

LIVING WITH A DEAF CAT

If your cat has become deaf, the first thing you'll want to do is make it a strictly indoor animal, out of harm's way when it comes to sounds that it can longer perceive and respond to — the roar of an oncoming car, for instance, or the stealthy movements of an approaching enemy.

Indoors, you must always be aware of your cat's hearing loss and adjust your behavior accordingly. Says Dr. Flanders: "Avoid startling the animal. Never approach it from behind without signaling your approach. Clap your hands sharply or stomp on the floor. The vibrations will let the cat know that you're nearby. If it's asleep on the sofa and you want it to wake up, move a pillow. The cat will pick up those vibrations."

Perhaps your cat has been trained to respond to verbal cues. If so, you'll have to replace these with visual commands — a hand signal, for example, to announce that dinner is served. Or you may be able to communicate with the cat by flicking a light switch on and off.