

The New Guy

Don't overlook your cat when you start a new relationship. Here's how to peacefully introduce your new partner or spouse to your cat.

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According to author Alexandra Powe Allred of Dallas, having a new person move into your home can be like the classic line from the Disney movie *Lady and the Tramp*: The baby moves in and the dog moves out!

Although it's just a line from a movie, this is a common scenario, and not just with babies, says Allred, author of *Cats' Most Wanted: The Top 10 Book of Mysterious Mousers, Talented Tabbies and Feline Oddities*.

Indeed, what happens when the new person in your home is another grown-up? One of the biggest mistakes cat owners can make when beginning a new relationship ... is taking the companionship of their cat for granted, Allred says. Not surprisingly, many cats will act out.

How can you prevent this from happening? Cecilia Burnside, DVM, a feline veterinarian in Austin, Texas, recommends focusing first on maintaining consistency in your cat's life. Keep your cat's food, litterbox and scratching post in the same areas so that its home does not feel like it has drastically changed, Burnside suggests. Provide your cat with plenty of attention so that it does not feel ignored.

April Masini, author of the Ask April advice column and online magazine AskApril.com, suggests that your new partner leave an article of his clothing at your house and offer Kitty treats so your cat will associate him with happy feelings. Cats are remarkably intelligent, Masini says. They will understand if he's trying to be nice to them.

However, if your cat seems overly distressed, consider using a pheromone spray ... which for some cats seems to have a calming effect, says Susan Nelson, DVM, assistant professor of clinical sciences at the Kansas State University Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital.

Finally, nationally renowned veterinarian Jeff Werber, DVM, emphasizes the importance of devoting time and energy to make sure the introduction goes smoothly: When that new family addition is accepted, everybody wins!