



SAN TAN CANINE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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Assessing, Anticipating Problems and Introducing Dogs to Cats

ASSESSING THE ANIMALS

Has your resident dog ever been around a cat? How did it react? A good relationship with a previous cat is a good sign, but this doesn't guarantee the same results with a new one. Your new dog or cat will behave differently than the previous one did.

How about the dog or cat you are thinking of acquiring? Is he known to be friendly to the other species? You should err on the side of caution. This is even more important if the dog's history with cats is not known. Regardless of which species you are adding to your household, each will be unfamiliar with the other and neither may respond the same way they did to previous animals they were well acquainted with.

HINT

When dogs and cats don't get along, it usually has nothing to do with territory. More likely, one is afraid of the other, resulting in defensive aggression, or the dog sees the cat as prey.

ANTICIPATING PROBLEMS

Most cats will be afraid of dogs. There are rare exceptions.

A dog's reactions will usually fall into several categories. Some immediately view cats as prey and will chase them with intent to hurt them. Many will be intensely curious about the cat. That curiosity can turn into playful, friendly behavior, or aggression, depending in part on the cat's response. The dog may start out just wanting to play, but the cat feels threatened and behaves aggressively. This may in turn provoke an aggressive response from the dog. A few dogs will immediately love the cat and be calm and relaxed in their presence.

In some cases, it can be difficult to determine at first what the dog's intentions are.

HINT

Continue to gradually increase the time your dog and cat can see one another, and decrease the distance between them, though not necessarily during the same session.



AN INTRODUCTION PROTOCOL

Your goal during the introduction is to help your animals become familiar with each other in small doses. The initial introduction should be a positive experience for all the animals. At all times, your over-riding concern must be for their safety.

Cats and dogs vary as to how quickly they move through this introduction phase. Some may accept one another within just a few days, while others may take weeks or months to tolerate one another.

1. Allow them to hear and smell each other, but not see each other. Confine the resident animal to one part of your house when you first bring your new dog or cat home. Allow the newcomer to explore his new digs while your resident animal is safely confined.
2. During this time, take an old towel, rub it on your new dog or cat, and put it in the room where you've confined your resident animal. This is the first step in getting them accustomed to one another.
3. After an hour or two, reverse the arrangements, including the scented towel. Repeat this process throughout the first day, and during the entire time your animals are housed separately during the acclimation period.
4. Feed the animals on either side of a closed door (one that they can't see through) so they will learn to associate pleasant experiences with one another. Your goal is to have the animals calmly eat with the bowls very close to the door. This may require several days or longer.
5. Continue keeping them separated until their interest in each other's scent and presence at the door wanes. Next, arrange an episode where they can see but not touch one another. This might be through a glass or screen door, or on either side of a baby gate, or with your animals on leashes or in crates.
6. Encourage the animals to lie or sit quietly, using treats, toys and/or petting. If anyone seems uncomfortable or overly excited, either increase the distance between them or calmly end the session and try again later.
7. Once they are all relaxed, allow a bit more interaction. Attach your dog's leash to a couch or chair, for example, and allow the cat to approach the dog at its own pace. Interrupt over-exuberant or aggressive behavior with a squirt of water. You must prevent your dog from developing the habit of chasing, harassing or threatening your cat. In turn, the cat must learn to trust that the dog isn't going to harm her.

When you're first introducing your dog to car travel, keep trips short and watch him for signs of nausea, such as lethargy or drooling.

BUCKLE HIM UP!

According to the American Pet Product Manufacturers Association (APPMA), over 40% of those who have dogs take them along when they travel. The bad news is that 80% of that group fails to "buckle up" their companions and protect them from injury in the event of an accident.

Your dog probably enjoys being loose in the car, but it's an unwise practice. Invest in a dog seat belt – these comfortable restraint devices allow the dog to easily sit, lie down and change position, yet help prevent injury in case of a mishap. Many pet supply stores now carry canine seat belts in different styles and sizes.

Alternatively, in a pinch, you can also fasten and tighten the middle back seat belt as far as it will go, and loop your dog's leash through it – just make sure he can move comfortably and that he's wearing a harness, not a collar, to protect his neck and throat.

Small dogs are best transported in a sturdy carrier; the carrier itself should be secured by a seat belt so it doesn't shoot off the seat in case you have to brake suddenly.

HEADS IN!

While it's true that some dogs seem to love this mode of travel, it's not good for them. Dust, gravel and other flying debris can cause injury or infection in the eyes and ears, plus there's always the risk that the dog might jump or fall out on the road.

Keep your animal inside the vehicle. If it's hot, turn on the air conditioning and direct the vents towards the back seat, or open the windows just enough for the breeze to blow through. You might also consider installing a sunshade.

WHEN THE HEAT IS ON

Never leave your animal shut in a parked car, especially in hot weather. Even in the shade and with the windows cracked open, the temperature inside a stationary car can rapidly soar to unbearable levels on a warm summer day; even when it's below 80°F outside, the temperature in a parked car can skyrocket to 110°F in less than half an hour. If you see an animal locked inside a vehicle on a hot day, especially if he looks distressed, contact the police or your local humane society immediately.

WHAT ABOUT MOTION SICKNESS?

Just like people, some animals get carsick. But because dogs and cats can't tell us when they're not feeling well, we may not realize there's a problem until it's too late.

- Avoid feeding him within three hours of the trip and give him ample opportunity to relieve himself before you set out.
- Ginger can help soothe the nausea associated with motion sickness – ½ to a full capsule of powdered ginger can be given to a dog, depending on his size.
- Some people find that Rescue Remedy administered before and during the trip helps – just rub it into your animal's ears or paw pads, or give a few drops by mouth.
- Another good flower essence for the motion sickness is Scleranthus.
- The homeopathic remedy Aconite 30C can so be useful.
- Be sure to take a towel or other washable covering for the back seat or the inside of the carrier. If all else fails and your animal still gets queasy, put his comfort first and arrange to leave him at home in the care of a trusted friend, relative or pet sitter.

FOR THE HYPER ONES

Rescue Remedy has a soothing effect on the hyperactive behavior caused by nerves or high spirits. If the behavior stems from anxiety, Mimulus or Cherry Plum can also help.

Soft music can also calm a stressed or excited animal. Just don't crank the volume up too loudly.

TAKE BREAKS

Depending on how far you're going, it's imperative to give animals, dogs especially, regular breaks. Stopping every two hours to let your dog relieve himself, stretch his legs, and have a drink of water is a good rule of thumb. Always lead your dog in and out of the vehicle away from traffic.

A deploying airbag can injure or even kill an animal, so your best friend should ride in the back rather than the front seat.

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