

Help! There's a Growling, Hissing Demon under the Bed

Acclimating Your New Savannah to Your Home

You've read stories about Savannah kittens and cats (SVs) arriving at their new homes and prancing out of their carriers straight into their owner's arms. After months of anticipation, your SV is finally home. You pop open the carrier, out comes the cat, who, after one glance in your direction, stuffs itself under the bed, behind the dresser, or in some dark tight place and proceeds to make noises like a Dementor attack on Hogwarts. What do you do?

ANTICIPATING THE ARRIVAL

Before your SV arrives home, prepare a room where the cat will stay during a 2-week quarantine period. The quarantine period gives the SV time to adjust to new surroundings, build confidence, and bond with you and your family. The quarantine is also absolutely necessary to ensure that your new SV is healthy before introducing it to other pets. The room can be a spare bedroom, home office, or bathroom and should contain:

- ✓ Cat bed
- ✓ Scratching post
- ✓ Litter box
- ✓ Pet carrier or cardboard box where the SV can go when it needs privacy
- ✓ Lots 'n lots of toys
- ✓ Food & water dishes

BONDING WITH YOUR SV

Sometimes it takes a lot of patience, trickery, and downright bribery to win the trust of an SV. If you adopted a kitten, remember that everything with which it is familiar has changed. It is in a new place with new smells and suddenly without its siblings, mother, and the breeder with whom it spent those important months learning to be an SV.

Cats in general don't like change. If you adopted an older kitten or adult or an SV who comes from another adoptive home where the circumstances were less than ideal, it may take a long time to establish a trusting relationship.

Tips 'n Tricks for Establishing Trust

The following are breeder and experienced owner tips 'n tricks for building trust with a scared or unconfident cat, or one that is uncomfortable with human touch. The list is not in order of importance. However, establishing yourself as a provider is important so I recommend hand feeding and treat giving as soon as you can.

It may take a combination of several suggested approaches before your SV changes from scared & seemingly demonic to confident & trusting. Get down on the floor, take a deep breath, exude calm and confidence.

- Be patient
- Be patient
- Be patient
- Never force physical contact.
- Sit in the quarantine room and read aloud to acclimate the SV to your voice.
- Sleep in the room with cat even if you can only do it intermittently.
- Sit in the room and ignore the cat. Do nothing if it approaches to explore you or whatever you're doing. After a few sessions when it appears the SV is comfortable being near you, try petting it. Maybe begin with a chin scratch. Let the cat smell your finger first.
- Quietly talk to the cat.
- Do not stare directly into the cats eyes - they perceive this is an aggressive act.
- Feed the cat from your hand. After a few sessions, try to pet the cat while it eats. If that fails, continue hand feeding and try again after a day or two.
- If hand feeding doesn't work, progressively move the food bowl closer

KNOWING WHEN TO BACK OFF

Everybody needs their space from time to time and it's important to know when your SV needs a break. The following are signs to watch for that signal escalating distress which may lead to aggression. It's important for you to get to know your cat and its limits in the home environment. For example, hissing can be a sign of aggression, usually accompanied

to you until the cat is comfortable eating next to you. Try to pet the cat while it eats. If that fails, wait a day or two and try again.

- Engage in play with a feather wand. Bring toy progressively closer to you and occasionally run the wand over the cat's back. "Accidentally" touch the cat's back with your finger or hand. Progressively increase contact.
- Experiment with treats. If you find one that the cat loves, place a piece a short distance from you. Progressively shorten the distance between the treat and you. Put a piece on your leg or in your palm resting on the floor. Let the cat retrieve the treat a few times before you attempt contact. Try to pet the cat while it's eating the treat from your leg or out of your hand.
- Be patient
- Be patient
- Be patient

by ears back and dilated pupils. However, one of my SVs "talks" this way. He inherited the hissy gene from his mom who also talks this way. He hisses when he's happy, annoyed, hungry, wants to play, wants to snuggle. It's incumbent on me to know the difference. These are general guidelines to determine your SVs emotional state.

Tails

- Curled slightly downwards and then curved at the tip, like an elongated "S" shape means cat is relaxed and content.
- Erect but not ridged and has a curved top, like a question mark (?) means cat is friendly and greeting.
- Limp but the end is flicking means cat is getting agitated. The more the tail flicks, the more annoyed the cat is getting.
- Erect and bobbing or dancing means cat is showing affection. Swishing from side to side like an S shape means cat is very angry.
- Erect and the hair is sticking out ridged means cat is showing aggression.
- Slightly raised but not ridged and the hair poofed out means cat is playful.
- Arched ("n" shape) and hair is sticking out ridged means cat may attack. Usually the cat also is standing on tip toes and has a sideways stance.
- Between legs means cat is giving in, scared, submissive.

Cat Tail Speak



I'm scared



*I'm happy
to see you*



*I'm getting
upset*



Let's be friends



*Hmmm. I'm
interested*



*I'm crazy
about you*



I feel loving



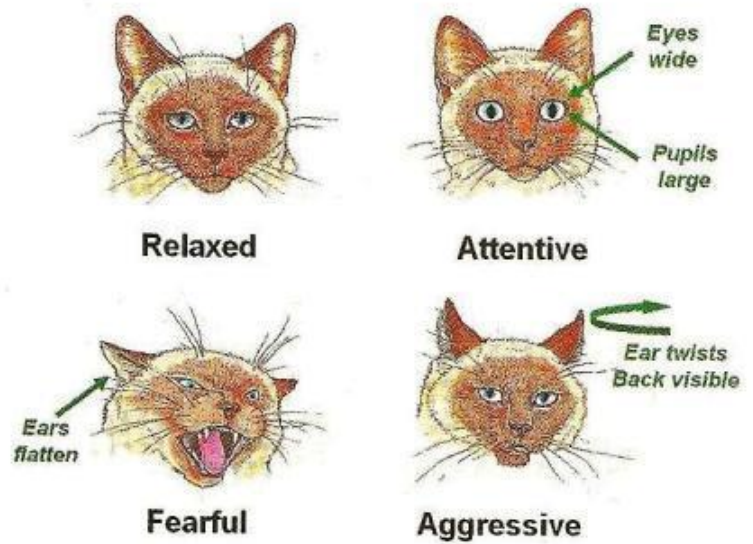
I'm worried



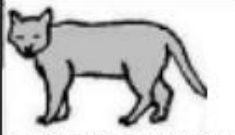

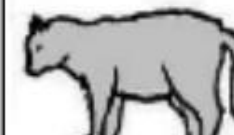













I'm mad

Ears

- Both ears flat each side of head normally with dilated pupils means the cat is intrigued and playful.
- Both ears are pointing back and flat means cat is annoyed and angry.
- One ear sideways one ear forward means cat is relaxed.
- Both ears forward means cat is alert and focusing on a noise.



Body Language

		MORE AGGRESSIVE →			
↑ MORE SUBMISSIVE OR MORE FEARFUL ↓	 TAIL MAY BE HELD ALOFT				
	 FLATTER TO THE GROUND				
	"FLINCH"  MAY EVEN FALL OVER IN SUBMISSIVE FEAR		 MUSTN'T CONFUSE THIS WITH STRETCHING	 POSTURE ALSO SEEN WHEN CATS SPRAY	
	TOTALLY WITHDRAWN  TAIL TUCKED UNDER	 TAIL TUCKED UNDER		LAST DITCH  SCARED ANGRY	