

## **How To Introduce Greyhounds To Cats and Small Dogs**

One of the biggest misconceptions about Greyhounds, is that people think that they cannot live with cats. Greyhounds were bred to chase and hunt, but 75 to 80 percent of them can live safely with **indoor** cats, **if introduced and supervised properly at first**.

We have some that even live with pet rabbits and birds. If you have outdoor, free roaming cats; however, a greyhound is not the pet for you. Prey drive outside is much higher than indoors. Greyhounds vary between: scared of cats, to no prey drive towards them at all, to some interest, to extremely focused on cats. Most fall between "no interest" to "some interest" but are easily correctible. Greyhounds are calm, quiet, lazy and very cat like, so tend to appeal to cat lovers. We test all of our greyhounds and label them "cat tolerant", "cat trainable" or "not cat safe" depending on their reaction.

We also test all of our greyhounds with small dogs. Even a non cat-safe greyhound can be tolerant with small dogs **if introduced and supervised properly**. Greyhounds are smart and can usually identify another dog by smell as long as they have a chance to sniff a small dog and it doesn't just come running at or past them. Cats are more likely to be considered prey than another dog. We do occasionally run into a greyhound with a high enough prey drive that it cannot live with small dogs.

Cat testing is not just "testing" a greyhound. Because of their unique upbringing on farms and at the racetrack, many have never seen a cat before or maybe have just seen feral cats at a distance. Groups do cat testing in different ways. Some make the test as difficult as possible to give the greyhound the most opportunity to fail. We tend to think that it is as much of an introduction, as it is a test of the greyhound's prey drive. The methods used for that first introduction can make a high percentage of Greyhounds fail or pass, and can affect the way they will view cats for the rest of their lives.

Nearly all greyhounds will fail a test conducted outdoors with a fast moving cat. **Greyhounds and most dogs of any breed aren't good with outside, free roaming cats, no matter how cat tolerant they may be indoors**. We warn adopters that their greyhound should **NEVER** be loose outside with any cat no

matter how safe they may be with cats indoors. Prey drive outside is much stronger than indoors.

Another thing that can cause a greyhound to fail a cat test, is watching another dog fail a cat test. Pack instinct kicks in and the watching dog will get excited about that cat too. Nearly all will fail a test with a cat at a distance, since they have no idea what it is without getting a sniff. If they have never met a cat or small dog, they can mistake one at a distance for a lure, a squirrel or a rabbit. It isn't fair to assume they won't be tolerant, until they actually get to sniff the small animal and identify it.

Greyhounds are very smart and learn quickly. They WILL learn something from the introduction; either that cats are prey and need chasing, or hopefully, that cats are to be left alone. There are quite a few steps to the process that can affect how a greyhound will view cats permanently.

**MUZZLE! MUZZLE! MUZZLE!** No cat or small dog testing or introductions should ever be done without a muzzle on the greyhound!

**TEST ONE DOG AT A TIME!** Never let one dog watch another dog's cat test. If one dog fails a cat test the ones watching will fail too. Pack instinct is strong and excitement is contagious.

**TEST ON LEASH WITH PROPERLY FITTED COLLAR!** A test or introduction should never be done with an off leash greyhound! The collar should be tight enough that it won't slip over the dog's head and accidentally remove the muzzle. Hold the leash very short and hold the collar as well to stop the greyhound from banging the cat with its muzzle if it gets too excited. A greyhound should never be tied up for a test, or any other time. Tying up a dog for a test is likely to increase excitement over whatever is just out of their reach.

**TEST INDOORS ONLY!** Prey drive is higher outdoors. Judging a dog's reaction to a strange cat at a distance outside is NOT a reliable way to cat test. Yes, most greyhounds will be interested and want to chase cats they see on walks in the neighborhood. That will be true of even most cat tolerant dogs indoors. Dogs are predators so this is not unique to greyhounds. Dogs are more alert and excitable outside, than in their den or house where they typically rest. Dogs are also

territorial and consider squirrels and the neighbor's cat to be intruders, in their yard.

**NEVER HOLD THE CAT DURING THE TEST!** You will get scratched and holding a cat up in the air increases prey drive. The dog is much less likely to pass the test with cat being dangled above his head like a lure or a toy. Let the dog meet the cat on the ground as if it were another dog. The same thing applies when introducing a greyhound to a small dog. It will be much more recognizable as a dog if it is on the ground walking like a dog and not carried like a toy.

**TEST IN A SMALL SPACE!** Tests and introductions should be held in a small space where the cat cannot run away. A bathroom works great or another small room where the cat can't run away or hide under things. This is SO important! The last thing you want is a greyhound to get excited over a fast moving small animal at the start of a test or intro- it is almost guaranteed to react with excitement and fail. You don't want the greyhound to mistake a cat for the lure it has been chasing at the track – also fast moving and fuzzy.

**TEST CALM DOGS!** If the dog has seen a lure moving, been playing with toys, chasing balls or has gotten excited by seeing a squirrel or cat at a distance first, skip the introduction and wait for the dog to calm down. The best bet would be to wait until the next day and intro in a different place. A Greyhound is likely to look for the "lure" even a day later in the spot he saw it before and have a similar reaction. A dog that is very excited will go straight to the chase or pounce rather than being curious and sniffing first. Sniffing to find out that a small dog or cat is not a lure or a squirrel is the key to the whole introduction. Most dogs that can remain calm enough to actually sniff a cat will lose interest after they sniff.

We had a foster that tested very cat and small dog tolerant – just not interested at all. It went to a foster home and was turned out in their back yard to potty before meeting their small dogs. As luck would have it, there was a wild rabbit in the yard that the foster chased. This put the foster into an excited, high prey drive state. When introduced to their small dogs, minutes later, it understandably thought every one of them was that bunny and couldn't calm itself down enough to sniff and find out otherwise. The next day the test with those small dogs was repeated, and the foster was fine with the small dogs. It just needed to calm down and get out of that high prey drive state so it could sniff and find out that the small dogs were not rabbits.

We had another foster that had been playing excitedly with a ball right before being introduced to a cat in an adoptive home. Even though he had passed a couple of cat tests before meeting that cat, he had a very poor reaction to that cat, because he met the cat in a very high state of excitement. He went back to being very good with cats when he was reintroduced in a calm state of mind. It is so important that introductions are done correctly with each cat and small dog they meet, especially if the Greyhound has some prey drive.

**TEST WITH A STILL CAT FIRST!** Put the cat in a crate if you need to. Once the dog calmly sniffs the cat in the crate, THEN let the cat out. Restrict the cat's movement and let the greyhound sniff it again without the bars between them. If the greyhound passes that part of the test, then let the cat move a little – walking only. No running! Few greyhounds will pass a cat or small dog test if it sees them running first without going through this gradual process. Let the dog identify the cat, when it is at its least exciting, so that the dog will already know what it is when it does move fast.

**INTRODUCE TO AS MANY CATS AND SMALL DOGS AS POSSIBLE!** Dogs can have different reactions to different animals. Fuzzy and white seems to be the hardest to resist for most Greyhounds because that is what the lures at the track look like. They also play with a fuzzy brown lure before they get to the track though. Very tiny dogs and kittens that look like squirrels and zip around take more careful introductions. We try to introduce each greyhound to adopter's specific small animals in this way or coach the adopter through the introduction. **Don't consider a dog to be tolerant with ALL cats or ALL small dogs just because he has passed a test with one small dog or cat. Repeat the introduction to each cat or small dog you have and visiting cats and small dogs.**

**NO GREYHOUND SHOULD EVER BE ALLOWED OFF LEASH WITH A CAT OR SMALL DOG HE HAS NEVER MET!** Many look like the lure they chased at the track. Most greyhounds have not been exposed to other breeds of dogs or cats. Just because your dog has been good with one small dog or cat he met during a test, it doesn't mean he will automatically know that the next cat or small dog he sees are the same animals and that the same "no chase" rules apply. They can look very different and it is important that he be introduced carefully to each new animal. **That is why dog parks are not usually a good idea for**

**Greyhounds, especially freshly retired Greys that haven't been around many breeds of dogs or many small dogs yet.**

**DON'T USE A FEARFUL CAT!** If you have multiple cats, introduce the greyhound to the cat that is not afraid of the dogs first. If you are cat testing for an adoption group, chose a cat that will stand up for itself. A fearful small dog or cat can trigger prey drive in all but the lowest prey drive dogs. This is something we take into consideration when choosing a dog for a home with a timid cat that is likely to run away. Only the most cat tolerant and low prey drive dog will be OK in that situation.

**DON'T USE A FAKE STUFFED CAT FOR A CAT TEST!** Greyhounds, like most dogs, love to play with stuffed toys. Stuffed animals don't smell like cats and even battery powered toy cats don't move like a real cat. Even the most cat friendly Greyhound will play with a stuffed toy. Please do the test right and use a real cat.

### **The Actual Test:**

Cat is in a small room in a crate. A Calm, muzzled greyhound is brought in on leash and allowed to sniff the cat in the crate. If the dog gets excited, allow him to calm down before letting the cat out of the crate. Even most non cat-safe dogs can pass this part of the test. Just testing the dog with a cat in a crate is unreliable for this reason. Some dogs just can't resist a moving cat, even if they can pass the "cat in a crate" test. A cat in a home will move so we want the dog to be exposed to that too.

When the cat comes out of the crate encourage the dog to sniff the hind end of the cat and position them there first. That is the greeting end for a dog. Dogs sniff butts but they grab the neck of prey. The end of the cat you present first can affect the outcome of the test. You want the dog to sniff politely not try to grab. This is the most important for dogs that are getting excited about the cat at this point in the test.

If the dog seems overly interested in the cat, even after sniffing it, we let it bother the cat a little bit to provoke a slap from the cat. Even dogs that are VERY interested in the cat usually jump back in surprise, yelp and try to get away when slapped by a cat. Most want nothing to do with the cat once they have been slapped. If the dog chooses to move away from the cat, we reward that. Then we

pull the resisting dog back over toward the cat. The more the dog resists, the more it is firmly ingrained in his mind that he doesn't want to bother the cat again. It becomes HIS decision and one he remembers. A dog that was interested at first in the cat, but won't go near the cat again after a slap from the cat, would get a "cat trainable" listing on the website, just because of the initial interest. Dogs that are not going to be cat tolerant or even cat trainable will only get more excited by a cat slap. If they back away for a second, they will excitedly go back toward the cat right away. When we find a dog like that we stop the cat test and that dog is labeled "not cat safe".

Very high prey drive Greyhounds won't respond to physical or verbal corrections when they are in the room with the cat. You won't be able to get their attention off the cat and they will be so focused that it is as if you aren't even in the room. Some bark and lunge for the cat, but others get very still and tense, staring at the cat. Often their tail is wagging tensely, but sometimes they are totally still. Don't mistake a tense tail wag for meaning that they "like" the cat.

A tense, still dog with a tensely wagging tail or still tail is not usually a good sign. Be VERY cautious testing this type of dog. They will seem OK one second and try to pounce on the cat the next. The muzzle prevents them from biting the cat but it hurts to be hit hard with a plastic muzzle. You want to have a firm grip on the collar to keep the dog from hitting the cat with the muzzle. Some high prey drive dogs will even turn their head a bit as if they aren't watching the cat, while watching it out of the corner of their eye. If the cat relaxes and turns or looks away from the dog for a second, this type of dog will take the opportunity to pounce. The dog can be very patient and stand motionless for a long time, very much like a cat hunts mice. A dog having this type of reaction to a cat is not likely to be cat tolerant, but occasionally a slap from the cat can change their mind. Even with a dog like this, it is important to get the dog to the hind end of the cat for a sniff. We have seen many dogs at this level of excitement, suddenly lose interest once they sniff the cat and realize what it is. Some at least calm down and become easily correctible and trainable with the cat, once they identify it as a cat.

If the dog passes the initial cat test, we try to get the cat to move a little faster and may let it hop up onto a windowsill or countertop, which can set off prey drive. If the dog responds to the moving cat, we check to see if he responds to correction. We use a collar correction, a loud voice or a firm poke with a couple

of fingers to his neck or side to see if we can get his focus off the cat. If he is interested in the cat but corrects easily we label him "cat trainable". If the dog checks out the moving cat and quickly loses interest on his own we label him "cat tolerant".

We often retest "non-cat tolerant" greyhounds after they have been in foster care for a while. It has been their job to chase a fuzzy lure until we get them and some take that job seriously. Many calm down after they have been retired a bit and do better on their cat and small dog test the second time around.

If possible, we take our "cat tolerant" or "trainable" greyhounds to the adopter's home and repeat this introduction with their individual cats. A greyhound that has only been exposed to a mostly black, short-haired cat isn't going to know that a white, long-haired cat, is a cat. He needs to be carefully introduced again and be allowed to go through the process and sniff and make the connection.

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