



# Introducing a new cat to your house

## Introduction

Cats are a unique type of pet animal, being the only domesticated feline. They are descended from a species of wild cat which normally lives alone, and it is the solitary characteristics of these lone hunters which give cats many of the independent traits which we admire in our pet cats today.

However, the pressures of living in much smaller territories, and sharing space with humans, dogs or other cats, can cause a lot of psychological stress in cats.

Cats need to know that they are in control of their own environment, which means that they do not like to share feeding or drinking places, or toileting places, or hiding/resting places with cats that they have not accepted socially.

Although some cats can be very social and enjoy human company, all cats value the ability to withdraw when they want to, and it is important that all cats have places where they can be sure no one will disturb them.

## Introducing a new cat to the house

Unlike dogs, cats do not readily accept new cats invading their living space. Try to picture the new cat as a 'lodger' – a total stranger who must share your house, rather than as a friend to your existing cat.

- Feed the original cat and the new cat in completely different places.
- Provide water in at least 2 different places, ideally separate from feeding areas.
- Make sure that both cats have separate areas for toileting. If both cats have free access to outdoors, they will choose their own places. If you provide litter trays, provide at least 1 per cat plus a spare. Do not position litter trays near food or water.
- Do not shut the cats in the same room overnight.
- Provide sleeping places high up, for example on tops of wardrobes, or radiator beds.

Make sure the cat can get up to them!

- Use Feliway Pheromone diffuser or spray to reduce anxiety. (Available from Riverside Veterinary Care)
- Leave it up to both cats as to whether they want to make friends or not. Some cats will become close friends, grooming each other and sharing food and litter trays willingly. However, if given the choice, most cats prefer their own facilities.

Forcing your cat to share facilities with a newcomer will cause a low level of long-term stress- in many cases you will not see anything obvious but chronic stress can have a profound impact on your cat's health.

With luck, your existing and new cat will learn to live happily alongside each other. Remember you cannot force them to become friends- allow them plenty of space and leave it up to them.