

She Sleeps with the Furbies



By Elizabeth Chandler

Every night when I go to bed, I think of the line from *The Godfather* that ends with “... it means he sleeps with the fishes.” All you *Godfather* fans, and you know who you are, know that line very well and you probably use it frequently in your everyday life, along with many of the other great lines from that movie (OK, maybe it’s only me that does that). Anyway, thankfully, I do not sleep with the fishes, but I do sleep with quite a few furbearing critters, as I suspect many of you do, so that is what I wanted to write about this month: Sleeping (or trying to sleep) when you share your bed with your pets.

First of all, there are hierarchy considerations in my pack. In order to cut down on debris in the bed and unauthorized blanket eating during waking hours, I block my dogs’ access to the bedroom with a pet gate. At bedtime, if I let the dogs into the bedroom all at once, the pack order apparently dictates that a few of them fight with each other over who gets on the bed first. So I have to outsmart my dogs (sadly, often a challenge) by removing the pet gate when they aren’t looking (after I let them out in the back yard just before bedtime). That way, when they come back in, one by one after they finish their business, we don’t have any unpleasant exchanges as they jump up on the bed.

The next consideration is that one dog is too small to be able to jump up on the bed and another, Dog-Wog, is too old to make it up on the bed, so I have to lift both of them up. Then, I put the pet gate back up (so the dogs can’t sneak out into the laundry room during the night to snack on cat treats in the litter pan) and put up a second pet gate above the first one (because my Beagle, Eddie, can jump the first one), leaving about 1 foot or so in between to allow the cats to come and go throughout the evening.

After kissing everyone and telling them that I love them, I try to find a spot for me in the middle of all of the warm, furry bodies. Eddie, one of my Beagles, stakes his claim on one of my pillows and Rocky Balboa (a very large Hound/Shepard mix) usually plops down smack dab in the middle of the bed. After considerable effort to get Rocky out of the way, I pull up the covers, but I am not yet “good to go” because my other Beagle, Cassie, insists on burrowing under the covers and there will be no peace until she is settled. Because the other dogs are lying on the covers, finding a section of the blanket to lift up so Cassie can burrow can be challenging. But, I know Cassie is “good to go” when she plops down and sighs a huge, happy sigh.

So now can I go to sleep? Not by a long shot. Now the cats must jockey for position. One or two of the cats form a fur cap around my head and there is usually one cat who takes its position on my side or back, depending on how I am laying. The other cats, knowing I am pinned by their cohorts, choose this time to wreck havoc in the living room, knocking photo frames off bookcases, chasing invisible objects, and batting small

items (paper clips, glass from the broken photo frames, etc.) around on the tile floor. For such small animals, they sure can make a lot of noise! I'm convinced they do it as part of what I call the "grand conspiracy" to drive me insane, but I don't want them to know that I'm on to them, so lets just keep that under our hats for now.

Dog trainers advise against letting your pets sleep in bed with you, as it apparently destroys the owner's standing as pack leader. Feng Shui experts say it's bad energy to let your pets sleep on the bed. But each of us has our own paths to follow, some of us just choose paths that are a little furrier than others. And some of us believe that sharing your bed with the warmth of your beloved pet is a blessed, blissful way to get a good night's sleep. OK, so maybe I don't get a lot of quality sleep; but I do love listening to the deep, steady breathing of happy dogs and cats who are safe, warm, well-fed, and well-loved, while I pick cat hair out of my eyelashes and contemplate how to turn over without disrupting my pets.

Elizabeth Chandler is a loving mom to several furry companions with whom she shares her life.