



Introducing cats and dogs

Before deciding to bring a new dog/new cat home

Will your cat be an indoor or outdoor cat?

Will you be comfortable with allowing your cat outside so they have more space and remove themselves from any unwanted attention from your dog? If you're unsure about this there are some possible options to keep your cat safer if you're worried about them going outside:

You can install cat friendly fencing which means your cat can access the garden but is restricted from going further afield

You can install a cat flap that allows your cat to go in and out. Do make sure your puppy can't fit through the flap though.

Catio – these are enclosed spaces that you can attach to an outside door where your cat can go and get fresh air in but again can't move out from (**Figure 1 and 2**)



Figure 2

Contact Lisa on lisa@albanypetservices.co.uk for a discount code to use on Protectapet products.



Figure 1

Thinking about the breed of dog you would like

Is the dog a breed that has an inherent desire and instinct to chase? Such as a greyhound? If so, they may never be suitable for life living with a cat. Equally if your cat is very nervous it may not be fair on them to welcome a dog home as the changes may be too much. Has your cat had a bad experience with a dog before or vice versa? Considering a dog's temperament is important when welcoming one home, if they are overly boisterous then they may not be a suitable companion for your cat. If your dog is timid and is scared of cats, then similarly this may not be the best idea.



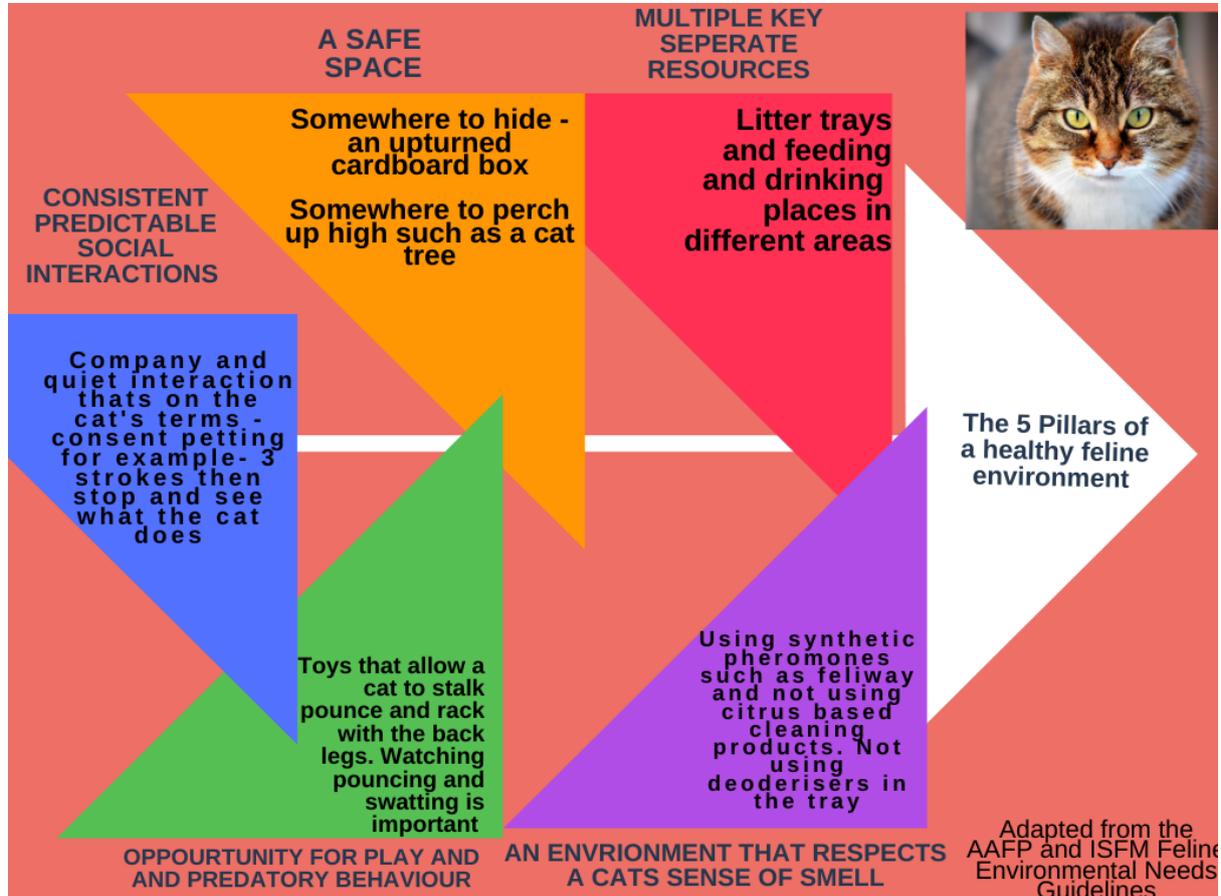
The homecoming – preparing for the dog’s arrival

- Install baby gates so you can block access to the cat when needed.
- Purchase Feliway plug ins.

Feliway is a synthetic pheromone. There are 5 feline pheromones identified in cats and Feliway classic is the F3 type. F3 is the pheromone that is deposited by a cat when they bunt and facial rub on to items helping them to smell familiar. Feliway releases this smell into the environment helps promote wellbeing and reduces fear/anxiety.

- You could also talk to your vet about options such as Zyklene.

The 5 freedoms





A lot of cats thrive on routine and predictability. It's really important that they have access to their key resources and can access them in private without a dog exploring them. One way to do this is to have a room in the house that the cat can access (again a way to do this is by installing a cat flap. Alternatively if you have a door that has glass panes then one could possibly be removed and the cat could move in to the next room by walking through the door, in a 'mouse hole' type passageway – (Feline Stress and Health)

The resources include a:

unhooded large litter tray which is placed away from food and water. Food and water bowls in separate locations – one end of the room from each other if possible so no smells are contaminating their water. A sturdy scratching post (sisal or corrugated cardboard), and cat friendly shelving or a cat tree, radiator beds and a hooded resting place such as an upturned cardboard box with a blanket inside.

One thing to do if your dog does chase your cat is to have a side table at the end of the sofa – depending on the size of your puppy or dog this will be a safe exit route for your cat to go behind and they can jump up and escape your dog's demands (Dr Sarah Ellis and John Bradshaw – The Trainable Cat.)

The first meeting

Gardens

If possible have the first meeting outside in the garden. Keep the puppy / dog on a short lead and give your cat the choice to come outside in the garden if they want to. Have a table/chair for your cat to sit on so they can watch the dog from a high vantage point so they feel safer.

Meeting indoors

Safety is paramount. Have baby gates installed so that your dog and cat can see each other but aren't in the same room to begin with. Have a table in the room so your cat can watch the dog from a high vantage point (keep the table a length away from the gate so they don't jump over it). Cats need to have somewhere to run to so make sure doors to rooms are open so that they can move when needed. Cats will naturally flee in moments that they feel threatened but if they have nowhere to go they may attack as offence is sometimes the best defence. This can damage any impending relationship before it's even started so it's important to put management in place to try and avoid and prevent this from happening in the first place.



If you run in to challenges

Look for body language indicators to suggest your dog is uncomfortable such as hackles raised, lip licking , tail tucked under, snarling and growling. For cats look for signs they're uncomfortable such as dilated pupils, hissing and growling, erect ears rotated sideways, moving slowly, pilo erection around the tail.

Hire the help of a positive reinforcement dog trainer if you need help training dog's not to chase and if your dog or cat have hurt each other or displayed signs such as growling, or teeth bearing please contact a clinical animal behaviourist as this could escalate into something dangerous such as bites needing veterinary attention and potentially irrevocably damage their relationship.

If you're dog has bitten your cat or you're worried that they may bite your cat, please do hire the help of a clinical certified animal behaviourist for guidance - talk to your vet for recommendations.

References

Isfm guide, feline stress and health, 'Managing negative emotions to improve feline health and wellbeing'.

AAFP and ISFM Feline Environmental Needs Guidelines

Sarah L H Ellis, Ilona Rodan, Hazel C Carney et al.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1098612X13477537>

The Trainable Cat, Dr Sarah Ellis and John Bradshaw.

Photos: Protectapet