



## FOREVER HOUNDS TRUST

Matching greyhounds and lurchers to happy homes

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Registered charity 1131399

# Cats and other small animals

## (Fact Sheet 15)

Different breeds of dog have been bred to fulfil different roles for mankind. Collies and gundogs, such as spaniels and retrievers, have been bred with the characteristics required for herding or retrieving, in tandem with a human handler and these traits have been enhanced by man over many centuries. Greyhounds and lurchers collectively referred to as sighthounds, have been designed to hunt independently by sight.

Most breeds of dog have a 'prey-drive' and many dogs will not be able to live with cats or small animals. Greyhounds and lurchers are no different, but whilst some cannot share their lives with a small furry, a few most certainly can. Whether your cat or small furry wants to share their home with a hound, is another matter!

If you have cats (or other small pets), you should consider the following questions before considering adopting a dog:

- Can your cat/small animal live with a hound and do they want to?
- If a hound is considered cat trainable, is it safe with all cats and small animals?
- Are you prepared to commit the time and effort to safely introduce your hound and cat/small animals?

### **Can your cat/small animal live with a hound?**

Before enquiring about adopting a Forever Hounds dog, it is important that you are sure your cat/small animal wants to share its home with a dog. If you currently have another dog, or have recently had a dog living harmoniously with your cat/small animal, then it is reasonable to assume that your cat/small animal will be comfortable with another canine companion.

However, if you do not know how your cat/small animal will react to a dog in the house, consider whether you know anyone who has both dogs and cats, and ask if they would bring their dog to your house for an introduction. If your cat is calm, this is a good sign but if your cat arches its back, hisses, spits, or tries to run away, then it may not be able to cope with sharing its home with a dog. If a cat is not used to hounds in the home, there is a risk that she could pack her bags and leave! It is essential to ensure that the cat has a collar and identity disc/microchip to cover this possibility.

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## Can all dogs live with a cat?

As with any breed of dog, many greyhounds and lurchers are unable to live successfully with cats or small animals but some individuals can be trained to accept a cat or other small animal, as a member of their new family.

Where facilities allow, Forever Hounds test each hound to determine whether it will be cat trainable, using the introduction sequence outlined in the 'Introducing your hound to your cat' section below. Unless a Forever Hounds dog is specifically described as cat trainable in their write-up on the website, it is safe to assume they are not.

## Are cat trainable hounds safe with all cats/small animals?

The simple answer is no. Although your hound may be completely safe with his own family cat - or even rabbit - he may view anything outside of his family unit as fair game, so be prepared!

Your hound is unlikely to get along with other people's cats, unless they are introduced in the correct way. They may also view any wild animals as something to be chased. It is all about the hound recognising the cat/small animal as part of his family unit, which can only happen when given the correct introductions and time.

If you are worried about neighbour's cats, check the garden before letting the hound out, use your muzzle and place a falconry bell on the hound's collar, to warn the neighbourhood cats that the hound is around.

If your street is full of cats, use the muzzle provided when out on walks, especially at first when you need to gauge the interest of the hound. Muzzles are widely used for all breeds and people are aware that this is a sign of a responsible owner and does not necessarily mean the dog is aggressive.

## Introducing your new hound to your cat/small animal

How you introduce your cat/small animal to your hound is the most important issue to deal with when you bring your hound home. To aid in this process and **prior to** bringing your hound home, ensure that you have brought home at least one item that smells of your hound and leave it around where your cat can smell it. You may also wish to do the same for your hound in his kennel.

Whilst we may have deemed your new hound to be cat trainable, it is imperative that sensible precautions are taken until you are confident of your hound's temperament and your cat's/small animal's response to a new dog. **Never leave your hound and cat/small animal alone together for at least the first few weeks.**

Some cats will spend many months watching the hound from the highest and furthest place away; others might be willing to give the newcomer a blow. It should not be forgotten that we have two temperaments to work with in this introduction. We have even had dogs returned because they are being terrorised by the cat, so it is definitely a two-way street.

When you make the introduction, ensure your hound is muzzled, wearing a tight collar and on-lead, so you have complete control. Remember that it is vitally important any humans present during the introduction process must remain completely calm, as both animals will pick up on any tension or nervousness, which will have an impact on the success of the introduction.

The introduction sequence detailed below should be followed for any other small animals and fowl you may have in your family:

- Use the muzzle provided by Forever Hounds and have the hound on a lead
- Make sure the hound and cat meet from the start, preferably in a small room. Have the door open and allow your cat to come in and out. Your cat should always have an escape route to leave the room by. Do not shut the cat away, as this promotes heightened interest
- It is very important to ensure that neither your cat nor your hound panic during the introduction, so keep both animals as calm as possible. Ensure the cat does not feel the need to run away, as this could promote a chase instinct before they are both aware that they are members of the same family and need to get on
- Use baby gates around the house to ensure that the cat always has somewhere safe to be. You may wish to use these for your introductions – your cat and hound can meet through the gate without being able to cause harm to one another
- At this point, if all the signs are right, e.g. the hound has acknowledged the cat but is either frightened of it or gently wagging his tail, it is time to remove the muzzle - but keep the hound on the lead and go through the previous steps again
- When you are happy with the reaction then reverse the process and have the muzzle on without the lead (you may wish to put a house line on the hound initially, to ensure that you can step in immediately if need be). By this time the cat and hound should be getting the message that they are going to need to get on, as they are both part of the same family. It is possible that you will have to keep your hound muzzled or on the lead while the cat is in the same room for several weeks
- Never force either pet to be in each other's proximity if they try to move away – they need more time to adjust. Try to ensure that all time together is calm, enjoyable, and relaxing
- It is also a good idea to feed the animals in different rooms, where possible
- Do not let the hound and cat go out in the garden together at first, this should only happen when you are fully happy with their reaction to each other and may take many weeks. If a cat comes hurtling over a fence the hound may not recognise it as the family cat, and a chase situation could occur.

## Summary

The cat/dog bonding process still has to take place, even for a hound that has lived with cats in a previous home.

Never leave your hound and cat together unsupervised until you are **absolutely confident** they are tolerant of one another.

Your hound may be safe with animals it considers part of the family but may still be interested in chasing other animals outside of the family unit – be prepared!

Introducing even the most tolerant dog to a cat or small animal takes time, patience, consistency, and commitment from all family members. It is highly unlikely that the dog/cat or small animal will 'hit it off' immediately. If you are uncertain about whether you can commit to making safe introductions, carefully consider whether this is the right time to introduce a dog to the family.

Not all cats and small animals, want to share their space with a dog. Find a suitable dog to test your cat/small animal with and be sure this is the right choice for them.