

Fighting Feline Housemates

Sometimes cats fight. This can occur when you bring a new cat into the home or when the cats have an altercation that triggers fighting. To try to re-introduce cats that have started to fight follow the below recommendations.

Separate the cats for a while. The victim cat should have the choice location in the house. This will help boost her confidence and level of security. The aggressor should not have the run of the house or he may continue to claim this prime territory as his and complicate the reintroduction. If the victim cat feels more secure in a smaller area, however, you can put each cat in its own room with neither having full run of the house.

Each room should contain all the necessities – food, water, litter box, toys, beds & a *Feliway Pheromone Diffuser*. Feliway is a synthetic version of the feline pheromones found in their facial glands. It has been found to have a calming affect on cats. The diffuser emits the pheromone on a constant basis into the room.

While separated:

Both cats should receive natural calming remedies like Rescue Remedy or Composure to help reduce their anxiety about each other and about being separated.

Victim cat –

Interactive play will help build confidence in the victim cat and help her feel safe and relaxed enough to engage in prey drive behavior.

Bully cat –

Play sessions will help him learn acceptable targets for biting (toys) and unacceptable ones (you). If he ever bites or scratches you during play sessions you should end play immediately.

Scent Exchange -

Using a sock on your hand – pet each cat every day with the sock to exchange their scents.

Room Exchange -

Switch the cats once a day for about 20 minutes so they can investigate and smell each other's territory.

Counterconditioning at the door way

Counterconditioning means providing something good in the presence of the trigger (the other cat) so that a new, more positive, association is formed.

Allowing the cats to see each other briefly without actually being able to get to each other is the first step. The best way to do this is to put up baby gates or a screen door on one of the

rooms. That way you can bring the cats into view of each other and provide yummy treats on either side of the door without fear of an altercation.

Short Reintroduction Sessions

When things are going well at the door you can start to conduct short controlled introduction periods. Once or twice a day you should bring the cats together in the same room (a neutral room that neither is staying in) and provide them with something great (play session or extra special food treats). Let them be together for only a few minutes at first - just enough time to eat the treats. As time goes by, increase the amount of time the cats are in the room together.

Preparing for the reintroduction:

Provide an environment of plenty

Multiple feeding stations

Multiple toilet areas

Multiple resting/observational perches

Increased vertical territory

*The aggressor cat should wear a bell on its collar so that the victim cat can know where he is at all times.

If a fight occurs:

Diversion Technique

If you notice the aggressor getting ready to attack, divert his attention onto an interactive toy like a Cat Dancer. This will trigger his prey drive and shift his interest onto something other than his housemate. Have a Cat Dancer in every room so you can easily and quickly grab it when needed.

If you are too late and the attack has already started - make a startling noise. They will most likely run in opposite directions when startled.

There are times when two cats simply cannot live together and no amount of work will change that. You may need to consider re-homing one of your cats if this is the case in your home. It is not fun for anyone to have cats that fight; and the quality of life for the cats (especially the victim cat) is not good. A new home may be the most humane thing to do.