neighbor's dog or cat and see what happens. However, never let unfamiliar animals play unsupervised.

To ensure all animals stay content, Max has her own "safe" room where she can go to get away from the dogs. The safe room comes in handy often because Chomp and Koshka like to chase Max around the house. However, all three seem to understand that they share a home.

Brenda Stokes is a freelance writer in Southern California. She looks forward to the day when allergy medication becomes advanced enough so she can own a cat.