

Ask Dr. Sacramone

Amy from Tyngsboro sent me an e-mail asking, “How do you recommend introducing a new pet into your home?”

First of all, thank you for your excellent question. This time of year many families add a new pet to their households. It is very exciting to get a new pet, however, sometimes existing pets are not as keen on the new family member. There are many factors that contribute to the pets’ future relationship, from the species, breed, size, gender, age, temperament, and health status. It is nearly impossible to predict how one pet will respond to another.

It is wise to have the new pet examined by your veterinarian BEFORE you bring it home. Your vet can check for potential health problem, especially things that can be contagious to existing pets and possibly even to you. Make sure you bring any paperwork with you and you should also bring a fecal sample to check for internal parasites.

You really never know how pets will get along; some get along instantly, while others will never like each other. There are some general guidelines that can help in any situation.

1. Be patient and take your time. It can sometimes take up to 2 months for a new pet to settle into a new home.
2. Spend some quality time with each pet (new and old) alone.
3. Watch for impending fights and try to prevent them. Some animals need to spend a significant amount of time apart before they will accept each other. Never put your own health in jeopardy trying to separate a fight.
4. Always have a way for the smaller, more frightened pet to escape, particularly when introducing cats and dogs. It is usually better to have the dog on a short leash and let the cats run and hide if they want. Don’t force a frightened cat to be near a dog if it doesn’t want to be.
5. Make good things happen when the new animals are in each other’s company. One good idea is to fast both pets so they are hungry, then feed them each their favorite food so they associate good things with the presence of the other pet.

Hopefully these general guidelines will give you a place to start. If you have further questions, please don’t hesitate to contact your veterinarian. I would also like to Thank Amy again for her great question. If anyone else has a question for me please e-mail me at info@dunstableanimalclinic.com. Who knows, maybe the next article will be addressed to you?