



How to introduce your shelter animal to your other pets

If you're considering getting an animal from a shelter, there's no need to be intimidated by the thought of introducing them to your other pets.

Sure, it might seem like a daunting task, but with the right approach, you can make the transition a breeze. Here are some tips on how to get your new animal settled in with your existing pets.





Prepare for the introduction

Preparation is key when it comes to introducing animals to each other.

First things first, make sure to become familiar with the history and background of your pet. Animals from shelters may have previous experiences with other humans and animals which could affect their behaviour around your existing pets.

Ensure your new pet has a room or area in the house with a physical barrier to keep them separate from your existing pets – a spot where they can feel safe and secure. This will look different between cats and dogs. Cats need places to hide, an abundance of vertical spaces, and a litterbox all to themselves. This will help them to become comfortable with each other without feeling overwhelmed.

Before allowing your new pet to mix with your existing furry family members, you should ensure they have been checked by a vet and received the recommended vaccinations to reduce the risk of your existing pets being exposed to disease. A quarantine period before mixing is also recommended to allow you to monitor your new pet for signs of disease such as sneezing or conjunctivitis.

Lastly, spend some time acclimating the new pet to your home before introducing other animals. This gives them a chance to check out their new digs without feeling threatened.



A general introduction process

1. Start preparing for the introduction process by slowly acclimating your existing pets to whatever smells, sounds and sights they may encounter with the new pet. If possible, bring home an item such as a blanket that has been in contact with the new pet so that your current pet can become familiar with their scent.
2. Keep the new member of the whānau in a separate space away from the other animals until everyone has had a chance to get used to each other's presence and smells without feeling overwhelmed.
3. Bring both animals into a neutral area where neither of them feels dominant or territorial over the space. Keep the encounters short and sweet at first; negative interactions can have a lasting effect down the line.



4. As the two become more comfortable, extend the time they spend together and vary the place: the lounge, the backyard, the local park.
5. With consistency, their relationship should progress naturally. If a significant amount of time passes and tensions are still high, seek some advice from your local vet.

While this process gives you a great place to start, it's important to remember that the process will look different for every pet and every introduction. Use these steps as a guide but adjust your approach as you gauge your pet's responses.

Make use of rewards

Positive reinforcement is an absolute must when introducing two animals who are unfamiliar with one another.

Using treats and verbal praise in the presence of the other animal will condition the pets to associate the member of the family with positive things. Using the same method, you can reward either pet when they interact calmly with the other, reinforcing this relaxed behaviour and strengthening bonds over time.

Additionally, if either animal shows signs of aggression or distress during their first meeting (growling, hissing etc.), don't punish them in any way as this can only worsen the situation. If tension begins to build, bring in distraction and redirection methods, by drawing your pet's attention to yourself with play or toys.

A few important tips to keep in mind

- **Keep the kids at bay:** Young children can sometimes unintentionally excite animals which can heighten stress levels.
- **Stay calm:** Some pets can sense fear and anxiety, so try to remain as relaxed as possible during the introduction process.
- **Be consistent:** Try and keep the existing routine the same while they adjust and cut your existing pet a little slack, change is not easy for anyone.



- **Be patient:** It may take some time for your pets to get used to one another, but with patience and positive reinforcement you'll give them the best chance at getting along.
- **Supervise all interactions:** Your presence should be the stabilising force across the introduction process and be prepared to step in if tensions heighten.
- **Keep neutral ground:** To reduce territorial behaviours, remove your pet's high value resources (such as a favourite toy) and feed the two pets separately from each other.
- **Extra help:** Each animal is unique and no two introductions will go the same. Don't hesitate to reach out to your veterinary professional for advice. The use of synthetic pheromones such as Feliway or Adaptil can also be beneficial to calm your pets.

With patience, preparation and understanding of their needs, you can navigate the waters of bringing home a new pet. And at the end of it all, you'll end up with an even bigger family than before - now isn't that something worth smiling about?

Keep yourself and your pets safe

Protecting your pets is important, and that's why SPCA Pet Insurance provides coverage for accidental injury and illness to help keep them safe. Love them, protect you!

For more tips and references, refer to the article on [SPCA Pet Insurance](#)



SPCA Pet
Insurance®