

SPCA of Wake County

Cat & Kitten Care Packet



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The SPCA of Wake County
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SPCA of Wake County Contacts

General Questions

Adoption Counselors

919-772-2326 ext. 2070

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Animal Behavior Questions

Molly Stone, Animal Behaviorist

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Shopping List (Kittens and Cats)

❖ Food

- Feed your cat a dry, high quality, brand-name kitten or cat food (avoid generic brands).
- Cats are carnivores so their diet must consist of meat for them to remain healthy. Choose a brand that has real meat (not by-products) as its #1 ingredient.
- Nutro, Eukanuba, Iams, Purina One and Purina Pro-Plan are good examples (but there are many food choices available).
- Choose food appropriate for your particular pet. Kitten formula, weight management, hairball control, or senior formula may be the type your cat needs depending on his/her age, size, and weight.

❖ Food/Water Bowls

- Stainless steel bowls are recommended and you may need weighted bowls.

❖ Litter Box and Scooper

- Some brands of litter are more odor-free than others – choose wisely!
- Some cats are picky about litter types, so you may need to try more than one kind.

❖ Scratching Posts

- Do not choose one covered in carpet if you have any carpeting in your home (the carpet on the floor will feel the same to kitty as the carpet on the post). Instead, choose one wrapped in rope. Also, a log or piece of wood works great. A post should be tall enough for kitty to stretch and scratch. Depending on the size of your house, you may need more than one. Place them by your cat's favorite sleeping areas.

❖ Safety Collar

- Choose a collar that will break loose if it gets caught on something.

❖ Identification Tag

- Inside cats need this, too! Keep this information current; include your best contact information whether you are in town or on vacation.

❖ **Cat Bed**

- Even if kitty does not use his bed right away, keep one available for him.

❖ **Cat Carrier**

- You will need this for visits to the veterinarian if for nothing else.

❖ **Nail Trimmers**

- You can use your own or buy clippers designed for cats.

❖ **Grooming Mitt or Brush**

- Especially for cats with longer hair

❖ **Cat Toothbrush and Toothpaste**

- Toothpaste made for cats is safe for them and flavored so cats will like it.

❖ **Toys/Treats**

- Cats need exercise and playtime, too! Cats can be entertained by toys you might not have to purchase. Anything that will spin around or they can bat around such as a shower curtain ring or empty thread spindle can be a cat toy.
- Avoid toys that might become a choking hazard such as string, yarn, or plastic pieces. Choose toys that are too large to fit inside kitty's mouth.

Cat Toys and How to Use Them

Although cats generally have different play styles than their canine counterparts, toys are as much a necessity for cats as they are for dogs. Toys help fight boredom and give cats an outlet for their instinctive prey-chasing behaviors. And when you are the one moving the toy around while your cat fishes for it, chases after it, or jumps in pursuit of it, playtime becomes a bonding experience for you and your cat.

❖ “Safe” Toys

- Our mothers always told us “no playing ball in the house,” but cats can usually participate in that forbidden exercise without knocking down a vase or a lamp (and being grounded for two weeks). Still, there are plenty of factors that may contribute to the safety of the toy they’re batting around.
- Many of those factors are completely dependent upon your cat’s size, activity level, and preference. Another factor to be considered is the environment in which your cat spends her time. Although we can’t guarantee your cat’s enthusiasm or her safety with any specific toy, we can offer the following guidelines.

❖ Be Cautious

- The things that are usually most attractive to cats are often the very things that are the most dangerous. Cat-proof your home by removing string, ribbon, yarn, rubber bands, plastic milk jug rings, paper clips, pins, needles, dental floss, and anything else that could be ingested. All of these items are dangerous, no matter how cute your cat may appear when she’s playing with them.
- Avoid or alter any toys that aren’t “cat proof” by removing ribbons, feathers, strings, eyes, or other parts that could be chewed or ingested.
- Soft toys should be machine washable. Look for stuffed toys that are labeled as safe for children less than three years of age and that don’t contain any dangerous fillings. Problem fillings include things like nutshells and polystyrene beads. Remember that rigid toys are not as attractive to cats.

❖ Recommended Toys

Active Toys

- Round plastic shower curtain rings, which are fun either as a single ring to bat around, hide, or carry, or when linked together and hung in an enticing spot.
- Plastic balls, with or without bells inside.

- Ping-Pong balls and plastic practice golf balls with holes to help cats carry them. Try putting one in a dry bathtub, as the captive ball is much more fun than one that escapes under the sofa. You'll probably want to remove the balls from the bathtub before bedtime, or you may lose some sleep, as two o'clock in the morning seems to be a prime time for this game.
- Paper bags with any handles removed. Paper bags are good for pouncing, hiding, and interactive play. Plastic bags are not a good idea, as many cats like to chew and ingest the plastic.
- Sisal-wrapped toys, which are very attractive to cats that tend to ignore soft toys.
- Empty cardboard tubes from toilet paper and paper towels are made even more fun if you "unwind" a little cardboard to get them started.

Comfort Toys

- Soft stuffed toys are good for several purposes. For some cats, the stuffed animal should be small enough to carry around. For cats who want to wrestle with the toy, the stuffed animal should be about the same size as the cat. Toys with legs and a tail seem to be especially enticing to cats.
- Cardboard boxes, especially those a little too small for your cat to fit into.

Catnip

- Catnip-filled soft toys, which cats like to kick, carry, and rub. Catnip is not addictive and is perfectly safe for cats to roll in, rub in, or eat.
- Plain catnip can be crushed and sprinkled on the carpet or, for easier cleanup, on a towel placed on the floor. Catnip oils will often stay in the carpet, and although they're not visible to us, your cat will still be able to smell them.
- Catnip sprays rarely have enough power to be attractive to cats.
- Not all cats are affected by catnip. Some cats may become overstimulated to the point of aggressive play and others may become relaxed.
- Kittens under six months old seem to be immune to catnip.

❖ Get the Most Out of Toys!

- Rotate your cat's toys weekly by making only a few toys available at a time. Keep a variety of types easily accessible. If your cat has a favorite, like a soft "baby" that she loves to cuddle with, you may want to leave that one out all the time.

- Provide toys that offer a variety of uses – at least one toy to carry, one to wrestle with, one to roll and one to “baby.”
- Hide-and-seek is a fun game for cats. “Found” toys are often much more attractive than a toy which is obviously introduced.
- Many of your cat’s toys should be interactive. Interactive play is very important for your cat because she needs active “people time” - and such play also enhances the bond between you and your pet. Cats generally engage in three types of play – “fishing, flying, and chasing” – and all types are much more engaging for cats when you are part of them.

Resources for this section:

Related topics at www.petsforlife.org.

Introducing Your New Cat to Your Other Pets

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Introducing Your New Cat to the Litter Box

Most of us know cats are finicky eaters, but they can also be pretty picky when it comes to the other end of the digestive process – making use of a litter box. Fortunately, the following suggestions should keep your cat from “thinking outside the box.”

❖ **Location, Location, Location**

Most people are inclined to place the litter box in an out-of-the-way spot to minimize odor and prevent cat litter from being tracked throughout the house. But if the litter box ends up in the basement – next to an appliance or on a cold cement floor – your cat may be less than pleased for a number of reasons.

A kitten or an older cat may not be able to get down a long flight of stairs in time to get to the litter box. If the litter box is located in an area that she seldom frequents, she may not even remember where it is, especially during the first few weeks she’s welcomed into your home. If a furnace, washing machine, or dryer suddenly comes on and startles your cat while she’s using the litter box that may be the last time she risks such a frightening experience. And if your cat likes to scratch the surface surrounding her litter box (which some cats do), she may find a cold cement floor unappealing.

So you may have to compromise. The litter box should be kept in a spot that affords your cat some privacy yet is also conveniently located. If you place the litter box in a closet or a bathroom, be sure the door is wedged open from both sides to prevent her from being trapped inside or locked out. Depending on the location, you might consider cutting a hole in a closet door and adding a pet door.

❖ **Pick of the Litter**

Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litters, presumably because they have a softer feel. The new scoopable (clumping) litters usually have finer grains than the typical clay litter and are very popular. But high-quality, dust-free, clay litters are relatively small-grained and may be perfectly acceptable to your cat.

If you suspect your cat has spent part of his life outdoors and is likely to eliminate in your houseplants, try mixing some potting soil with your regular litter; pellet-type litters or those made from citrus peels are not recommended. Once you find a litter your cat likes, stick with it. Buying the least expensive litter or the brand that’s on sale any given week could result in your cat not using the litter box.

Many cats are put off by the odor of scented or deodorant litters. For the same reason, it’s not a good idea to place a room deodorizer or air freshener near the litter box. A thin layer of baking soda placed on the bottom of the box will help absorb odors without repelling your cat, and odors shouldn’t really be a problem if you keep the litter box clean. If you find the litter box odor

offensive, your cat probably finds it even more offensive and won't want to eliminate there.

❖ **What's the Magic Number?**

You should have at least as many litter boxes as you have cats. That way, none of them will ever be prevented from eliminating in the litter box because it's already occupied. You might also consider placing litter boxes in several locations around the house, so that no one cat can prevent the other cats from getting access. We also recommend that you place at least one litter box on each level of your house.

It's not possible to designate a personal litter box for each cat in your household, as cats may use any litter box that's available, and that means a cat may occasionally refuse to use a litter box after another cat has used it. In this case, all of the litter boxes will need to be kept extremely clean and additional boxes may be needed.

❖ **An Undercover Operation? Potential Problems of Covered Litter Boxes**

Some people prefer to provide their cats with a covered litter box, but doing so may introduce some problems.

You may forget to clean the litter box as frequently as you should because the dirty litter is "out of sight, out of mind." A covered litter box traps odors inside, so it will need to be cleaned more often than an open one. A dirty, covered litter box is to your cat what a portapotty is to you!

A covered litter box may not allow a large cat sufficient room to turn around, scratch, dig, or position herself in the way she wants.

A covered litter box may make it easier for another cat to lay in wait and ambush the user as she exits the box; on the other hand, a covered litter box may feel more private and timid cats may prefer it.

To discover which type of litter box your cat prefers, you may want to experiment by offering both types at first.

❖ **Keeping It Clean**

To meet the needs of the most discriminating cat, feces should be scooped out of the litter box daily. How often you actually change (replace) the litter depends on the number of cats you have, the number of litter boxes, and the type of litter you use. Twice a week is a general guideline for clay litter, but depending on the circumstances, you may need to replace it every other day or only once a week. If you clean the litter box daily, scoopable litter may only need to be changed every two to three weeks. If you notice an odor or if much of the litter is wet or clumped, it's time for a

change. Don't use strong smelling chemicals or cleaning products when washing the litter box, as doing so may cause your cat to avoid the box. Some cleaning products are toxic to cats. Washing with soap and water should be sufficient.

❖ **Liner Notes**

Some cats don't mind having a plastic liner in the litter box, while others do. Again, you may want to experiment to see if your cat is bothered by a liner in the box. If you do use a liner, make sure it's anchored in place, so it can't easily catch your cat's claws or be pulled out of place.

❖ **Depth of Litter**

Some people think that the more litter they put in the box, the less often they will have to clean it, but that's a mistake. Most cats won't use litter that's more than about two inches deep. In fact, some long-haired cats actually prefer less litter and a smooth, slick surface, such as the bottom of the litter box. The fact is the litter box needs to be cleaned on a regular basis, and adding extra litter is not a way around that chore.

❖ **"Litter-Training" Cats**

There's really no such thing as "litter-training" a cat in the same way one would housetrain a dog. A cat doesn't need to be taught what to do with a litter box because instinct will generally take over. The only thing you need to do is provide an acceptable, accessible litter box, using the suggestions above. It's not necessary to take your cat to the litter box and move her paws back and forth in the litter; in fact, we don't recommend it, as such an unpleasant experience is likely to initiate a negative association with the litter box.

❖ **If Problems Develop**

If your cat begins to eliminate in areas other than the litter box, your first call should always be to your veterinarian. Many medical conditions can cause a change in a cat's litter box habits. If your veterinarian determines that your cat is healthy, the cause may be a simple behavior problem that can be resolved by using behavior modification techniques. Punishment is not the answer, nor is banishing your cat outdoors. For long-standing or complex situations, contact an animal-behavior specialist who has experience working with cats.

Resources for this section:

Related topics at www.petsforlife.org.

Solving Litter Box Problems

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Positive Reinforcement

❖ Training Your Cat

- We all like to be praised rather than punished. The same is true for your cat, and that's the theory behind positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement means giving your pet something pleasant or rewarding immediately after she does something you want her to do. Because your praise or reward makes her more likely to repeat that behavior in the future, it is one of your most powerful tools for shaping or changing your cat's behavior. It's more effective to teach your pet what she should do than try to teach her what she shouldn't.
- Correct timing is essential when using positive reinforcement. The reward must occur immediately – within seconds – or your cat may not associate it with the proper action. For example, when your cat uses her scratching post, you can throw a piece of dry cat food for her to chase as a reward. Many cats enjoy chasing (hunting) their food and it's good exercise, too. But if you throw the food when she has stopped scratching the post and is walking toward you, she will think she's being rewarded for coming to you.
- Consistency is also an important element in training. Everyone in the family should reward the same desired behaviors.

❖ Using Positive Reinforcement

- Positive reinforcement may include food treats, praise, petting, or a favorite toy or game. When your pet is first learning a new behavior, such as clawing the scratching post instead of your couch, she should be rewarded every time you catch her using her scratching post. You may even help shape her behavior of using the scratching post by spraying it with catnip (if she reacts positively to catnip) or enticing her with a toy that you dangle on the post. Taking your cat over to the scratching post, positioning her paws on the post, and raking them along the post to show her what she's supposed to do will likely have the opposite effect of encouraging her to use the post. She may interpret your actions as frightening and uncomfortable. It's important to look at the world from her point of view.
- Once your cat reliably offers the desired behavior, you may reward her with treats intermittently, for example, three out of every four times she does the behavior. Then, over time, reward her about half the time, then about a third of the time, and so on until you're only rewarding her occasionally with a treat. Continue to praise her every time. Your cat will learn that if she keeps offering desired behaviors, eventually she'll get what she wants – your praise and an occasional treat. You won't be forever bound to carry a pocketful of goodies, but it's fun to surprise your cat from time to time.

❖ The Pros and Cons of Punishment

- Punishment can be verbal, postural, or physical, and is meant to make your pet immediately associate something unpleasant when she does something you don't want her to do. The punishment makes it less likely that the behavior will occur again. To be effective, punishment must be delivered while your pet is engaged in the undesirable behavior - in other words, "caught in the act." If the punishment is delivered too late, even seconds later, your pet will not associate the punishment with the undesired behavior. The punishment will seem unpredictable to her.
- Remember, cats do not act out of spite or revenge, and they don't have a moral sense of right and wrong. Never use physical punishment that involves discomfort or pain as this may cause her to bite, defend herself, or resort to other undesirable behaviors. Holding your cat's neck skin and shaking her may result in a frightened cat that scratches or bites to defend herself. And punishment might be associated with other stimuli, including people that are present at the time the punishment occurs. For example, a cat that is punished for getting too close to a new baby may become fearful of, or aggressive towards, that baby – or towards other babies. That's why physical punishment is not only bad for your cat; it's also bad for you and others.
- Punishment delivered by you may erode your cat's trust and frighten her. That's why punishment is most effective when it does not come directly from you. For example, if your cat enjoys scratching the couch, you may apply special double-sided tape to those surfaces. Cats rarely like sticky paws. Your cat will perceive the couch, instead of you, as delivering the punishment. In this way, too, your cat is more likely to avoid the undesirable behavior when you're not around. However, it is critical that while discouraging undesirable behaviors, you help your cat understand what you want her to do and provide appropriate outlets for her normal cat behaviors.
- One of the reasons that cats are such fun companions is that when they're not sleeping, many of them enjoy playing. Playing helps your cat develop physically and behaviorally. Providing appropriate play outlets for your cat can reduce undesirable behaviors. Be sure your cat has safe toys to play with by herself, and don't underestimate the power of playing with your cat to strengthen the bond between you and enhance the quality of life for both of you.

Resources for this section:

Related topics at www.petsforlife.org.

Cat Toys and How to Use Them

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Why Do Cats Scratch?

The fact is that cats scratch objects in their environment for many perfectly normal reasons, for instance:

- To remove the dead outer layer of their claws.
- To mark their territory by leaving a visual mark and a scent – they have scent glands on their paws.
- To stretch their bodies and flex their feet and claws.
- To work off energy.
- Because scratching is a normal behavior, and one that cats are highly motivated to display, it's unrealistic to try to prevent them from scratching. Instead, the goal in resolving scratching problems is to redirect the scratching onto acceptable objects.

❖ Training Your Cat to Scratch Acceptable Objects

You must provide objects for scratching that are appealing, attractive, and convenient from your cat's point of view. Start by observing the physical features of the objects your cat is scratching. The answers to the following questions will help you understand your cat's scratching preferences:

- Where are they located? Prominent objects, objects close to sleeping areas, and objects near the entrance to a room are often chosen.
- What texture do they have – are they soft or coarse?
- What shape do they have – are they horizontal or vertical?
- How tall are they? At what height does your cat scratch?

Now, considering your cat's demonstrated preferences, substitute similar objects for her to scratch (rope-wrapped posts, corrugated cardboard, or even a log). Place the acceptable object(s) near the inappropriate object(s) that she's already using. Make sure the objects are stable and won't fall over or move around when she uses them.

Cover the inappropriate objects with something your cat will find unappealing, such as double-sided sticky tape, aluminum foil, sheets of sandpaper or a plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up. Or you may give the objects an aversive odor by attaching cotton balls containing perfume, a muscle rub, or other safe yet unpleasant substance. Be careful with odors, though, because you don't want the nearby acceptable objects to also smell unpleasant.

When your cat is consistently using the appropriate object, it can be moved very gradually (no more than three inches each day) to a location more suitable to you. It's best; however, to keep the appropriate scratching objects as close to your cat's preferred scratching locations as possible.

Don't remove the unappealing coverings or odors from the inappropriate objects until your cat is consistently using the appropriate objects in their permanent locations for several weeks, or even a month. They should then be removed gradually, not all at once.

Resources for this section:

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How to Trim Your Cat's Claws

- If possible, start training your cat to have her claws trimmed as a kitten. Gently stroke your cat's paws, often, getting her used to having her paws held before you attempt trimming. Be sure to reward your cat with a special food or treat – one that she receives only during claw trimmings or some other grooming procedure – during or immediately after trimming. The best time to trim your cat's claws is when she is relaxed or sleepy. Never try to give a pedicure right after a stressful experience or an energetic round of play.
- Your cat should be resting comfortably on your lap, the floor, or a table. Hold a paw in one hand and press a toe pad gently to extend the claw. Notice the pink tissue (the quick) on the inside of the claw. Avoid the quick when you trim the claw; cutting into it will cause pain and bleeding. Remove the sharp tip below the quick (away from the toe), clipping about halfway between the end of the quick and the tip of the claw. If your cat becomes impatient, take a break and try again later. Even if you can clip only a claw or two a day, eventually you'll complete the task. (Because cats do little damage with their claws and do a good job of keeping them trim themselves (by chewing them) many cat owners never clip the rear claws. Others trim their cats' rear claws three or four times a year or have them done by the veterinarian or a professional groomer.)
- If you accidentally clip into the quick, don't panic. The claw may bleed for a moment, but it will usually stop very quickly. Soothe your cat by speaking softly to her and stroking her head. If the bleeding hasn't stopped after a minute or so, touch a styptic pencil to the claw end or pat on styptic powder to help staunch the bleeding.
- How often you need to clip your cat's claws depends somewhat on how much of the tip you remove, but usually a clipping every ten to fourteen days will suffice. If your cat absolutely refuses to allow you to clip her claws, get help from your veterinarian or a professional groomer.
- Special claw trimmers (two are shown) are available from veterinarians or pet supply stores, but sharp nail clippers for humans work just as well. Keep a styptic (astringent) pencil or powder on hand in case you accidentally clip into the quick and bleeding hasn't stopped with a couple of minutes.

Declawing

Technical Facts and Information

❖ The Cat's Claws

- Unlike most mammals that walk on the soles of the paws or feet, cats are digitigrades, which means they walk on their toes. Their back, shoulders, paw and leg joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments and nerves are naturally designed to support and distribute the cat's weight across its toes as it walks, runs and climbs. A cat's claws are used for balance, for exercising, and for stretching the muscles in their legs, back, shoulders, and paws. They stretch these muscles by digging their claws into a surface and pulling back against their own claw hold – similar to isometric exercising for humans. This is the only way a cat can exercise, stretch and tone the muscles of its back and shoulders. The toes help the foot meet the ground at a precise angle to keep the leg, shoulder and back muscles and joints in proper alignment. Removal of the last digits of the toes drastically alters the conformation of their feet and causes the feet to meet the ground at an unnatural angle that can cause back pain similar to that in humans caused by wearing improper shoes.

❖ Understanding Declawing (Onychectomy)

- The anatomy of the feline claw must be understood before one can appreciate the severity of declawing. The cat's claw is not a nail as is a human fingernail; it is part of the last bone (distal phalanx) in the cat's toe. The cat's claw arises from the unguicular crest and unguicular process in the distal phalanx of the paw. Most of the germinal cells that produce the claw are situated in the dorsal aspect of the unguicular crest. This region must be removed completely, or regrowth of a vestigial claw and abcessation results. The only way to be sure all of the germinal cells are removed is to amputate the entire distal phalanx at the joint
- Contrary to most people's understanding, declawing consists of amputating not just the claws, but the whole phalanx (up to the joint), including bones, ligaments, and tendons! To remove the claw, the bone, nerve, joint capsule, collateral ligaments, and the extensor and flexor tendons must all be amputated. Thus declawing is not a "simple," single surgery but 10 separate, painful amputations of the third phalanx up to the last joint of each toe. A graphic comparison in human terms would be the cutting off of a person's finger at the last joint of each finger.
- Many vets and clinic staff explain to their clients that declawing removes the claws and that the procedure is a "minor" surgery comparable to spay/neuter procedures and do not include that it involves amputation (partial or complete) of the terminal-toe bone, ligaments and tendons. Some vets support the above description by saying that since the claw and the third phalanx (terminal toe bone) are so firmly connected, they simply use the expression "the claw" to make it simpler for clients to understand. Other vets state that if they used the word "amputation",

most clients would not have the surgery performed. Onychectomy in the clinical definition involves either the partial or total amputation of the terminal bone. This is the only method. What differs from vet to vet is the type of cutting tool used (guillotine-type cutter, scalpel or laser).

❖ **Onychectomy (Declawing) Surgery**

- Below is a clinical description of the declawing surgery taken from a leading veterinary surgical textbook. Contrary to misleading information, declawing is not a “minor” surgery comparable to spaying and neutering procedures; it is 10, separate, painful amputations of the distal phalanx at the joint (disjointing).

“The claw is extended by pushing up under the footpad or by grasping it with Allis tissue forceps. A scalpel blade is used to sharply dissect between the second and third phalanx over the top of the ungula crest. The distal interphalangeal joint is disarticulated (disjointed), and the deep digital flexor tendon is incised (severed). The digital footpad is not incised. If a nail trimmer is used, the ring of the instrument is placed in the groove between the second phalanx and the ungula crest. The blade is positioned just in front of the footpad. The blade is pushed through the soft tissues over the flexor process. With the ring of the nail trimmer in position behind the ungula crest, the blade is released just slightly so that traction applied to the claw causes and flexor process to slip out and above the blade. At this point, the flexor tendon can be incised and disarticulation of the joint (disjointing) completed. Both techniques effectively remove the entire third phalanx.” - Excerpted from Slatter D; Textbook of Small Animal Surgery 2nd ed vol 1, p. 352 W.B. Saunders Company Philadelphia

❖ **Complications**

- Declawing is not without complication. The rate of complication is relatively high compared with other so-called routine procedures. Complications of this amputation can be excruciating pain, damage to the radial nerve, hemorrhage, bone chips that prevent healing, painful regrowth of deformed claw inside of the paw which is not visible to the eye, and chronic back and joint pain as shoulder, leg and back muscles weaken.
- Other complications include postoperative hemorrhage, either immediate or following bandage removal is a fairly frequent occurrence, paw ischemia, lameness due to wound infection or footpad laceration, exposure necrosis of the second phalanx, and abscess associated with retention of portions of the third phalanx. Abscess due to regrowth must be treated by surgical removal of the remnant of the third phalanx and wound debridement. During amputation of the distal phalanx, the bone may shatter and cause what is called a sequestrum, which serves as a focus for infection, causing continuous drainage from the toe. This necessitates a second anesthesia and surgery. Abnormal growth of severed nerve ends can also occur, causing long-term, painful sensations in the toes. Infection will occasionally occur when all precautions have been taken.

“Declawing is actually an amputation of the last joint of your cat’s “toes.” When you envision that, it becomes clear why declawing is not a humane act. It is a painful surgery, with a painful recovery period. And remember that during the time of recuperation from the surgery your cat would still have to use its feet to walk, jump, and scratch in its litter box regardless of the pain it is experiencing.” - Christianne Schnelling, DVM

“General anesthesia is used for this surgery, which always has a certain degree of risk of disability or death associated with it. Because declawing provides no medical benefits to cats, even slight risk can be considered unacceptable. In addition, the recovery from declawing can be painful and lengthy and may involve postoperative complications such as infections, hemorrhage, and nail regrowth. The latter may subject the cat to additional surgery.” – The Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR)

Two studies published in peer-reviewed veterinary journals (Vet Surg 1994 Jul-Aug; 23 (4): 274-80) concluded “Fifty percent of the cats had one or more complications immediately after surgery ... 19.8% developed complications after release.” Another study (J Am Vet Med Assoc 1998 Aug 1; 213(3):370-3) comparing the complications of declawing with tenectomy concluded “Owners should be aware of the high complication rate for both procedures.” Many cats also suffer a loss of balance because they can no longer achieve a secure foothold on their amputated stumps.

“Objective: To compare short- and long-term complications after tenectomy of the deep digital flexor tendons or onychectomy.

Animals: 20 cats undergoing tenectomy and 18 cats undergoing onychectomy.

Procedure: Cats undergoing tenectomy or onychectomy were monitored for a minimum of 5 months to enable comparison of type and frequency of complications. Type and frequency of complications did not differ between procedures.

Clinical Implications: Owners should be aware of the high complication rate for both procedures.”

❖ **Psychological and Behavioral Complications**

- Some cats are so shocked by declawing that their personalities change. Cats who were lively and friendly have become withdrawn and introverted after being declawed. Others, deprived of their primary means of defense, become nervous, fearful, and/or aggressive, often resorting to their only remaining means of defense, their teeth. In some cases, when declawed cats use the litter box after surgery, their feet are so tender they associate their new pain with the box ... permanently, resulting in a life-long aversion to using the litter box. Other declawed cats that can no longer mark with their claws, they mark with urine instead resulting in inappropriate elimination problems, which in many cases, results in relinquishment of the cats to shelters and ultimately euthanasia. Many of the cats surrendered to shelters are surrendered because of behavioral problems which developed after the cats were declawed.
- Many declawed cats become so traumatized that they end up spending their lives perched on

top of doors and refrigerators, out of reach of real and imaginary predators against whom they no longer have any adequate defense.

- A cat relies on its claws as its primary means of defense. Removing the claws makes a cat feel defenseless. The constant state of stress caused by a feeling of defenselessness may make some declawed cats more prone to disease. Stress leads to a myriad of physical and psychological disorders including suppression of the immune system, cystitis, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).
- “The consequences of declawing are often pathetic. Changes in behavior can occur. A declawed cat frequently resorts to biting when confronted with even minor threats. Biting becomes an overcompensation for the insecurity of having no claws. Bungled surgery can result in the regrowth of deformed claws or in an infection leading to gangrene. Balance is affected by the inability to grasp with their claws. Chronic physical ailments such as cystitis or skin disorders can be manifestations of a declawed cat’s frustration and stress.” - David E. Hammett, DVM

❖ **Moral, Ethical and Humane Considerations**

- The veterinary justification for declawing is that the owner may otherwise dispose of the cat. However, many cats end up dumped out or dropped off at shelters to be euthanized after a declaw, due to the changes in the cat that resulted as a consequence of declawing. Unfortunately, many declawed cats are not adoptable due to inappropriate elimination and/or fearful or aggressive behavior.
 - “The Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights is opposed to cosmetic surgeries and to those performed to correct ‘vices.’ Declawing generally is unacceptable because the suffering and disfigurement it causes is not offset by any benefits to the cat. Declawing is done strictly to provide convenience for people. – The Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR)
 - Some veterinarians have argued that some people would have their cats killed if declawing was not an option. We should not, however, allow ourselves to be taken ‘emotional hostage’ like this. If a person really would kill her or his cat in this case, it is reasonable to question the suitability of that person as a feline guardian, especially when there are millions of non-declawed cats living in harmony with people.”
 - Many countries are particularly concerned about animal welfare and have banned declawing as abusive and causing unnecessary pain and suffering with no benefit to the cat. One highly regarded veterinary textbook by Turner and Bateson on the biology of cat behavior includes a short section on scratching behavior with the following statement: “The operative removal of the claws, as is sometimes practiced to protect furniture and curtains, is an act of abuse and should be forbidden by law in all, not just a few countries.”
- ❖ The following is a partial list of countries in which declawing cats is either illegal or considered extremely inhumane and only performed under extreme medical circumstances:

- England
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- Germany
- Austria
- Switzerland
- Norway
- Sweden
- Netherlands
- Denmark
- Finland
- Brazil
- Australia
- New Zealand

❖ **Cat Fanciers Association**

- CFA perceives the declawing of cats (onychectomy) and the severing of digital tendons (tenectomy) to be elective surgical procedures which are without benefit to the cat. Because of post-operative discomfort or pain, and potential future behavior or physical effects, CFA disapproves of declawing or tenectomy surgery.”

Declawing of Cats – CFA Guidance Statement: Approved by the CFA Board of Directors – October 1996
by Joan Miller, CFA Health Committee

- ❖ The Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR) position on declawing cats: “A major concern that the AVAR has about declawing is the attitude that is evident in this situation. The cat is treated as if he or she is an inanimate object who can be modified, even to the point of surgical mutilation, to suite a person’s perception of what a cat should be. It would seem more ethical and humane to accept that claws and scratching are inherent feline attributes, and to adjust one’s life accordingly if a cat is desired as a companion. If this is unacceptable, then perhaps a different

companion would be in order.”

- ❖ Dr. Nicholas Dodman, Professor of Behavioral Pharmacology and Director of the Behavior Clinic at Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine and internationally known specialist in domestic animal behavioral research, explains declawing.
- ❖ The fact that many cats recover from the experience of declawing without untoward effects, and even though they may not hold grudges, doesn't seem like sufficient justification for putting a family member through such an experience ...
- ❖ Your cat should trust you and depend upon you for protection.

Resources for this section:

Information from www.declawing.com, provided by Veterinarian Dr. Christianne Schelling, Copyright © 2006

Why You Should Not Declaw

- A cat's claws are a vital part of its anatomy, essential to balance, mobility and survival.
- The reasons to avoid declawing are compelling, for you as well as for your cat.
- It is a mistake to think that declawing a cat is a minor procedure similar to trimming fingernails. Declawing is literally disfiguring a cat, a mistake that can lead to physical, emotional and behavioral complications. Declawing is an irreversible surgical procedure that involves amputating the last joint of the cat's "toes." It is a very painful procedure with strong potential for secondary complications. Imagine having the last joint of your own fingers amputated, not a pleasant idea.
- On some occasions, declawing may lead to secondary contracture of the tendons. This makes it uncomfortable for the cat to walk. Since the last joints of their front paws are missing, they compensate by placing more of their weight to the hind quarters, causing them to be out of balance. This shift of weight to the hind quarters may lead to atrophy of the muscles of their front quarters.
- Being out of balance is extremely distressing to a cat, whose very life is about balance. You've observed cats climbing trees, teetering perilously on a single branch, leaping incredible heights to land on a pre-selected spot, or threading in and out of complex arrangements of knickknacks without disturbing a single ornament (unless, of course, they choose to do so). These are acts of balance and part of a cat's basic heritage.
- In addition to being an intrinsic part of a cat's normal conformation, its front claws are a cat's primary defense. Once declawed, there is no replacement or growth of the claws. You may think, "My cat never goes outside", but what if your cat accidentally gets outside and you can't find her? She is now defenseless in a potentially hostile environment.
- Deprived of its front claws a cat may become insecure and distressed. I can assure you that if Kitty becomes emotionally distressed, you will too. Kitty's display or distress tends to take such forms as urinating on your favorite rug or spraying your antique armoire. Feeling defenseless without her claws, Kitty may become hostile to people (including you) and to other cats and become more apt to bite.
- Some cats develop an aversion to their litter box because of the pain associated with scratching in the litter after a declawing procedure. If Kitty doesn't go in the box, she will find a more comfortable place to do her business. Often times, these habits are hard to break.
- One more compelling reason not to declaw ... many European countries, as well as other countries, have ruled declawing illegal! It is considered inhumane. This is also currently under review in certain areas of the United States.
- Now it's time to lighten things up and provide you with some solutions.

❖ **Lesson 1 – Scratching is a natural behavior for cats**

- This isn't exactly a revelation, since you probably have the evidence everywhere – in the tattered corners of your sofa, the shredded drapes, and your frayed nerves. Though Kitty's natural propensity for scratching may not be big news, it is a fact that you'll need to take into account if you're to make any headway in winning the battle to keep her from scratching in places you consider undesirable.

❖ **Lesson 2 – You can't keep your cat from scratching**

- What you can do is stop her from scratching those items you value and want to keep in their relatively pristine state. Bear in mind Mark Twain's advice, which applies universally, "Never try to teach a pig to sing; it frustrates you and annoys the pig." Translate this bit of wisdom to your dealings with cats and you'll avoid a good deal of futility and frustration. You can't make a cat do anything she doesn't want to do, be clear about that. Getting her to stop something she enjoys is just about as difficult. Therefore, you have to think smart and re-channel her desires.

❖ **A word about punishment – Don't do it!**

- Cats don't understand physical punishments. In addition to it being wrong to hit your cat, punishment simply doesn't work and is likely to make your situation worse. Clever though Kitty is about many things, she won't understand that you're punishing her for scratching the couch. She will only compute that sometimes when you catch her she is treated badly. This may make her insecure and stimulate her to scratch more or develop other undesirable behavior problems. Eventually you will break the trust and security that is the basis for your cat's relationship with you, and you will find it very difficult to catch her for any reason at all. Cats have excellent memories and hold serious grudges.

❖ **Lesson 3 – Why do cats scratch?**

- More to the point, why do they scratch your prized possessions? Understanding your cat's need to scratch is more than just an act of charity on your part. It's the key to channeling Kitty's efforts to more acceptable areas.

❖ **Marking their Territory**

- Scratching is a territorial instinct by which cats place their mark and establish their turf. Through scratching, cats mark their domains with more than just visible signs of claw marks. Cat's paws also have scent glands that leave their own special scent on their territory. This is why they mark the most visible portions of your house. It's Kitty's way of adding her own personal touch to your (and her) home – her version of interior decorating.

❖ Exercise

- Scratching also serves to keep your cat in shape. The act of scratching stretches and pulls and works the muscles of a cat's front quarters – a cross between a feline gym workout and Kitty Yoga.

❖ Sheer Pleasure

- Hey, it feels good to scratch! So, give up the idea of reforming Kitty's desire to scratch. Redirect her scratching where you want her to. You'll both be happier.

❖ Lesson 4 – Provide your cat with an appropriate scratching post

- Since your cat brings you so much joy, you decide to buy her the softest, prettiest and most luxurious scratching post you can find. You take it home and your feline friend gives you a blank stare and walks away. This activates your parental guidance mechanism and you decide to show her how to use the post by taking her front paws and making scratching motions at the post. She of course struggles until she gets free of you and then treats you with utter disdain for the rest of their day.
- Never make the mistake of trying to “show her how” to scratch anything. You'll only offend her. She knows perfectly well how to do it. She just reserves the right to scratch when and where it suits her.

❖ Lesson 5 – Remember, we said appropriate

- Bear in mind that your idea of desirable and Kitty's may not coincide. Cats like rough surfaces that they can shred to pieces (The exception of course is your velvet couch, which has its own particular appeal.). The scratching post with the most aesthetic appeal to your cat is often a tree stump, though this is a bit unwieldy in a one-bedroom apartment. Whatever post you choose, it must be tall enough for her to fully extend her body, and most important, it must be secure. If it topples over even once, she won't go back to it.
- Sisal scratching posts are ideal for releasing Kitty's primal urges. This is a material she can shred to pieces with great satisfaction. Be sure to not throw it away when it is shredded, since that's when she's just broken it in satisfactorily, and she will not appreciate your tidiness.
- The reverse side of rugs provides a good, satisfyingly resistant texture for clawing. You can place a piece of rug material over an area of carpet where Kitty has already been scratching. However, it must be stationary. Secure it so it doesn't move by duct taping the edges or placing it under furniture. You can also staple pieces of rug to a wall or post.

❖ Lesson 6 – How to get Kitty to prefer the post

- Remember that an important part of scratching is the cat's desire to make a territory, so a scratching post should be in an area that's used by the family, not hidden in a back corner. After time, you can move the post away to the periphery of the room, but you'll need to do this gradually.
- Initially, put the post where your cat goes to scratch. This may be a sofa, a chair or wherever Kitty has chosen as her territory, and you may need more than one post to cover her favorite spots. Security is a major factor in making the post appealing to your cat. If it topples or shakes, she won't use it. It should either be secured to the floor or have a base wide enough and heavy enough to keep it stable.
- Encourage kitty to use her post with clever enticements. Feed her and play with her by the post. Rub dried catnip leaves or powder onto it. Make all the associations with the post pleasurable. Reward her with a favorite treat when she uses it. Have her chase a string or a toy around the post or attach toys to it, which will result in her digging her claws into it. Eventually she will learn to love it and regard it as her own. It's also a good idea to put a post where Kitty sleeps. Cats like to scratch when they awaken, especially in the morning and the middle of the night. If space permits, a scratching post in every room of the house is a cat's delight. The most important place is the area of the house in which you and Kitty spend the most time. I have many sisal posts in my house, yet often in the morning my cats line up to use the one in the living room.
- If at first Kitty is reluctant to give up her old scratching areas, there are means you can use to discourage her. Covering the area with aluminum foil or double-sided tape is a great deterrent. These surfaces don't have a texture that feels good to scratch.
- Remember too that Kitty has marked her favorite spots with her scent as well as her claws. You may need to remove her scent from the areas you want to distract her away from. You will find pet odor removers in pet stores and many supermarkets as well.
- Cats have an aversion to citrus odors. Use lemon-scented sprays or a potpourri of lemon and orange peels to make her former scratching sites less agreeable to her.
- If Kitty still persists in scratching the furniture, try squirting her with a water gun or a spray bottle set in steam. Another option is a loud whistle or other noise-maker. You must employ these deterrents while she is scratching for them to be effective. The point is to establish an aversion to the spot you don't want her to scratch. Do not let Kitty see you make the noise or distraction. The cat must associate the interruption with her behavior, not you, and your timing must be just right.

❖ Lesson 7 – Start them young

- If you are starting with a kitten, consider yourself fortunate. It's much easier to initiate good habit patterns than to correct undesirable ones. From the beginning, teach your kitten the appropriate place to scratch. Use the methods already described, especially playing around the scratching post to capture her interest. Take advantage of your kitten's desire to play and attach toys to the post. She will soon "dig in" to catch her toy and discover how good it feels to scratch this surface.
- Do not take her paws and make her scratch the post. This is a major turn-off and will only inspire a bratty "you can't make me" attitude. Even at an early age, cats refuse to be coerced into doing what they don't want to do.
- If she starts to scratch an inappropriate object, immediately place her in front of her scratching post and begin petting her. Some cats will begin kneading when petted, thus digging their claws into the desired surface and establishing this as a fine place to scratch.
- Cats are creatures of habit. Start them off with good ones.

Alternate Solutions

❖ **Trimming your cat's nails**

- Though you should never declaw, you may defray some of your cat's potential for destruction by carefully trimming the razor-sharp tips of her claws. You will find this endeavor more easily accomplished by two people, one to hold Kitty and one to trim her nails. Though she enjoys other forms of pampering, Kitty will not find a manicure soothing.
- Gently hold Kitty's paw in one hand and with your thumb on top of the paw and forefinger on the pad gently squeeze your thumb and finger together. This will push the claw clear of the fur so it can easily be seen. You will notice that the inside of the claw is pink near its base. This is living tissue that you do not want to cut. Trim only the clear tip of the nail. Do not clip the area where pink tissue is visible or the slightly opaque region that outlines the pink tissue. This will avoid cutting into areas that would be painful or bleed. The desired effect is simply to blunt the claw tip. Many different types of nail trimmers are available in pet stores. Be sure to get one specifically for trimming cat's nails.
- If by now you're rolling on the floor laughing because you know your cat isn't about to let you trim her claws, here are a couple of guidelines that will help make this a possibility: patience and preparation.
- Rushing into a full-scale claw trimming is a foolhardy move unless you're really into operative drama and traumatic events. As you well know, cats hate to be restrained. And, they don't like you fooling with their paws, which comes across as threatening. After all, their claws are a major tool for survival, and Kitty may consider your motives suspect.
- This is where preparation comes to the rescue. For approximately a week before her manicure, begin making Kitty accustomed to having her paws handled. While petting and soothing her, start massaging her paws, especially on the underside. Gently press on the individual pads at the base of her claws. You may want to give her treats to reward her for not protesting. The point, of course, is to make the process reassuring so that she will eventually feel comfortable enough to let you handle her paws without protest.
- Next, be patient. Don't attempt to trim all her nails at once. Trim one or two at a time, reward her with affection or food, and then let her do as she wishes. Cats are not strong on patience or restraint. As the creature theoretically higher on to evolutionary scale, that's your department. Don't attempt to change your cat. Instead make it tolerable for her. Eventually trimming will become a completely non-traumatic experience.

❖ **Soft Paws[®] – An excellent alternative**

- Another very desirable option (if the others are too time consuming) is a wonderful product

called Soft Paws[®]. These are lightweight vinyl caps that you apply over the cat's own claws. They have rounded edges, so your cat's scratching doesn't damage your home and furnishings.

- Soft Paws[®] are great for households with small children, as they guard against the child getting scratched. They are also extremely useful for people who are away from home all day and simply can't apply the watchfulness necessary to train a cat to use a scratching post. Remember, if your cat accidentally gets outside while wearing them, they take away one of the cat's chief means of self-defense.
- Soft Paws[®] last approximately six weeks once Kitty becomes accustomed to them. At first they may feel a bit strange to her and she may groom them excessively, causing them to come off sooner. She'll get used to them quickly though, and thereafter they will last longer. It is amazing how well cats tolerate the Soft Paws[®]; most don't even notice they are wearing them.
- Soft Paws[®] come in a kit and are easy to apply. Just glue them on. They are generally applied to the front paws only, since these are what cause most of the destruction to your home. A kit will last approximately three to six months, depending on your cat. After you apply the Soft Paws[®], check Kitty's claws weekly. You may find one or two caps missing from time to time, and these are easily replaced using the adhesive included in the kit. To make application easier for you and your cat, follow the instructions on accustoming your cat to having her paws handled that are discussed here in the section on trimming your cat's claws.
- The great majority of cats tolerate Soft Paws[®] well. The brattiest of my own cats, a princess who is hyper-fastidious, wears them with aplomb. On her, by the way, one Soft Paws[®] kit last at least five months. Visit their website: www.softpaws.com.

❖ **As a checklist, here are the pertinent things to remember:**

- > Don't declaw!
- > Understand your cat's need to scratch
- > Forget punishment – it doesn't work
- > Provide a suitable place for your cat to scratch
- > Make the scratching post attractive to Kitty – i.e. use sisal posts
- > Make the place she's been scratching unattractive = physical or scent deterrents
- > Whenever possible, start cats young
- > You may want to trim your cat's claws
- > Consider Soft Paws[®] as an easy alternative

Resources for this section:

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Cat Care Tips

❖ Cat Care Tip #1 – Biting and Scratching

- Does your cat play too roughly? Sometimes it can be difficult to distinguish between playful and aggressive behavior. What the cat is actually doing is engaging in a type of behavior that is a combination of both. Predatory play and sneak attacks are expressions of a cat's hunting instincts at work. While being selected as a playmate can be flattering, you are not alone if you are not particularly enjoying all the scratching and biting.
- Studies carried out by the university of Pennsylvania and the Animal Medical Center in New York City indicate that a primary trigger for these rough-house antics is routinely leaving the cat alone for extended periods of time. A person who lives with a cat and is away from home all day long (i.e., at work) must make a concerted effort to redirect the play/aggression to something other than himself (toys) so that the cat will play even when alone. Rolling or dangling (mobiles) toys that can be batted about and large stuffed catnip toys that can be wrestled with and "mauled" are excellent choices. Select the toys carefully. Remember that during rough play, toys can be chewed and torn into bite-size pieces, and bells, squeakers and ornamentation can be pulled off and swallowed.
- One of the best ways to encourage play with a toy when you are not around is to offer the toy to your cat for him to play with when you are there. Rub the toy between your palms to impart your scents to it. Also, tie it to a string, drag it or throw it, and let the cat chase, stalk or fetch it. Many times when a toy is pleasantly associated with you and the good times you and your cat have together, the cat will focus his attention on it when you are not there.
- A cat that is left alone for extended periods of time can become over-stimulated and excitable during petting. If your cat bites and scratches when you pet him, do so for only a short period of time. Note how long you can pet before the cat begins to bite and scratch, and keep your petting sessions shorter than that. Many cats do not enjoy being petted or scratched on the belly or hips. If your cat doesn't enjoy it, don't do it!
- Cats that are introduced into a new household can be quite leery about being touched. When first meeting a cat, offer a closed fist. If the cat sniffs and moves in toward you, lightly pet him only around the head and shoulders. Proceed slowly. Short frequent petting sessions are the key. Do not reach for or restrain a cat that is not actively soliciting you. The action can be perceived as an aggressive one. Watch the cat carefully for signs of intolerance or overstimulation and stop handling the cat before he becomes overly stimulated. Should you miss the signs and the cat begins to bite or claw you, a firm "No!" is in order. Stop petting at once and leave if you have to. Unacceptable behavior should never be rewarded with positive attention.
- Finally, never dangle your fingers, scuff your feet or wiggle your toes while engaging in play with

your cat. Body parts are not toys. If you permit biting and clawing at some times, but not at others, you are giving your cat two different messages. By being arbitrary, you are confusing him.

- Consistency and timing are everything in training. This approach will help to minimize and ultimately correct biting and scratching problems while allowing your cat to develop a healthy relationship with you.

❖ **Cat Care Tip #2 – Litter Box Training**

- Contrary to popular myth, Garfield wasn't born using a litter box. He was just drawn that way! Cats do not come into this world knowing how to use a litter box, that is, a colored, plastic box filled with sterilized clay gravel. Cats learn what and where the bathroom is from their mom at about 4 weeks of age. Learning can happen so quickly that the casual observer may be unaware that any active instruction has taken place. A caretaker must introduce the box concept to orphaned kittens. Otherwise, they will randomly choose a spot and imprint on the texture (cloth towels, dust balls, carpeting, etc.)
- A kitten should be placed in the litter box upon waking and after both meals and vigorous play. His front paws can be dragged through the litter to simulate digging and covering. Most kittens soon take over and successfully use the box. The trick is to make sure it is the only spot the kitten uses. An unsupervised kitten can easily lose track of the box and instead use whatever is nearby when nature calls.

Strays and Feral Cats

- If kittens are born outdoors, mom may designate a clump of leaves or some soft ground as the bathroom. Recently homed feral and stray cats may have to be actively trained to use a box filled with clay litter, especially if they have been imprinted on something else. While some strays catch on quickly, others don't. Try a fine-grained sand-type litter rather than gravel-textured clay. In some cases, it may be necessary to start off with the substance the cat is used to (soil, sand, newspapers, etc.) and make the switch by gradually changing the proportion of the old substance to the new one over a period of several weeks. Clean the solids out of the litter box daily, and completely change the litter and wash out the box as often as necessary to keep it clean and dry. Remember, a cat that lived outdoors had many sites to choose from. A dirty box will drive the cat away from the box and to a cleaner, drier spot (the back of the closet). If the cat refuses to use the box at any stage, back up to the last stage at which he was successful.

Is She Spayed .. Is He Neutered?

- Sexually mature cats use urine and feces to mark territory and advertise for a mate. If your cat is more than 6 months old, he or she should be spayed or neutered. Male cats are neutered and females are spayed. This is a relatively simple surgical procedure that is performed on an

anesthetized cat by a veterinarian. Contact your vet or your local SPCA to get more information. An intact cat that does not use the litter box is very difficult to train because his behavior is hormonally influenced.

Spraying ... What Is It and Why?

- Is the urine puddle up against the wall or along the side of the sofa? If so, the cat is not urinating out of his box – he is spraying. When a cat squats, he is emptying his bladder to get rid of body waste. A cat does not squat when he sprays. He stands with his tail straight up and sends a stream of urine sideways. It hits the wall and runs down onto the floor. It is not clear whether spraying claims territory or warns trespassers to stay away, but it is clear that spraying has nothing to do with going to the bathroom.
- Spraying commonly accompanies stress. Although both males and females spray, males tend to do so more frequently. Unneutered males almost always do it. The good news is that if an unneutered male has just started to spray, very often neutering him will put a stop to the behavior. Unfortunately, if the cat has been allowed to spray for some time, as is the case with many rescued tom cats, neutering may not solve the problems. In that case, it may be necessary to work with a professional behavior counselor in order to correct the problem.

Clean Box ... Clean Cat

- Cats will often refuse to use the litter box if it isn't kept clean. For some cats, this means clearing out the box after each use. For others, once a day is more than enough. If a cat thinks the box is dirty, he may use the area around it (throw rug, sink or tub), especially if the litter scatters around it.

Is He Really Box-Trained?

- Some cats can become oriented to the location of the box. You may think a cat is trained to use a box when he is really trained to use the space in which you have placed the box. If this is the case, the cat will continue to eliminate where the box used to be. If you must change a box's location, move the box a few feet each day until it reaches the new location. If you have moved into a new home, actively show the cat where the box is after he has eaten, when he wakes from napping, and at times when you know he has to go.
- Changing the litter texture (clay to cedar chips or stripped newspaper) or switching to a scented litter may cause a cat to go elsewhere. Switching back to the former litter usually solves the problem. Changing the size or type of box (covered/uncovered) can also send the cat elsewhere. After all, that's not what his bathroom looks, feels and smells like!

He Uses the Box – Sometimes!

- Now we come to cats that are box-trained but have accidents. Has the cat ever used the box reliably for any length of time? Does he have accidents once a week, one a month, or once a year? A cat that has frequent accidents is not box-trained. In fact, he is demonstrating that he doesn't know that there is only one place to eliminate – box!
- Use close supervision or confinement to train the cat to use the box and only the box. All previously soiled areas must be cleaned and treated with an odor-neutralizing product. Whenever possible, visually change the areas that are most frequently soiled. Add a chair, an end table, a garbage can or an umbrella stand! If the area doesn't smell or look like the old bathroom the cat will be less likely to return. If you see him sniffing or scratching around a forbidden area, gently but firmly direct him towards the litter box. If the cat has infrequent or predictable ("he always does it when I come back from vacation") accidents, it may be a sign of stress.

Don't Yell ... Clean It Up!

- Never hit or become aggressive with your cat for not using the litter box. Punishing him after the act will not teach him to use the box when he "has to go." Shouting, hitting and general stomping around will only serve to damage your relationship with your cat. This will teach him to watch out for you because you are an unpredictable and frightening human being.
- It is important to clean a soiled area thoroughly with an enzyme-based cleanser that will not only take out the stain, but remove the odor. If you can't get to a pet supply store, an adequate substitute can be made from equal parts of seltzer and white vinegar. Never use ammonia or ammonia-based products to clean up because they will attract the cat back to the area. Follow package directions carefully, and make sure you are using the product that is best suited for your type of job (dried spots, new spots, spots previously cleaned, etc.).
- Frequently soiled, foam-backed carpets and carpet padding can emit an ammonia-like odor. If this happens, enzyme cleansers may not work, so you might have to remove the padding and replace it.

Is it Spite? No, It's Stress

- Environmental stress takes its toll on house cats. Studies indicate that there is a high correlation between ongoing stress and house soiling. Cats are as individual as people. Some are bold, outgoing, and adventurous and thus are resilient and forgiving. Others are timid and thus slink from room to room and run from strangers. Most cats thrive on the predictability of a daily routine. Personal crisis, a new family member (spouse/baby), and redecorating are significant events from the feline point of view. A dinner party (a bunch of noisy strangers all over the place), going away for the weekend (isolation, change in routine, and/or care giver), or having the plumber come in to fix the sink (trespasser) may cause the cat to feel threatened and

become anxious.

- Take the time to learn who your cat is and how you can best meet his needs and minimize his stress. Whenever possible, isolate a sensitive cat from stressful events. Create a sanctuary for him and bed him down there during a big party or renovations. In addition, prepare the cat well in advance of a change in routine. Have the cat sitter come and feed him several times before you leave on vacation.
- Dealing with stressful situations can be very difficult for a cat. The cat may continue to avoid the box and/or urinate on personal objects like bedding, clothing and your favorite chair in the presence of unresolved, ongoing and/or escalating stress. This is not to say that you must eliminate the stressful element, but instead alter the cat's perception of it through socialization and/or desensitization. Consider working with a professional behavior counselor.

The Multi-Cat Household

- Cats have a social hierarchy that includes not only dominant and subordinate roles, but also pariahs or outcasts. The structure of the hierarchy is completely dependent on the individual personalities of the cats involved. Outcast cats hide most of the time or spend their days on the highest spots to which they have access. Other cats may attack them regularly, but they will rarely fight back. If you find that the house soiler is an outcast, the best thing to do may be to find him a new home. A cat who is an outcast in one group may fit in well with a different or smaller group.
- Ongoing stress within a multi-cat household can drive one or more of the cats to spray (mark territory) or urinate and defecate out of the box. If the presence of a new cat is causing an existing cat to soil the house, confine the newcomer and make every attempt to keep the first tenant's life as stable as possible. Other solutions for the problems in a multi-cat household include multiple litter boxes placed in separate spaces and creating more "cat places" with multiple levels (scratching posts with hideouts and/or lookouts, carpeted shelves, etc.)

Retraining ... Can He Be Helped?

- The first step toward finding a solution is to rule out any health problem (worms, cystitis, intestinal disease, etc.) by having the cat thoroughly examined by a veterinarian. Once it has been determined that the cat is in good health, training can begin.
- The method of choice is a combination of confinement and supervised freedom. The cat starts the program in confinement. Most cats do well in small rooms. Bathrooms are recommended since they typically have unabsorbent tile flooring and offer privacy. Since it is essential for people to use the bathroom on a regular basis, the cat is never isolated for an extended period of time. In addition to necessary rest stops, you should make time for three or four 20-minute sessions with the cat. Play, groom, talk to and/or feed during the sessions. Put a cat bed and some toys in the room. Remember to place the bed and all bowls in the corner furthest from

the litter box.

- It is necessary to place some cats in an area smaller than a room for them to learn to use a litter box. This is because they will go in the wrong spot if they are given any opportunity to do so. In these cases, a cattery cage or kennel is useful. The enclosure must be big enough to accommodate a cat bed at one end and the litter box at the other. If the cat urinates on the cat bed, it must be removed. Feed the cat two meals a day, leaving the food down for approximately 20 minutes. Keep a diary and be sure to note when the cat uses the litter box.
- When the cat has been using the box and only the box for two weeks, you can begin to allow him access to other rooms in the house one at a time. Observe the cat from a distance. Make sure that he has not fallen prey to old habits. The best time to let him roam is right after he's used the box. Make sure to return him to confinement before his next scheduled "pit stop." Do not leave the cat out when you are not home. Only when you observe the cat reliably returning to the litter box on his own can you begin to cut back on the supervision. Do not leave food out all day long. Constant nibbling increases the chances of a misplaced bowel movement. The cat should not be able to urinate or defecate outside of the box without being observed and directed toward it. It is better to proceed slowly and build a strong foundation than to rush through the procedure because it is inconvenient or time-consuming. In order for effective learning to take place, the cat must be watched carefully and encouraged to use the box. Consistency is everything!
- The complexities of cat behavior become quite evident when dealing with a cat that does not reliably use his box. The solutions often require patience, and always require consistency. Be sensitive to your cat's needs. Your investment of quality time and attention will be well rewarded.

❖ **Cat Care Tip #3 – General Information on Cat Care**

Before You Bring Your Cat Home

- You will need food, a food dish, a water bowl, interactive toys, a brush, a comb, a scratching post, and a litter box.

History

- All cats come from their cousins, the wild cats. Tigers, lions, bobcats, mountain lions and companion cats are all related. Cats have been domesticated for more than 5,000 years, and there are more than 41 recognized breeds.

Diet

- Premium-quality dry or canned cat food provides a healthy diet for your pet. Fresh, clean water must be available at all times. All water bowls should be washed and refilled daily.

Feeding

- An adult cat should be fed one large meal or two smaller meals each day. Kittens 6 to 12 weeks old need to be fed four times a day and kittens 12 to 24 weeks old need to be fed three times a day. Feed specific meals and throw away any leftover food after 20 minutes. Do not make food available all the time.

Housing

- Cats should have a warm, dry place of their own in the house. Line the bed with something warm and soft – a towel or blanket. Be sure to wash the bedding often. It's safer to keep your cat indoors. Outdoor cats can get poisoned, hit by cars and hurt in fights. They also are more apt to pick up diseases and parasites.

Handling

- To pick up your cat, place one hand under his front legs and the other under his hindquarters. Lift gently. Never pick up a cat by the scruff of the neck (behind the ears) or by his front legs.

Health

- Your cat should see a veterinarian at least once a year for an examination and shots. Also take your feline to a vet if he becomes sick or injured. Carefully go over your cat's body at least once a week to check for fleas, ear mites and bumps or cuts.

Litter Box

- All indoor cats need a litter box. The bathroom, utility room and sun porch are all good places to put the box. Always keep it in the same place. Scoop solids out at least once a day. Dump everything, wash the box with a mild detergent and refill it at least once a week. Cats won't use a messy, smelly litter box!

Grooming

- Your cat will keep himself relatively clean. Most cats rarely need a bath, but they do need to be brushed or combed. Frequent grooming helps keep your feline's coat clean, reduces his shedding and reduces the number of hairballs he will have.

Identification

- If allowed outdoors (**NOT recommended**), a cat should wear a collar and an identification tag. A safety collar – one which has an elastic panel or is made out of popper beads – will allow your cat to free himself if the collar gets stuck on something. An I.D. tag makes it possible for someone to return your pet to you if he should become lost.

Claws

- All cats need to scratch to loosen old nail sheathes and allow new nails to grow. Cutting your cat's nails every 10 to 14 days will keep them relatively blunt and thus make them less likely to harm arms of both people and furniture. Provide your cat with sturdy scratching posts covered with rough material such as sisal, burlap or tree bark to further prevent household destruction. A sprinkle of catnip once or twice a month will keep your cat interested in the scratching posts.

Play

- All cats delight in stalking imaginary prey. The best toys for cats are those that can be made to jump and dance around (the Cat Dancer and Kitty Tease are good examples). The cat will act out his predator role by pouncing on the toys instead of people's ankles.

Warning: Do not use your hands or fingers as play objects with young kittens or your cat may have biting and scratching problems as he matures.

Additional Information

- Indoor cats live for 15 to 20 years
- It is important to spay (females) or neuter (males) your cat since she or he can breed up to three times per year. This operation prevents your cat from having unwanted litters and protects him from certain diseases of the reproductive organs. Neutered cats seldom spray urine around the house to mark territory, and are generally easier to own.
- If your cat has fleas, try frequent flea-combing or using flea powder. Flea collars for cats can irritate the skin on their necks.

❖ Cat Care Tip #4 – Household Destruction

- Many people choose to live with cats because they think that a cat is an easy pet to live with – one that does not require obedience training the way a dog does. The fact of the matter is that by tooth and nail, cats can be responsible for tremendous amounts of household destruction. Destruction by tooth generally refers to noshing on house plants and pica, which is the eating of dirt, leather, wood and/or other inappropriate substances. Destruction by nail refers to the old feline classics of using furniture as a scratching post and curtains as a jungle gym.
- Feline destruction can be handled by managing the problem, distracting the cat away from the objects of desire, and retraining the cat. A combination of these techniques will probably be what solves the problem.
- House plants often fall victim to young cats. This problem can be managed by turning table-top plants into hanging plants or by putting them in a room that is kept off limits. Another option is

to distract your cat by making the house plants harder to reach and growing flats of catnip and wheat grass in a more readily accessible area. This should satisfy his craving for fresh vegetation. (Giving your plants away and learning to love plastic and/or silk flowers is also a possibility.)

- Attempt to retrain a cat who chews on plants by spraying their leaves with an anti-chew agent specially formulated for plants. Also attach balloons and/or double-stick tape to the planters. Cats avoid sites of loud noises (popped balloons) and surfaces that feel tacky to their touch.
- In cases involving pica, the cat should first be examined by a veterinarian to make sure he is not suffering from any sort of physiological problems. If there are none, try keeping objects that the cat is attracted to in drawers or closets. Also try distracting the cat away from desired objects by providing him with plenty of toys. Some experts feel that the chewing of inappropriate items is a sign of boredom and isolation. Increasing the amount of exercise the cat gets and rotating his toys just might bring about a change.
- The introduction of a second cat as a playmate might also alleviate the problem, but should only be considered if the owner truly desires a second cat. (Adding a cat to a household is stressful to the existing cat and numerous misbehaviors such as fighting and household soiling may result. Stress-related health disorders such as Feline Urologic Syndrome can also occur.)
- Attempt to retrain a cat exhibiting pica behavior through dietary measures. Put him on a premium quality dry food with adequate fiber in it. Feed only that food and no other supplements or treats and keep the cat away from his former pseudo-food items for at least 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, spray the desired object with an anti-chew spray and reintroduce it.
- To deal with the number one destruction complaint – scratching the furniture – make both the furniture and the drapes tactilely unattractive. Smooth cotton fabrics such as chintz and silky fabrics such as parachute cloth hold little interest for cats. Their preferences run to rough, bumpy surfaces like a Haitian cloth, Herculon, raw silk and leather. If the furniture pre-dates the cat, the use of a decorative sheet or comforter as a cover should be considered. Of course, there are always plastic slipcovers! Trimming the cat's nails every two weeks will help minimize the damage done by any scratching. Distract the cat from furniture by providing a suitable scratching post. Cats have an inherent need to scratch in order to remove the dead nail sheaths from around their claws. This allows new nails to grow out. Provide a sturdy, wide-based and rough-textured post that is at least three feet tall. It should be covered in sisal, burlap or some other rough fabric. A natural tree trunk that has been debugged is also acceptable. Be sure to keep the post or tree trunk near the cat's favorite napping place, because the urge to scratch is often strongest upon awakening.
- Retrain the cat to not scratch furniture by covering it with double-stick tape, balloons, tin foil and/or contact paper (sticky side up). Initially place an appropriate scratching post beside furniture the cat scratches the most, and then gradually move it to the place where you would

prefer it to be.

- The sound of human nails running over a scratching post often entices a cat to it. Praise the cat if this occurs. Dragging a ribbon or other interactive toy over or around a post also often gets a cat heading in the right direction. Be sure to sprinkle some potent catnip on the post several times a month to increase its desirability if the cat responds positively to this herb.
- By providing for a cat's physical and mental needs through the use of kitty greens, appropriate scratching posts and challenging interactive toys, much of the destruction caused by tooth and nail can be avoided.

❖ **Cat Care Tip #5 – Kitten Care**

- Kittens 6 to 12 weeks old should be fed four times a day.*
- Kittens 3 to 6 months old should be fed three times a day.
- Kittens 6 to 12 months old should be fed two times a day.
- Cats 1 year old or older should be fed two times a day.
- A kitten should be taught that he must visit the litter box after each meal. Usually, after the kitten finishes eating, he will groom his face and paws and then search for a place to go to the bathroom. The litter box should be nearby. Do not carry the kitten to it – he will not learn how to find it by himself if you do.
- When food is left down for a kitten to eat at will, he will tend to nibble all day long rather than eat distinct meals. Random feeding makes for random toilet habits. It is not uncommon for a very young kitten to have problems with litter box training if he is on a free-feeding program with minimal supervision (owner at work all day). The kitten can become “lost” within the apartment and answer nature's call wherever he happens to be. He will use the first convenient absorbent surface he finds. Many times this will be under a couch or dresser, or behind a refrigerator or stove. Because the fecal mass is so small and the urine does not have a strong scent, the owner may be unaware that the kitten is not visiting the box each and every time. The owner will be tipped off only by an accidental discovery of dried feces or by the scents of accumulated fecal matter. In most cases, the discovery comes too late – the behavior has been habituated and the owner is left with a kitten that thinks there are several “bathrooms” in the house. Retraining is a prolonged process – it is much easier to train a kitten properly the first time than to retrain one.
- It is important for the owner of a kitten to realize that he has an infant on his hands. Like all non-human babies, kittens need ample supervision so they can learn how to co-habitate successfully with humans.

- **Kittens under 6 weeks of age should not be fed commercially prepared food or strained baby food because their digestive tract is too immature to digest these substances properly. It is best to feed kittens either KMR or a weaning formula. Both are readily available at pet shops and pet food stores.*

❖ **Cat Care Tip #6 – Letting the Cat Out**

- Thanks to the creation of cat litter in the mid-1940's, more and more cats are becoming indoor-only pets. As such, they are leading longer lives. The average indoor cat lives to be 15 years old and many of us are acquainted with felines who are more than 20 years old. In contrast, outdoor cats usually live only a few years. Our homes are a safer, healthier environment than the street. No ticks or fleas, unless the family dog brings them in! No tangling with rabid raccoons, aromatic skunks or hungry coyotes. No one-on-ones with moving vehicles. No doubt about it – indoors is safer!
- Yet when we choose to make our cats indoors-only companions, we take on a responsibility to provide the same kind of stimulation that nature provides. Scratching and climbing posts stand in for trees. Interactive toys offer an outlet for predatory behavior otherwise used for hunting birds, bugs and field mice. A rotating array of cat playthings can provide excitement and unpredictability as well as exercise. Many cat lovers still prefer to share the great outdoors with their feline friends, despite the increased risks. If you are planning to “let the cat out,” you must try to minimize the potential for harm.
- While vaccinations are important to indoor cats, they are critical to the health of cats allowed outside. The soil of one's garden or yard can harbor diseases spread by stray, unvaccinated cats for months. In addition, rabies, which is transmitted primarily through altercations with wild animals such as foxes, raccoons and bats, can be found in much of the world. The safest ways to allow your cat to enjoy some time outdoors are to walk him on a harness and provide him with a screened-in enclosure or fenced-in yard topped with cat-proof netting.
- Harness training, like many things, is easiest taught during kittenhood. However, some older cats can acclimate to it. Choose a figure 8- or H-type harness and make sure it fits well. (If you can barely get your finger between the cat and the harness, the fit is fine.) Put the harness on a few minutes at a time at first. Right before mealtime is good because the cat will associate it with something positive. Repeat several times a day. When the cat begins to ignore the harness, let him drag a leash around for a few more short sessions. You must be present to make sure it doesn't catch on anything. The next step is to pick up the lash and follow the cat around the house. The idea is for the cat to get used to a person following him around without feeling tightness on the leash. That comes in the next step.
- When your cat is comfortable taking light direction from the leash, you are ready to proceed to a quiet area outdoors. Remember to keep sessions short, frequent, and upbeat. Little food rewards often come in handy. If you are leaving your property for walks, keep your eyes peeled

for any off-leash dogs, in-line skaters or bicyclists that could put your feline in danger or just give him a scare.

- Outdoor enclosures come in all shapes and sizes since they are usually homemade creations. Chicken wire and wire hardware cloth are preferable to ordinary window screening because they are more durable. The best-loved enclosures usually feature climbing and resting furniture inside.
- It is safest to use an outdoor enclosure and traditional fencing with cat-proof netting on top of it when you are home and either outdoors with your cat or checking on him frequently. Pet theft only takes a few moments. It doesn't matter whether it's by pesky neighborhood kids or an organized group rounding up animals to sell to laboratories. The resulting heartache is the same. A microchip, tattoo or identification tag just might be the very thing to reunite you and your feline when precautions fail.

❖ **Cat Care Tip #7 – Interactive Play**

- He's young and lean and hides in the shadows. Silently, he waits for an opportune moment to dart out and launch his attack on passing ankles and calves. He's – your cat!
- Feral cats, barn cats and outdoor cats left to fend for themselves hunt birds, insects and small mammals to survive. According to the July 1995 issue of *Catnip*, a publication of the Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine. "The cat has evolved into a superb spotter, tracker and pouncer. Cats have highly developed acuity of vision for movement." These skills of stalking, lying in wait, pouncing and especially killing are taught to cats by their mother. The feline that merely "plays" with its prey probably didn't get lessons from mom.
- Kittens with hunting mothers may begin to show signs of learning the art of the kill when they are only 4 weeks old. So, it is understandable when a pampered, young household feline starts attacking his unsuspecting owner's body parts. These misdirected attacks occur most during the stages of peak feline fitness and energy – late kittenhood and adolescence. The attacks usually level off or cease entirely at 1.5 to 2 years of age.
- Take heart. There rarely are complaints about nightly "twitching toe attacks" beyond Simba's second summer. There is no need to just grin and bear it until the cat matures. Redirecting his predatory/play behavior is the answer. Just draw his attention to something that appears to be alive (to him, anyway), but won't be hurt by the flurry of teeth and nails.
- It is up to the cat's human family to engage him in interactive play. This is done with toys that can float, twirl, dart or fly in a way that simulates live prey. Toys seem alive when they are dragged on the floor, dangled from a wire, and so on. Wiggling fingers are not appropriate; they only encourage aggression toward human flesh.
- Interactive toys such as a feather wand, the Cat Dancer or the Kitty Tease can be purchased at

pet supply stores. Do-it-yourselfers can simply make their own. An old sock stuffed with paper and a little catnip makes a great target for predatory aggression when knotted at the top and dragged on a piece of string.

- Interactive toys should be securely locked away when the game is over for two reasons. First, they may have parts that are unsafe for a cat to ingest. Second, they are more exciting to the cat when they disappear and then reappear. Cat owners often complain that they have purchased dozens of toys that their cat just ignores. Toys that are always available quickly lose their allure.
- To be most effective, interactive games should be played several times a day. Engaging Simba just before mealtimes is ideal because the entire sequence of “stalk, pounce, kill and feed” will be completed. The duration of these games depends on your cat’s energy and concentration levels, but 10 to 15 minutes per game is usually enough.
- Interactive play provides many benefits for both your cat and you. A game before bedtime not only can help reduce the number of predatory/play attacks, but also tire out a nocturnal pest enough to make him sleep through the night. Additional benefits include stress reduction and helping a neutered cat keep a trim form. Of course, the best by-product of all is a better relationship with your cat.

❖ **Cat Care Tip #8 – Feline Adolescence**

- When your cat matures from kittenhood to adolescence, behavior once giggled over can become obnoxious. An intolerant owner might begin to search for another home for Fluffy Sue. Adolescence calls for a little understanding. Perhaps looking at your cat’s behavior through his eyes will provide you with that understanding.

Scratching

- Do you hear it, that rhythmic scratch, scratch, scratch down the side of your new sofa? Why is Fluffy Sue destroying new furniture when she has that obscenely expensive, color-coordinated, carpet-covered scratching post standing unused half a room away? There are two reasons. One is that she is trying to leave her mark on the furniture in order to claim it as her property/territory. The other is that she is trying to loosen irritating old nail sheaths so new nails can grow.
- What’s an owner to do? First, trim the cat’s nails every two to three weeks to keep them relatively blunt. Second, provide a scratching post covered with a rough material (sisal is ideal, but ripe, starched burlap or a tree stump will also suffice) that is at least three feet tall. Make sure it has a wide, sturdy base and won’t tip over, even when climbed on or attacked by the cat. A short or rickety post will be of no use to him, and therefore will be rejected in favor of non-tipping furniture.

- Keep the post interesting by sprinkling it with catnip every two weeks. Draw the cat's attention to the post by playing interactive games with him near it. Be sure to place the post near your cat's favorite resting place because the urge to scratch is strongest upon awakening.
- Don't think that declawing will be the answer to your prayers. This surgical amputation can shake your cat's confidence to the point where he may stop using the litter box, become a biter or start hiding in dark, out-of-the-way places to avoid social interactions. Declawing is a drastic, irreversible solution and there are many other alternatives that are better solutions.

Predatory/Play Aggression

- Crouch, stalk, pounce and bite! That was no mouse; that was my ankle! Felines are predators, and many cats have all the training they need to become mighty hunters when they are only 8 weeks old. If your cat was taken from his littermates too early (prior to 10 weeks of age) and not actively taught to inhibit his bite, you may find yourself his next hapless victim.
- Cats need an outlet for their predatory behavior. Channel their predation toward playthings that you can make come alive. If your cat zeros in on your body parts, correct him with a loud hiss or a puff of air in his face. For more hard-core cases, use a spritz of water or a loud noise. Praise the cat for any interest he shows in the toy with which you are tantalizing him. No hitting please or his predatory play could swiftly turn into defensive aggression.

Nocturnal Behavior

- Did your cat keep you up last night? Contrary to popular belief, cats are not nocturnal creatures. However, latchkey adolescents and seniors have been known to get restless, usually near dawn. There may not be much you can do about a geriatric cat's metabolism, but a 10-minute play session followed by a fashionably late dinner does wonders for an early-rising youngster.
- When cats hunt, they stalk, pounce, kill, and then eat their prey. Replicating this predatory ritual by playing interactive games and then serving dinner can be tremendously satisfying for your cat.
- Make sure you are not inadvertently teaching your cat any bad habits. If he cried loud and long and you get up to feed him, play with him, or cuddle with him, he will be rewarded for his bad behavior.
- Create a plan space/bedroom in a containable room like the bathroom for cats who continue to be disruptive early risers. A litter box, bed and various types of toys dangling off doorknobs and towel racks should fill the environment. This will be your cat's bedroom until he outgrows his pre-dawn antsiness. Don't wait until he wakes you up. Tuck him in there at bedtime. He earns access to your bed by learning to sleep in until you say so.

- During this stage of rambunctiousness, expect willful disobedience and boundary testing. Patience, a sense of humor, and a sound understanding of feline adolescent behavior are the best revenge.

❖ **Cat Care Tip #9 – Bringing in a Second Cat**

- A carefully planned introduction is everything. Most cats do not readily accept a new member of the family. They need time to get used to the idea. A certain amount of hissing, posturing and chasing is to be expected. It is important to have patience and not rush things along. Don't chance an all-out fight. When in doubt, wait a few more days before proceeding to the next step of the introduction. Preventing a problem is always easier than solving one.
- Several factors need to be considered and balanced when introducing a second cat. Among them are age, size, sexual maturity and personality. Experience matters. Strays will be competitive and territorial, while orphaned, hand-raised kittens may very well grow up to be awkward and fearful adults. In addition, they commonly will be unable to adjust to living with another cat. The more the introduction deviates from the ideal, the more it becomes protracted. If there are sufficient grounds for conflict, the cats will become adversaries, rather than friends.
- In an ideal world, the new cat (N-cat) would be younger and smaller than the existing cat (E-cat). The N-cat would also be sexually immature or a spayed/neutered member of the opposite sex. His personality would complement that of the E-cat. Finally, the owner would take the time to interview all candidates thoroughly and be rational, rather than emotional, during the decision-making process.
- The reality is that there often is no choice. Roommates, lovers and spouses with cats come as only part of a non-negotiable package deal. The people decide to co-habitate, so the cats have to manage. This type of introduction can be rough. Be prepared for a prolonged introduction, especially if the cats in question have lived alone since kittenhood and have no experience living with other cats.
- Finding a stray on the street or falling in love at a shelter is another one of those unplanned events that can deliver a jolt to both you and your E-cat. Should you take the cat you've met home just because fate put him in your path? A cat from a shelter or a rescued stray must be physically isolated from your E-cat for 10 days to two weeks to make sure he is not incubating a contagious disease. A cat with an unknown background must not only be thoroughly examined for parasites and disease, but tested for leukemia and vaccinated before it will be safe for him to come into contact with the E-cat.

The Isolation Area

- All introductions should start the same way. The N-cat should be isolated and the E-cat should be given the run of the house. Only the N-cat's isolation area should be off limits. It should be a

room with a door that can be closed so there will be absolutely no contact between the N-Cat and the E-cat. It is especially important for you to create an isolation area if the N-cat is a shelter cat or a stray. If his health record is known and space is severely limited, a large cattery or kennel cage with a blanket over it will suffice.

- If there is no spare room, the bedroom or bathroom can be used as the isolation area. If the E-cat is used to sleeping with the owner, it may be necessary to use the bathroom. Remember, the E-cat's routine should be disrupted as little as possible. Suddenly denying him the companionship he is used to will just complicate the introduction.
- If the bathroom is chosen to be the isolation area and the E-cat's litter box is currently located in it, move the box to a new spot or get a privacy screen. If circumstances permit, do this at least two weeks before bringing the N-cat home. Planning ahead will minimize the chaos for the E-cat.
- The isolation area should be cat-proofed and well ventilated. In addition, a litter box, a water bowl and a cave-like hiding box lined with something comfortable should all be inside it.

How Will I Know If He'll Fit In?

Smaller is Better than Larger

- The visual impression made is important. Smaller is less intimidating to the E-cat. A physically smaller N-cat means that the E-cat will be less inclined to feel threatened. Size is based upon perception – both body size and hair length count.

Younger is Better than Older

- Cats go through the same developmental stages that people do.
 - A kitten less than 12 weeks old is an infant who needs lots of care and supervision. He has no life experience to help him make decisions, and thus makes tactical errors. For example, he does not respond in a coordinated fashion when he needs to escape. You must be there to help an infant kitten cope.
 - A kitten between the ages of 12 weeks and 6 months is a juvenile. Full of energy and enthusiasm, he can be a downright annoying companion because of his constant testing of both physical and social boundaries.
 - A cat between 6 months and 2 years old is an adolescent. If he is an E-cat, he should be spayed or neutered before the N-cat is brought into the home. A sexually mature N-cat should be altered as soon as possible.
 - The stability of adulthood begins to show itself at about 2 years of age. Cats older than that

have a fixed personality and may be somewhat inflexible. Adult cats should be carefully matched in terms of their sociability and activity level since they are not likely to compromise easily.

- A cat more than 8 years old can begin to show signs of aging. He may be arthritic, sedentary and opinionated. If he is either the E-cat or the N-cat, you must be very careful not to stress him out. Ongoing anxiety can produce a variety of physical stress disorders, some of which can be life-threatening. Check with your veterinarian if you're planning to surprise an 8-year-old E-cat with an N-cat.

Personality

- The E-cat and the N-cat must be compatible in order for them to become friends. Sociability, lust for adventure, activity level and tolerance all play a part. A living lawn ornament will not appreciate a companion with the energy of a small tornado, and a temperamental prima donna will be offended by a spirited comic. The N-cat and the E-cat should complement each other, rather than irritate each other.

Harry, Guess What ... I Brought You Home a Friend ... Okay?

Step One

- Upon arrival, the N-cat should be brought directly into the isolation area. Don't stop to chat with the E-cat. Remove the N-cat from the carrier and let him scope out the room. Don't linger. Bring the empty carrier out. Be sure not to plop the carrier down in front of the E-cat. Give him a chance to discover and explore the empty carrier and respond to it. Watch carefully, but don't interfere. The E-cat's response to the scent of the N-cat can be telling. Some cats will posture, hiss and even attack the carrier (rough seas ahead) while others will stalk and growl, run off, and then return again and again (typical). Still others will approach the carrier curiously and sniff it with great excitement (prognosis: good). Remember that it is best to leave the carrier out until the E-cat loses interest in it.
- Spend at least an hour with the E-cat. Resist temptation. Don't go back and peek in on the N-cat. He'll be just fine. He will need some alone time to explore. Studies have shown that cats respond to environmental challenges before they respond to social invitations.
- When the E-cat winds down, slip into the isolation room with a small portion of food. Sit quietly. Talk softly. Do not actively solicit the cat. He'll approach when ready. If he engages you, respond conservatively. Don't rush forward and scoop him up. Remain for half an hour to 45 minutes. Wash your hands if you've been petting the N-cat, and then leave without ceremony. Visit him several times a day, one hour at a time.
- The E-cat may begin to hiss or growl at you. You smell like the intruder! Continue with your normal routine. Note how much time the E-cat spends sniffing around and sitting outside the isolation

room's door. Do not proceed to step two until all hostile responses to the scent, doorway and carrier have ceased.

- Be sure to spend quality time with the E-cat. Talk to him. Tell him that although things are not the way they used to be, he is still special. Play his favorite games. Groom him daily. Give him little bits of something yummy by hand. Make it intimate.

Step Two

- Now that the E-cat is accustomed to the N-cat's limited presence, it's time to move forward. The next step will be allowing the two to see each other without allowing them to make full-body contact. Stack two tension gates that are at least 36 inches tall in the N-cat's doorway. Rigid plastic mesh baby gates are available at most children's specialty and department stores. If there is reason to believe that either cat will get over the gates, use Plan B. It is very important that the cats not fight.
- Plan B: Jam the door to the isolation room with two hard-rubber door stops. Place them on opposite sides of the door and leave it open about two to three inches. Make sure that neither cat can fit his head through the opening. Check that the door is secure and will not suddenly open further or slam shut if a cat slams against it. The cats should be able to touch noses and whack each other with their paws, but not make full-body contact. When the owner is not at home or is unable to at least peripherally supervise, the door should be closed. Do not proceed to the final step until the cats seem relatively calm in each other's presence. Hissing, posturing, and growling should be at a bare minimum.

Step Three

- Finally, you get to open the door! While the E-cat is occupied elsewhere, take down the gate or open the door. Don't make a big deal out of it. Let the cats happen upon each other. Stay on the side lines and don't interfere. The E-cat may stalk and chase the N-cat. This is typical territorial behavior. The N-cat may do the same if the E-cat enters the isolation area. Be sure not to leave the two unsupervised.
- If a fight breaks out, the owner should keep his hands out of it. He should not attempt to handle or pick up either cat. Instead, he should clap his hands and shout or bang a pot with a spoon. Cat fights almost always sound much worse than they really are. Cats yowl and scream, but if their nails have been trimmed, damage should be minimal. Declawed cats have no alternative to biting. When things have cooled down considerably, the owner should go over each of the cats' bodies carefully and check for damage. Bites and puncture wounds can become infected and abscess.
- The introduction can take anywhere from several days (kitten or juvenile) to several months (adult stray/adult prima donna). A lot depends on how far away from the ideal the situation is. Watch for signs of stress. Eating food quickly and then vomiting and excessive grooming, sleeping, and/or drinking are all signs that a cat is not happy. Spraying, mewling, hiding, and indiscriminate urination

and/or defecation also are associated with anxiety and stress.

- Do not promote competition. Continue to feed in separate areas. Maintain two separate litter boxes. Many E-cats have been known to block doorways and deny access to a box or bowl. Don't be in a hurry to consolidate. If a cat can't get to his box, he will be left with no choice except to create a new toilet area!
- Eventually, hostilities will decline. The E-cat will stop his chasing and stalking and the N-cat will stop his perching and scurrying along the edges of the room. The two will declare a cease-fire. They will start to groom each other and share sleeping spots. At worst, they will simply co-exist peacefully. Hopefully, they will become best friends.

❖ **Cat Care Tip #10 – Cat Health Care**

Veterinary Examinations

- Healthy cats should be taken in for a check-up once per year; cats who have a medical problem may require more frequent visits.

❖ **Vaccinations**

- A kitten should receive a three-in-one distemper shot at 2, 3, and 4 months of age. These vaccinations will protect him or her from calicivirus, rhinotracheitis and panleukopenia, which also is known as distemper. Unvaccinated cats who are older than 4 months should receive two shots given three to four weeks apart. All cats should receive annual booster shots.
- The Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) both affect a cat's immune system. They can be transmitted through biting or from a mother to her kittens at birth and are always fatal. A cat can interact with cats who have not been tested. There is a vaccine available for FeLV, but it does not provide protection for every cat who receives it. There is no vaccine for FIV.
- Some counties require cats to be vaccinated against rabies.

❖ **Spaying and Neutering**

- Spaying a female (removing the ovaries and uterus) or neutering a male (removing the testicles) ensures that a cat will not contribute to the pet overpopulation problem. Both procedures are performed with the same general anesthesia used in human medicine, and require minimal hospitalization.
- Neutering a male cat by 6 months of age prevents testicular cancer, prostate disease and hernias. It also can reduce household spraying and fighting. Spaying a female cat helps prevent pyometra (a pus-filled uterus) and breast cancer; having this done before the first heat offers

the best protection from these diseases. Treatment of pyometra requires hospitalization, intravenous (IV) fluids, antibiotics and spaying. Breast cancer can be fatal in about 90 percent of female cats. With any older, seriously ill animal, anesthesia and surgery are complicated and costly.

❖ **Upper Respiratory Infections**

- Cats commonly contract upper respiratory infections (URI). The symptoms of these viral diseases include sneezing, runny eyes, and drooling. A cat that has a URI should be brought to a veterinarian.

❖ **Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease**

- Cats may develop Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease. Its signs are frequent trips to the litter box, difficulty urinating and blood in the urine. Certain foods may help prevent the condition. If a male cat seems constipated, he may actually have a urethral obstruction. This can be fatal if left untreated. Urethral blockages are rare in females.

❖ **Fleas and Ear Mites**

- Fleas are parasites that can transmit tapeworms and irritate the skin. There are many products available to prevent them, so consult with your veterinarian. Excessive scratching of the ears and head shaking can be signs of ear mites. If a cat has the parasite, his or her ears should be cleaned by a veterinarian and then treated with a topical medication.

❖ **Dental Health**

- Cats can get cavities and develop periodontal disease, so their teeth should be cleaned with pet toothpaste at least twice per week. It is best to use a small toothbrush that has soft bristles. Cleanings performed by a veterinarian may also be required.

❖ **Vomiting and Diarrhea**

- Vomiting and diarrhea can be caused by intestinal parasites, foreign bodies, hair balls, stress or a change in diet. Kittens will dehydrate very quickly, so they must be taken to a veterinarian immediately. Older cats should be taken in if there is blood in their vomit or diarrhea, or their condition persists for more than 24 hours.

❖ **Medications**

- Aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen can all be fatal to cats. Use only medications prescribed by your veterinarian.

Resources for this section:

Copied with permission of the ASPCA Companion Animal Services

Your Cat - Indoors or Out?

Ever wonder what goes on behind closed doors? Healthy, safe cats live out their entire lives, for one thing. If you want your cat to live to a ripe old age, the best thing you can do for her is keep her inside. Allowing your cat to wander around on her own, without your supervision, makes her susceptible to any of the following life-shortening – and often painful – tragedies:

- > Being hit by a car
- > Ingesting a deadly poison like antifreeze or a pesticide
- > Being trapped by an unhappy neighbor
- > Being attacked by a roaming dog, cat, or wild animal
- > Contracting a disease from another animal
- > Becoming lost and unable to find her way home
- > Being stolen
- > Encountering an adult or child with cruel intentions

Some people believe there are good reasons to allow their cat to be outdoors without their supervision, so we've included a number of these objections along with our comments and suggestions.

“But I have a six-foot fence.”

Unless you have special fencing that's designed to prevent a cat from climbing out, your cat will be able to scale your fence and escape the confines of your yard. If you do have special fencing, make sure that it can keep other cats or animals from getting into your yard to injure your cat. Some companies manufacturer ready-made cat fences and backyard enclosures.

“But my last cat went outdoors and he loved it.”

Your cat may enjoy being outdoors, but by allowing him to go outside unsupervised, you're putting him at risk for a shortened life span. The expected life span of an indoor/outdoor cat will depend on several factors, including the type of neighborhood you live in and sheer luck. But, on average, cats who are allowed to roam outdoors often don't live to see age five. Cats that are always kept safely confined can live to be 18 to 20 years old.

“But my cat's litter box smells.”

Scoop your cat's litter box on a daily basis. How often you actually replace (change) the litter depends on the number of cats in your home, the number of litter boxes, and the type of litter you use. Twice a week is a general guideline for clay litter, but depending on the circumstances, you may need to change it every other day or once a week. Wash the litter box with soap and water every time you change the litter; the use of strong-smelling chemicals and cleansers may cause your cat to avoid the box.

“But my cat likes to sun herself.”

Your cat can safely sun herself indoors by lying near a window. If you're really intent on letting your cat

outdoors, put her on a harness and leash and stay with her while she's taking in the rays.

“But I can't keep him in.”

Keep your windows closed or install screens. Remember to always keep your doors closed and teach your children the importance of keeping the doors closed, too. It may take a few days or a few weeks, but if there are enough interesting things for your cat to play with indoors, he'll come to enjoy being indoors. Be sure to provide him with a scratching post and safe toys to bat or carry around.

“But we've always let her out.”

You can change your cat's behavior. It will take time and patience, but it might save her life. When you implement your “closed door” policy, give her a lot of extra attention and entertainment. At first she may cry, but don't give in – more often than not, she'll soon be happy to stay indoors with you.

“But my cat knows to avoid cars.”

Even if this were true, all it would take is another cat, a dog, or a shiny object to lure your cat into the street and into the path of traffic. Also keep in mind that not everyone will swerve to miss a cat in the road.

“But my cat needs exercise and likes to play with other cats.”

Stray cats could spread viruses such as feline leukemia and other fatal diseases. If your cat needs a friend, adopt another cat who's healthy and disease-free. Cats kept safely confined do need extra attention and exercise inside, so be sure to play with your cats regularly using a variety of toys and chase games.

“But my cat yowls and acts like he really needs to go outside.”

Your cat may be feeling the physiological need to mate. If this is the case, make sure your cat is spayed or neutered. Sterilized cats don't have the natural need to breed, and therefore, won't be anxious to go out to find a mate.

Transforming a cat who is allowed roam freely outside into a safe indoor cat will take time, effort, and patience; some cats will adapt more quickly than others. And many cat owners report that keeping cats inside actually fosters the bond between feline and human. If, despite your best efforts, your cat simply cannot make the transition, then vow to keep your next cat safely confined from the start.

Resources for this section:

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A Poison Safe Home

❖ Food to Avoid Feeding Your Pet

- Alcoholic beverages
- Apple seeds
- Apricot pits
- Avocados – toxic to birds, mice, rabbits, horses, cattle, and dairy goats
- Cherry pits
- Candy (particularly chocolate, which is toxic to dogs, cats, and ferrets, and any candy containing the sweetener Xylitol)
- Coffee (grounds, beans, chocolate covered espresso beans)
- Grapes
- Hops (used in home beer brewing)
- Macadamia nuts
- Moldy foods
- Mushroom plants
- Mustard seeds
- Onions and onion powder
- Peach pits
- Potato leaves and stems (green parts)
- Raisins
- Rhubarb leaves
- Salt
- Tea (caffeine)
- Tomato leaves and stems (green parts)

- Walnuts
- Yeast dough

❖ **Warm Weather Hazards**

- Animal toxins – toads, insects, spiders, snakes and scorpions
- Blue-green algae in ponds
- Citronella candles
- Cocoa mulch
- Compost piles fertilizers
- Flea products
- Outdoor plants and plant bulbs
- Swimming-pool treatment supplies
- Fly baits containing methomyl
- Slug and snail baits containing metaldehyde

❖ **Cold Weather Hazards**

- Antifreeze
- Liquid potpourri
- Ice melting products
- Rat and mouse bait

❖ **Medications**

Common examples of human medications that can be potentially lethal to pets, even in small doses, include:

- Pain killers including Acetaminophen
- Cold medicines
- Anti-cancer drugs
- Antidepressants

- Vitamins
- Diet pills

❖ **Common Household Hazards**

- Fabric softener sheets
- Mothballs
- Post-1982 pennies (due to high concentration of zinc)

❖ **Holiday Hazards**

- Christmas tree water (may contain fertilizers & bacteria and can upset the stomach)
- Electrical cords
- Ribbons or tinsel (can become lodged in the intestines and cause intestinal obstruction – most often occurs with kittens!)
- Batteries
- Glass ornaments

❖ **Common Toxic Plants**

- Aloe
- Avocado
- Azalea
- Calla Lilly
- Castor Bean
- Cyclamen
- Daffodil
- English Ivy
- Hyacinth
- Iris

- Kalanchoe
- Lilies
- Marijuana
- Mistletoe
- Morning Glory
- Oleander
- Philodendron
- Rhododendron
- Sago Palm
- Tomato Plant
- Tulip
- Yew
- Yucca

❖ **Non-Toxic Substances for Dogs and Cats**

The following substances are considered to be non-toxic, although they may cause mild gastrointestinal upset in some animals:

- Water-based paints
- Toilet bowl water
- Silica gel
- Poinsettia
- Cat litter
- Glue traps
- Glow jewelry

Resources for this section: Please know that the information contained in the list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather a compilation of the most frequently encountered items. Sources: ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, The Toronto Humane Society, and St. John's Poison Resource Center

Removing Pet Stains and Odors

You know how it goes: The minute you turn your back, your pet decides that your new carpet is the perfect place to relieve himself. You clean and clean, but you can't get rid of that smell. What can you do?

Well, for starters, you need to find which areas are soiled and then retrain your pet to avoid eliminating in those areas. And to do that, you'll have to clean those areas, and clean them well. Here are the steps you'll need to take:

Find all soiled areas using your nose and eyes. A black light bulb will usually show even old urine stains. Turn out all lights in the room, use the black light to identify soiled areas, and lightly outline the areas with chalk. Black lights can be purchased at home supply stores.

- Clean the soiled areas appropriately to remove the odors.
- Rule out medical causes for the behavior by visiting your veterinarian.
- Figure out why your pet is urinating or defecating in inappropriate areas.
- Make the areas unattractive or unavailable.
- Make the appropriate "bathroom" area attractive.
- Teach your pet the appropriate place to eliminate by using positive reinforcement techniques.
- To be successful, you need to follow all these steps. If you fail to completely clean the area, your retraining efforts will be useless. As long as your pet can smell his personal scent, he'll continue to return to the "accident zone." Even if you can't smell traces of urine, your pet can. Your most important chore is to remove (neutralize) that odor with the following steps.

❖ To Clean Washable Items

- Machine wash as usual, adding a one-pound box of baking soda to your regular detergent. It's best to air dry these items if possible.
- If you can still see the stain or smell the urine, machine wash the item again and add an enzymatic cleaner (available at pet supply stores) that breaks down pet-waste odors. Be sure to follow the directions carefully.
- If your pet urinates or defecates on the sheets or blankets on a bed, cover the bed with a vinyl, flannel-backed tablecloth when you begin the retraining period. It's machine washable, inexpensive, and unattractive to your pet.

❖ **To Clean Carpeted Areas and Upholstery**

- For new stains, those that are still wet, soak up as much of the urine as possible with a combination of newspaper and paper towels. The more fresh urine you can remove before it dries, especially from carpet, the easier it will be to remove the odor. Place a thick layer of paper towels on the wet spot and cover that with a thick layer of newspaper. If possible, put newspaper under the soiled area as well. Stand on this padding for about a minute. Remove the padding and repeat the process until the area is barely damp.
- If possible, put the fresh, urine-soaked paper towel in the area where it belongs – your cat’s litter box or your dog’s designated outdoor “bathroom area.” This will help remind your pet that eliminating isn’t a “bad” behavior as long as it’s done in the right place.
- Rinse the “accident zone” thoroughly with clean, cool water. After rinsing, remove as much of the water as possible by blotting or by using a “wet vac.”

❖ **For Stains That Have Already Set**

- To remove all traces of heavy stains in carpeting, consider renting an extractor or wet vac from a local hardware store. This machine operates much like a vacuum cleaner and is efficient and economical. Extracting/wet vac machines do the best job of forcing clean water through your carpet and then forcing the dirty water back out. When using these machines or cleaners, be sure to follow the instructions carefully. Don’t use any chemicals with these machines; they work much more effectively with plain water.
- Once the area is really clean, use a high-quality pet odor neutralizer available at pet supply stores. Be sure to read and follow the cleaner’s directions for use, including testing the cleaner on a small, hidden portion of fabric first to be sure it doesn’t stain.
- If the area still looks stained after it’s completely dry from extracting and neutralizing, try any good carpet stain remover.
- Avoid using steam cleaners to clean urine odors from carpet or upholstery. The heat will permanently set the stain and the odor by bonding the protein into any man-made fibers.
- Avoid using cleaning chemicals, especially those with strong odors such as ammonia or vinegar. From your pet’s perspective, these don’t effectively eliminate or cover the urine odor and may actually encourage your pet to reinforce the urine scent mark in that area.
- If you previously used cleaners or chemicals of any kind on the area, then neutralizing cleaners won’t be effective until you’ve rinsed every trace of the old cleaner from the carpet. Even if you haven’t used chemicals recently, any trace of a non-protein-based substance will weaken the effect of the enzymatic cleaner. The cleaner will use up its “energy” on the old cleaners instead of on the protein stains you want removed.

- If urine has soaked down into the padding underneath your carpet, your job will be more difficult. In some cases, you may need to take the drastic step of removing and replacing that portion of the carpet and padding.

❖ **To Clean Floors and Walls**

- If the wood on your furniture, walls, baseboard, or floor is discolored, the varnish or paint has reacted to the acid in the urine. You may need to remove and replace the layer or varnish or paint. If you do so, make sure the new product is safe for pets. Employees at your local hardware or home improvement store can help you identify and match your needs with appropriate removers and replacements. Washable enamel paints and some washable wallpapers may respond favorably to enzymatic cleaners. Read the instructions carefully before using these products and test them in an invisible area.

❖ **Retrain Your Pet**

- Finally, in conjunction with cleaning, be sure to teach your pet where you want him to eliminate. To do this, make the “accident zone” unattractive and the appropriate “bathroom” area attractive, and see our related tip sheets at www.petsforlife.org. The retraining period may take a week or more. Remember, it took time to build the bad habit, and it will take time to replace that habit with a new, more acceptable behavior. Treat your pet with patience and give him lots of encouragement!

Resources for this section:

Related topics at www.petsforlife.org.

Housetraining Your Puppy

Positive Reinforcement: Training Your Dog or Cat with Treats and Praise

Reducing Urine-Marking Behavior in Dogs and Cats

Solving Litter Box Problems

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Feline Upper Respiratory Infection Fact Sheet

❖ What is Feline Upper Respiratory Infection?

- Feline upper respiratory infection, or feline URI as it is commonly known, is a highly contagious disease affecting the nasal passages and sinuses of cats and kittens. It is common in animal shelters, catteries, multiple-cat households, and free roaming cat populations. Almost all cases of feline URI are caused by infection with one or two viruses; feline herpes virus (also known as feline rhinotracheitis virus) and feline calicivirus. These two viruses are species specific, meaning they infect only cats and kittens, not dogs or humans.

❖ How is it transmitted?

- Feline URI is transferred between cats by fluid discharged from the mouths and noses of infected cats, similar to the transfer of flu virus between humans. Cats can shed the virus through the air by sneezing, coughing, or breathing; or by direct physical contact with cages, toys, food bowls, even the hands and clothes of people handling them. Cats who have previously had the disease are often silent carriers, meaning they shed the virus and can infect other cats without showing symptoms of the disease themselves.

❖ What are the signs?

- Symptoms of feline URI include sneezing; fever; runny nose or red, watery eyes; nasal congestion (often seen as drooling or open-mouth breathing); ulcers on tongue, gums, lips, nose, or roof of mouth; mild to severe depression; and lack of appetite or thirst. Symptoms of feline URI are generally mild at first and worsen within one to three days.

❖ The incubation period (the time period between infection and the first signs of illness) lasts from 2 to 17 days.

- The illness itself typically lasts from one to four weeks, depending on the strength of the cat's immune system.

❖ Which cats get it?

- Any cat that is stressed by overcrowding, poor nutrition, cold or heat, age, fear, or infection with another disease is susceptible to feline URI. Cats who are especially at risk for infection include unvaccinated cats, kittens (because they have immature immune systems), and cats whose immune systems are compromised by another disease, such as feline leukemia (FeLV) feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), cancer, malnutrition, or parasites. Recently vaccinated cats who have healthy immune systems are still susceptible to the disease, but symptoms are usually very mild and short-term, usually limited to three to five days of sneezing with no fever and no loss of appetite.

❖ **How is Feline URI Treated?**

- Feline URI is easily treatable even though there are no drugs available to kill the feline URI viruses, just as there are no drugs available to treat many human viruses. Treatment of feline URI is aimed at strengthening the cat's body and immune system to help the animal fight the virus, and usually consists of vitamins, good nutrition, and good nursing care. Antibiotics are often prescribed to prevent or treat secondary bacterial infections that may accompany the viral infection. Infected cats may stop eating or drinking, and may require special therapy to combat dehydration and malnutrition. Some cats become sick enough to require hospitalization and the disease can lead to fatal pneumonia if medical care is not provided. Almost all cats and kittens recover with proper care. A few cats may have chronic (long-lasting) symptoms and some symptoms may recur whenever the cat is stressed or otherwise ill.

❖ **How is Feline URI prevented?**

- Feline URI cannot be totally prevented in the shelter environment; many cats will enter the shelter already infected, and the stress of being sheltered will lead to full-blown disease and spread of the infection to other cats and kittens.
- Sanitation programs, health evaluation, isolation of sick and injured animals, and preventive health care (vaccinations and deworming) all play a part in the control of feline URI. Many types and brand names of vaccines are available to counter feline URI. The vaccination protocol used should be determined by a veterinarian who is familiar with the special health needs of sheltered cats and kittens and who is familiar with our shelter's environment and its inhabitants.

Resources for this section:

Information reprinted courtesy of the Human Society of the United States Animal Sheltering Magazine/Jan-Feb 1997

What Does FVRCP Stand For?

Cats are susceptible to many contagious diseases, most of which are caused by viruses. Fortunately, we have vaccines to prevent our feline friends from succumbing to several of the worst ones. A series of four FVRCP injections (three weeks apart) is given to kittens. The vaccine series is usually started at six to eight weeks of age. It is then given as an annual booster for the remainder of the cat's life. There are three preventive agents in the FVRCP vaccine. The following is an explanation of each of those agents.

❖ FVR Stands for Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis

- Rhinotracheitis is a severe upper respiratory infection caused by a feline type 1, herpes-virus. It is most severe in young kittens and older cats, and is one of the most serious upper respiratory diseases seen in the feline species. The virus is airborne and very contagious in susceptible animals.
- Cats with this infection are lethargic, and show signs of respiratory involvement with much sneezing and coughing. There is usually a discharge from the nostrils and the eyes, and a high temperature may be present. Some cats develop pneumonia and occasionally ulcerations in the eyes. Infected cats do not want to eat or drink because the nostrils are plugged and the throat is sore. Dehydration and weight loss are common.
- The disease is debilitating and chronic. Many cats require hospitalization, intravenous fluids and intensive care to help them get over the infection. Antibiotics are given to treat secondary bacterial infections. Some cats suffer permanent damage to the eyes and the respiratory system. Fortunately, the vaccine is an effective preventive agent.

❖ C Stands for Calicivirus Infection

- There are several strains of caliciviruses that affect the cat. They can cause a range of diseases, from a mild almost asymptomatic infection, to life-threatening pneumonia. Most cases show only evidence of problems in the mouth, nasal passages and the conjunctiva (mucus membranes) of the eyes.
- Early signs are loss of appetite, elevated temperature and lethargy. Later, sneezing, oral ulcers and discharge from the eyes are seen. The course of the disease in uncomplicated cases is short, and recovery may be expected in seven to ten days. Some of the more virulent strains can cause severe symptoms. They may cause rapid death in young kittens and older cats.
- The disease is transmitted by direct contact with an infected cat or object (bowl, cage, brush, blanket, etc.) that harbors the virus. The virus can survive eight to ten days in the environment. Carrier cats can pass the virus into the environment for up to one year.

❖ **P Stands for Panleukopenia**

- Panleukopenia (also known as feline distemper and infectious feline enteritis) is a highly contagious disease characterized by a short course and high mortality rate. The disease is caused by a parvovirus similar to the parvovirus seen in dogs. It is very resistant and may remain infectious in the environment for up to a year.
- The disease is most severe in young kittens, but can affect cats of all ages. The first symptom is loss of appetite, followed by vomiting and diarrhea. A blood count usually shows a lowered number of white blood cells, a fact which helps in diagnosing the infection.
- Infected cats usually must be hospitalized with intensive treatment such as intravenous fluids, antibiotic and supportive care. Mortality rate may reach 90% in young kittens under six months, and may approach 50% in older animals. The vaccine is very effective in preventing the disease.

Resources for this section:

Information courtesy of Chatsworth Veterinary Center Virtual Library, 2006

Introducing Your New Cat to Your Other Pets

- Wouldn't it be nice if all it took to introduce a new cat to your resident pet were a brief handshake and a couple of "HELLO, My Name Is ..." name tags? Unfortunately, it's not quite that simple, which means you'll need to have some realistic expectations from the outset.
- What are realistic expectations? First, it's recognizing and accepting that your pets may never be best buddies but will usually come to at least tolerate each other. Second, it's understanding the need to move slowly during the introduction process to increase your chances for success.
- Some cats are more social than other cats. For example, an eight-year-old cat that has never been around other animals may never learn to share her territory (and her people) with other pets in the household. But an eight-week-old kitten separated from her mom and littermates for the first time might be glad to have a cat or dog companion.
- Cats are territorial, and they need to be introduced to other animals very slowly so they can get used to each other before a face-to-face confrontation. Slow introductions help prevent fearful and aggressive problems from developing. Here are guidelines to help make the introductions go smoothly.

❖ Confinement

- Confine your new cat to one medium-sized room with her litter box, food, water, and a bed. Feed your resident pets and the newcomer on each side of the door to this room, so that they associate something enjoyable (eating!) with each other's smells. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until your pets can eat calmly while standing directly on either side of the door.

❖ The Old Switcheroo

- Swap the sleeping blankets or beds used by all the cats so they each have a chance to become accustomed to the other cats' scents. You can even rub a towel on one animal and put it underneath the food dish of another animal.
- Once your new cat is using her litter box and eating regularly while confined, let her have free time in the house while confining your other animals to the new cat's room. This switch provides another way for the animals to experience each other's scents without a face-to-face meeting. It also allows the newcomer to become familiar with her new surroundings without being frightened by the other animals.
- Next, after the animals have been returned to their original designated parts of the house, use two doorstops to prop open the dividing door just enough to allow the animals to see each other, and repeat the whole process over a period of days – supervised, of course.

❖ **Slow and Steady Wins the Race**

- It's better to introduce your pets to each other gradually so that neither animal becomes afraid or aggressive. You can expect a mild protest from either cat from time to time, but don't allow these behaviors to intensify. If either animal becomes fearful or aggressive, separate them, and start the introduction process once again with a series of very small, gradual steps, as outlined above.
- Note: When you introduce pets to each other, one of them may send "play" signals which can be misinterpreted by the other pet as signs of aggression. If that's the case, always handle the situation as "aggression" and seek professional help from a veterinarian or animal behaviorist right away.

❖ **Precautionary Measures**

- Try to keep your resident pets' schedules close to what they were before the newcomer's arrival. Before bringing a new pet home, check with your veterinarian to be sure all your current pets are healthy. You'll also want to have at least one litter box per cat in separate locations. Make sure that none of the cats are being "ambushed" by another while trying to use the litter box, and be sure each cat has a safe hiding place.
- If small spats (hissing, growling, or posturing) do occur between your cats, you shouldn't attempt to intervene directly to separate the cats. Instead, make a loud noise, throw a pillow, or use a squirt bottle with water and vinegar to separate the cats. Give them a chance to calm down before reintroducing them to each other.

❖ **Cat-to-Dog Introductions**

- You'll need to be even more careful when introducing a dog and a cat to one another. A dog can seriously injure and even kill a cat very easily, even if they're only playing – all it takes is one quick shake to break the cat's neck. Some dogs have such a high prey drive that they should never be left alone with a cat. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats, and cats usually become afraid and defensive. In addition to using the techniques described above to begin introducing your new cat to your resident dog, take these steps:

❖ **Practice Obedience**

- If your dog doesn't already know the commands "sit," "down," "come," and "stay," begin working on them right away. Small pieces of food will increase your dog's motivation to perform, which will be necessary in the presence of a strong distraction such as a new cat. Even if your dog already knows these commands, work to reinforce these commands in return for a tidbit.

❖ **Set Up Controlled Meetings**

- After your new cat and resident dog have become comfortable eating on opposite sides of the door and have been exposed to each other's scents as described above, you can attempt a face-to-face introduction in a controlled manner. Put your dog's leash on and have him either sit or lie down and stay for treats. Have a second person offer your cat some special pieces of food. At first, the cat and the dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Lots of short visits are better than a few long visits. Don't drag out the visit so long that the dog becomes uncontrollable. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other's presence without fear, aggression, or other undesirable behavior.

❖ **Let Your Cat Go**

- Next, allow your cat some freedom to explore your dog at her own pace, with the dog still on-leash and in a "down-stay." Meanwhile, keep giving your dog treats and praise for his calm behavior. If your dog gets up from his "stay" position, he should be repositioned with a treat lure and praised and rewarded for obeying the "stay" command. If your cat runs away or become aggressive, you're progressing too fast. Go back to the previous introduction steps.

❖ **Use Positive Reinforcement**

- Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with your cat is unacceptable behavior, he must also be taught what is appropriate and be rewarded for those behaviors, such as sitting, coming when called, or lying down in return for a treat. If your dog is always punished when your cat is around and never has "good things" happen in the cat's presence, your dog may redirect aggression toward the cat.

❖ **Directly Supervise All Interactions Between Your Dog and Cat**

You may want to keep your dog at your side and on-leash whenever your cat is free in the house during the introduction process. Be sure that your cat has an escape route and a place to hide. Until you're certain your cat will be safe, be sure to keep the two separated when you aren't home.

❖ **Kittens and Puppies**

- Because they're so much smaller, kittens are in more danger of being injured or killed by a young energetic dog or by a predatory dog. A kitten will need to be kept separate from an especially energetic dog until she is fully grown, except for periods of supervised interaction to enable the animals to get to know each other.
- Even after the cat is fully grown, she may not be able to be safely left alone with the dog. Usually, a well-socialized cat will be able to keep a puppy in his place, but some cats don't have enough confidence to do this. If you have an especially shy cat, you might need to keep her separated from your puppy until he matures enough to have more self-control.

❖ **When to Get Help**

- If the introductions don't go smoothly, seek professional advice immediately from a veterinarian or animal-behavior specialist. Animals can be severely injured in fights, and the longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to resolve. Punishment won't work and could make things worse. Luckily, most conflicts between pets in the same family can be resolved with professional guidance.

Resources for this section:

For complete tips and advice on pet behavior and other pet care topics visit www.petsforlife.org

Adapted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado. © 2000 Dumb Friends League and © 2003 the HSUS. All rights reserved.