

Hello, Kitty!

**Introducing a new cat to current pets can cause tension. Learn how to ease the transition and help your pets become friends.**

*Deborah Draper*

Posted: Tue Jan 4 00:00:00 PST 2005

"We should expect a little hissing and argument, and even a little swatting," Levergood says. "But try to end the visit on a positive note, even if the session lasts only a minute or so, and go back to territory sharing so that they're both still comfortable in the territory."

#### Cat Business

Over time, the cats will develop a relationship on their own terms. Vocalization and harmless scuffles should dissipate as they establish a feline hierarchy. Human intervention usually creates more problems, so stay out of these negotiations. As Levergood says, this is cat business.

However, you can help smooth the waters. Because territorial disputes often cause aggression between cats, create more space. Add vertical territory with a cat tree. Make sure you have more litterboxes than cats, positioned in different parts of the house. Ensure that each cat always has a retreat available.

Immediately stop behaviors such as stalking, play misinterpreted as attack and true violence. Distract the cats by making a loud noise, breaking their line of sight or using a squirt bottle. Punishment will not help, and will only further confuse them. If you can't phase out these behaviors by going back a step, consult a veterinarian or animal behaviorist.

Left unaddressed, anxiety can manifest itself in other negative ways. It can lead to illness, eating disorders and elimination problems. "In situations where there's real aggression, you may want to take a pharmaceutical approach," says Ken Klingman, DVM, a veterinarian at Berthoud Village Animal Clinic in Berthoud, Colo. He adds that medication isn't a solution in itself, but may reduce anxiety while addressing serious behavioral issues.

Introducing cats is not an overnight, or even a week-long process. Klingman estimates that a successful introduction takes an average of six to eight weeks, though it may take several months in other circumstances. For the sake of your household and all its inhabitants, be patient. Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither are feline relationships.

- More Ready for a Cat? Tips -