



# **MY NEW CAT:** **INFORMATION GUIDE**

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## **INTRODUCTION TO YOUR NEW KITTEN**

When you are adopting a kitten, behavioral health is just as important as their medical health. In order to provide for their behavioral health there are many things to think of.

First and foremost is the amount and quality of playtime a kitten requires. Make sure you have tons of toys for them. Their play is generated by their “predatory nature” and the most popular ones are ping pong balls, play mice, paper bags, and boxes. Think chase and pounce games. Instead of playing with your hands, encourage them to wrestle with a stuffed animal.

Another important factor for a kitten is the litter box. Each kitten has a preference with which type of box, litter, and environment in which the box is placed. Generally, kittens like an open box, sand like or scoopable litter, and an open area in a quiet space to place their box. If this is not what your kitten prefers, you may have to experiment to find what they do like.

Cats like a routine, so set one for your kitten. Feeding time, play time, and sleep time should be the same every day. Start with feeding her in the morning, lunchtime, and dinnertime and when she gets older you can decrease the amount. Play time could be in the morning, when you get home from work, and after dinner. At first she will sleep when you’re gone and keep you up at night. She will eventually learn your routine and sleep when you do, just make sure she has plenty to keep her awake while you are gone.

If you have any more questions on adopting your new kitten, please call the APA at 314-645-4610 or email us at [apamo.org](mailto:apamo.org).



## **DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF KITTEN BEHAVIOR**

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Well socialized cats are more likely to have well socialized kittens. Kittens learn from their mothers' calm or fearful attitude toward people. But, your new kitten will also learn from **YOU**. Although feeding time for your kitten is important, it is also vital to include petting, talking and playing in order to build good "people-skills" in your new friend.

Kittens are usually weaned at six or seven weeks, but may continue to suckle for comfort as their mother gradually leaves them more and more. Orphaned kittens, or those weaned too soon, are more likely to exhibit continued suckling behaviors later in life. Ideally, kittens should stay with their littermates (or other role-model cats) for at least 12 weeks.

Kittens orphaned or separated from their mother and/or littermates too early often fail to develop appropriate "social skills", such as learning how to communicate with other cats and animals through common "signals", when and how hard to "bite", how far to go in play-wrestling, etc. Play is important for kittens because it increases their physical coordination, social skills and helps as they learn limits. By interacting with their mother and littermates, kittens learn "how to be a cat", as well as explore the ranking process ("who's in charge").

Kittens that are handled by a human, 15 to 40 minutes a day during the first seven weeks, are more likely to develop larger brains. They're more exploratory, more playful and are better learners. However, many skills not acquired during the first eight weeks may be learned from you as you introduce your kitten to the world. While growth stages are important and fairly consistent, a cat's mind remains receptive to new experiences and lessons well beyond kitten-hood. Most cats are still kittens, in mind and body, through the first two years.

**The following chart provides general guidelines for the stages of development.**

### **0 - 2 weeks = Neonatal**

- Learn to turn heads and body toward sound.
- Eyes begin to open, usually completely open by two weeks.
- Competition for rank and territory begins. Separation from mother and littermates at this point can lead to poor learning skills and aggression toward people and other pets, including other cats. APA of MO will not place kittens this young for adoption as they may fail to manage the struggle to survive.

### **2 – 7 weeks = Socialization**

- By the third week, sense of smell is well-developed and vision is developed enough to find the mother.
- By the fourth week, sense of smell is fully mature and hearing is well-developed. Start to interact with littermates, able to walk fairly well, and teeth are coming in.
- By the fifth week, sight is fully mature, able to turn over, run, place feet precisely, avoid obstacles, stalk and pounce, and catch "prey" with their eyes.
- Start to groom themselves and others.

## KITTEN STAGES (CONTINUED)

- By the sixth and seventh weeks, they begin to develop adult sleeping patterns, motor abilities and social interaction.

### **7 – 14 weeks = Most active play period**

- Social and solitary play increases and improves physical coordination and social skills. Most learning is by observation, preferably from their mother.
- Social play includes “belly-ups”, hugging, ambushing and licking.
- Solitary play includes object scooping, tossing, pawing, mouthing and holding.
- Social/object play includes tail chasing, pouncing, leaping and dancing.
- Depending upon weight of kitten, and your family structure, adoptable as new member of your family, from the APA of MO.

### **3 – 6 months = Ranking period**

- Most influenced by their “litter” (playmates now include companions of other species).
- Beginning to see and use ranking (dominant and submissive) within the household, including humans.

### **6 – 18 months = Adolescence**

- Heightened exploration of dominance, including challenging humans.
- If not spayed or neutered, beginnings of sexual behavior, however, ALL animals adopted from the APA of MO are spayed/neutered before adoption. NO exceptions.

We hope this information on kittens will help you enjoy and understand all the learning and growth your new kitten will experience. YOU are an important part of your kitten’s learning process. How you treat your kitten will help determine the cat he/she will become. Please call the APA of MO Adoption staff, if you have any questions or need assistance in raising your new feline family friend!



## **MANAGING YOUR KITTEN'S ROUGH PLAY**

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Play-motivated aggressive behaviors are common in young, active cats less than two years of age. These actions are also common in cats that live in one-cat households. When felines play they are showing you the special qualities of being a “cat”! This variety of behaviors, such as exploration, investigation and hunting are a very important part of learning for your pet and they offer you the chance to get to know more about a very special species. Play provides young cats with opportunities to practice skills they might need for survival. Kittens like to explore new areas and investigate anything that moves. They may bat, pounce on and/or bite objects that resemble prey. We domesticated our companion animals thousands of years ago, but they love to share their heritage with us. Although these instincts would be helpful to survive, even now, our cats are meant to be our indoor friends. Enjoy this chance to learn and explore the world through the eyes of your pet!

Kittens learn when biting is “bad” from their littermates and their mother. A kitten that is separated from her family too early may play more roughly than a kitten that has had more valuable family time. In addition, if humans play with a young kitten using their hands and/or feet instead of toys, the kitten is liable to learn that rough play with people is okay. In most cases, it’s possible to teach your kitten or young adult cat that rough play is not acceptable behavior.

### **Encourage Acceptable Behavior**

Redirect your kitten’s aggressive behavior onto acceptable objects like toys (ask about our information sheet, “Cat Toys and How to Use Them”). Drag a toy along the floor to encourage your kitten to pounce on it, or throw a toy away from your kitten to give her even more exercise chasing the toy down. Some kittens will even bring the toy back to be thrown again! Another good toy is one that your kitten can wrestle with, like a soft stuffed toy that’s about the size of your kitten, so she can grab it with both front feet, bite it, and kick it with her back feet. This is one of the ways kittens play with each other, especially when they’re young. It’s also one of the ways they try to play with human feet and hands, so it’s important to provide this type of alternative play target. Encourage play with a “wrestling toy” by rubbing it against your kitten’s belly when she wants to play roughly – be sure to get your hand out of the way as soon as she accepts the toy! Those back feet can do some damage!

Since kittens need a lot of exercise and play, try to set up three or four consistent times during the day when you can start the games with your kitten. This will help her understand that she doesn’t have to be the one to begin “playtime” by pouncing on you.

### **Discourage Unacceptable Behavior**

You need to set the rules for your kitten’s behavior, and every person your cat comes in contact with should reinforce these rules. Your kitten can’t be expected to learn that it’s okay to play rough with dad, but not with the baby.

## MANAGING KITTEN PLAY (CONTINUED)

- **Use aversives to discourage your kitten from nipping.** You can either use a squirt bottle filled with water and a spoonful of vinegar or a can of pressurized air to squirt your kitten with when she becomes too rowdy. To use this technique effectively, you need to have the spray bottle or can available at all times. Place one in each room, or carry one with you as you move around the house. In some cases, you may want to apply taste aversives to your hands. If you have sensitive skin you may want to wear gloves and put the aversive on the gloves. The possible disadvantage to this method is that your kitten may learn that “hands with gloves taste bad and those without gloves don’t”. (For more information on aversives, see our information sheet: “Aversives for Cats”.) Remember that aversives will work only if you offer your kitten acceptable alternatives.
- **Redirect the behavior after using the aversive.** After you startle your kitten with the a squirt of water or air, IMMEDIATELY offer her a toy to wrestle with or to chase. This will encourage her to direct her rough play onto a toy instead of a person. We recommend that you keep a stash of toys hidden in each room specifically for this purpose.
- **Withdraw attention when your kitten starts to play too roughly.** If the distraction and redirection techniques don’t seem to be working, the most drastic thing you can do to discourage your cat from her rough play is to withdraw all attention when she starts playing too roughly. She wants to play with you, so eventually she’ll figure out how far she can go if you keep this limit consistent. The best way to withdraw your attention is to walk away to another room, and close the door long enough for her to calm down. If you pick her up to put her in another room, then you’re rewarding her by touching her. You should be the one leaving the room.

**Please Note:** None of these methods will be very effective unless you also give your kitten acceptable outlets for her energy. Play with her regularly using appropriate toys.

### **What Not To Do**

- Attempts to tap, flick or hit your kitten for rough play are guaranteed to backfire and they may injure her. Your kitten could become afraid of your hands, or she could interpret those flicks as playful moves by you and play even more roughly as a result.
- Picking up your kitten to put her into a “timeout” could reinforce her behavior because she probably enjoys the physical contact of being picked up. By the time you get her to the timeout room and close the door, she has probably already forgotten what she did to be put in that situation.

**Aggression:** Kittens can bite or scratch through the skin. Most often they are simply sending a message that you are too rough with them, they do not mean harm but in some cases it’s best to seek help from a behavior specialist to work with your kitten’s behavior. Be sure to keep your kitten confined until you can get professional help. If you are injured be sure to thoroughly clean all bites and scratches and consult your physician. Cat scratches and bites can easily become infected.



## **UNDERSTANDING CAT AGGRESSION TOWARDS PEOPLE**

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Cat owners sometimes have difficulty understanding why their cats seem friendly and content one minute and may suddenly bite and scratch them the next. Aggressive behaviors are part of the normal behavioral pattern of almost any animal species. Cat bites are seldom reported, but probably occur more frequently than dog bites. Aggressive cats can be dangerous, so attempting to resolve a cat aggression problem often requires assistance from an animal behavior specialist who is knowledgeable about cat behavior.

### **Types of Aggression**

#### **Play Aggression**

Play-motivated aggressive behaviors are commonly observed in young, active cats less than two years of age, that live in one-cat households. Play incorporates a variety of behaviors, such as exploratory, investigative and predatory, and provides young cats with opportunities to practice skills they would normally need for survival. For example, kittens like to explore new areas and investigate anything that moves, and may bat at, pounce on, and bite objects that resemble prey.

Playful aggression often occurs when an unsuspecting owner comes down the stairs, steps out of the bathtub, rounds a corner, or even moves under the bedcovers while sleeping. These playful attacks may result in scratches and inhibited bites which don't break the skin. People sometimes inadvertently initiate aggressive behavior by encouraging their cat to chase or bite at their hands and feet during play. The body postures seen during play aggression resemble the postures a cat would normally show when searching for or catching prey. A cat may freeze in a low crouch before pouncing, twitch her tail, flick her ears back and forth, and/or wrap her front feet around a person's hands or feet while biting. These are normal cat behaviors, whether they're seen during play or are apart of an actual predatory sequence. Most play aggression can be successfully redirected to appropriate targets, however, it may still result in injury (see our handout: "Managing Your Kitten's Rough Play").

#### **"Don't Pet Me Anymore" Aggression**

Some cats will suddenly bite while they're being petted. This behavior isn't well understood, even by experienced animal behaviorists. For whatever reason, petting which the cat was previously enjoying, apparently becomes unpleasant. Biting is the cat's signal that she has had enough petting. Cats vary in how much they'll tolerate being petted or held. Although people often describe their cats as biting "out of the blue" or without warning, cats do generally give several signals before biting.

You should become more aware of your cat's body postures, and cease petting or stop any other kind of interaction before a bite occurs. Signals to be aware of include:

- Restlessness
- Your cat's tail beginning to twitch
- Your cat's ears turning back or flicking back and forth
- Your cat turning or moving her head toward you hand

## UNDERSTANDING CAT AGGRESSION (CONTINUED)

When you observe any of these signals, it's time to stop petting your cat immediately and allow her to sit quietly on your lap or go her own way, whichever she prefers. Any kind of physical punishment almost always makes the problem worse, because your cat is more likely to bite either because she is fearful and/or because petting becomes even more unpleasant if it's associated with punishment.

If you want to try to prolong the amount of time your cat will tolerate petting, use some food rewards. When your cat first begins to show any of the behaviors described above (or even before she does so) offer her a special tidbit of food like a tiny piece of tuna or boiled chicken. At the same time, decrease the intensity of your petting. Continue to lightly pet your cat for a short time period while offering her tidbits. In this way, she'll come to associate petting with pleasant things and it may help her to enjoy petting for longer time periods. Each time you work with your cat, try to pet her a little longer each time using the food as a reward. Be sure to stop the petting before she shows any aggression. If a display of aggression results in the petting being stopped, then this unacceptable behavior has worked.

### **Fearful/Defensive Aggression**

Cats that are fearful may display body postures which appear to be similar to canine submissive postures – crouching on the floor, ears back, tail tucked, and possibly rolling slightly to the side. Cats in this posture are not submissive – they're fearful and defensive and may attack if touched (see our handout: "The Fearful Cat")

### **Redirected Aggression**

Redirected aggression occurs when a cat is aroused into an aggressive response by one person or animal, but then redirects this aggression onto another person or animal. For example, if two family cats have a spat, the losing cat, still aroused, may walk up and attack the family child.

### **Territorial Aggression**

Cats are highly territorial, even more so than dogs, however, they usually only feel the need to defend their territory from other cats. Territorial aggression in cats isn't commonly directed at people.

### **What To Do**

- Check first with your veterinarian to rule out any medical reasons for your cat's aggressive behavior.
- Seek professional help. An aggression problem won't go away by itself. Working with aggression problems requires in-home help from an animal behavior specialist.
- Take precautions. Your first priority is to keep everyone safe. Supervise, confine and/or restrict your cat's activities until you can obtain professional help. You're liable for your cat's behavior.

### **What Not To Do**

- You should never attempt to handle a fearful or aggressive cat. Cat bites and scratches become infected easily. If you do receive an injury from your cat, clean the wound carefully and contact your physician.
- Punishment won't help and will only make the problem worse. If the aggression is motivated by fear, punishment will make your cat more fearful, and therefore more aggressive.



## **DESTRUCTIVE SCRATCHING IN CATS**

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### **Why Do Cats Scratch?**

It's normal for cats to scratch objects in their environment for many reasons:

- To remove the dead outer layer of their claws.
- To mark their territory by leaving both 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, your most successful goal in resolving scratching problems is to redirect the scratching onto acceptable objects.

### **Training Your Cat to Scratch Acceptable Objects**

1. 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 areas 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?
2. 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.
3. 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 unpleasant odor. Be careful with odors, though, because you don't want the nearby acceptable objects to also smell unpleasant.
4. When your cat is consistently using the appropriate object, it can be moved very gradually (no more than three inches a 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.
5. 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.

## SCRATCHING IN CATS (CONTINUED)

### **Should I Punish My Cat For Scratching?**

The answer? **NO!** A startling noise is effective if you catch your cat in the act of scratching unacceptable objects and have provided him/her with acceptable scratching objects. Punishment after the fact, won't change the behavior and may cause your cat to be afraid of you or the environment. It may also bring on defensive aggression. Used by itself, punishment won't resolve scratching problems because it doesn't teach your cat where to scratch instead. If you do catch your cat in the act of scratching inappropriate objects, remote punishment is best. Ideas for remote punishment include making a loud noise (using a whistle, shaking a pop can filled with rocks or slapping the wall), or using a water-filled squirt bottle. If punishment is identified as coming from you, your pet will learn to refrain from scratching in your presence but will continue to scratch when you're not around. They associate the negative with you NOT the scratching.

### **How Do I Trim My Cat's Claws?**

To help keep them sharp, cats keep their claws retracted except when they're needed. As the claws grow too long and become curved, they can't be retracted completely. It is best to clip off the sharp tips of your cat's claws on all four feet every week or so. Clipping your cat's claws will also help prevent them from becoming snagged in carpets, fabrics and skin.

If you have an adult cat, before trimming claws, accustom your pet to having paws handled and squeezed. You can do this over several days by gently petting legs and paws while giving a treat. This will help to make it a more pleasant experience. Gradually increase the pressure so that petting becomes gentle squeezing, as you'll need to do this to extend the claw. Continue with the treats until your cat tolerates this kind of touching and restraint. It may take a little longer for rambunctious kittens or if your adult cat is not used to having legs or paws handled.

Apply a small amount of pressure to the paw, with your thumb on top of the paw and your index finger underneath, until a claw is extended. Within the claw, you should be able to see the pink or "quick", which is a small blood vessel. Don't cut into this pink portion, as it will bleed and be painful for your cat. If you cut off just the sharp tip of the claw, the "hook", it will dull the claw and prevent extensive damage to household objects and to your skin.

There are several types of claw trimmers designed especially for pets. These are better than your own nail clippers because they won't *crush* or *splinter* the claw. Until you and your cat have become accustomed to the routine, one foot a day is enough of a challenge. Don't push to do all four paws at once, or you'll both have only negative memories of claw clippers!

### **Should I Declaw My Cat?**

We strongly discourage cat owners from having their cats declawed. Scratching is a natural behavior for cats and can be directed to appropriate items. However, if you feel that you must either declaw or give up your cat, we would rather see your cat stay in her home and be your lifelong companion. If you decide to have your cat declawed, we strongly suggest you have the surgery done at the same time he/she is neutered or spayed, that you **only** declaw the front paws and that you **always** keep your cat indoors. Your cat will now have minimum defenses available and cannot truly survive outdoors.



## **CAT TOYS AND HOW TO USE THEM**

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Cats love to play. Games are great ways to learn about felines and to bond with your special friend!

### **“Safe” Toys**

There are many factors that contribute to the safety or danger of a toy. Many of those factors, however, are completely dependent upon your cat's size, activity level and personal preference. Another factor to be considered is the environment in which you cat spends her time. Although we can't guarantee you cat's enthusiasm or her safety with any specific toy, we can offer the following guidelines.

### **Be Cautious**

The things that are usually the most attractive to cats are often the very things that are the most dangerous. Cat-proof your home by checking for: string, ribbon, yarn, rubber bands, plastic milk jug rings, paper clips, pins, needles, and anything else that could be ingested. All of these items are dangerous, no matter how cute your cat may look when she's playing with them.

Avoid or alter any toys that aren't "cat-proof" by removing ribbons feathers, strings, eyes, or other small parts that could be chewed and/or ingested.

Soft toys should be machine washable. Check labels for child safety, as a stuffed toy that's labeled as safe for children under three years old, doesn't contain dangerous fillings. Problem fillings include things like nutshells and polystyrene beads. Also, rigid toys are not as attractive to cats.

### **Toys We Recommend**

#### **Active Toys:**

- Round plastic shower curtain rings are fun either as a single ring to bat around, hide or carry, or when linked together and hung in an enticing spot.
- Plastic rolling 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, unless you can't hear the action from your bedroom. 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. They're also a great distraction if you need your cat to pay less attention to what you're trying to accomplish. Plastic bags are not a good idea, as many cats like to chew and ingest the plastic.
- Sisal-wrapped toys are very attractive to cats that tend to ignore soft toys.
- Empty cardboard rolls from toilet paper and paper towels are ideal cat toys, especially if you "unwind" a little cardboard to get them started.

## CAT TOYS (CONTINUED)

### **Comfort Toys**

- Soft stuffed animals are good for several purposes. For some cats the stuffed animal should be small enough to carry around. For cats that want to “kill” the toy, the stuffed animal should be about the same size as the cat. Toys with legs and a tail seem to be even more attractive to cats.
- Cardboard boxes, especially those a tiny bit too small for your cat to really fit into.

### **Catnip:**

- Catnip-filled soft toys are fun to kick, carry and rub.
- Plain catnip can be crushed and sprinkled on the carpet, or on a towel placed on the floor if you want to be able to remove all traces. The catnip oils will 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 attracted to catnip. Some cats may become over-stimulated to the point of aggressive play and others may be slightly sedated.
- Kittens under six months old seem to be immune to catnip.
- Catnip is not addictive and is perfectly safe for cats to roll in, rub in or eat.

### **Get The Most Out Of Toys!**

- Rotate your cat’s toys weekly by making only four or five toys available at a time. Keep a variety of types easily accessible. If your cat has a huge favorite, like a soft “baby” that she loves to cuddle with, you should probably leave that one out all the time, or risk the wrath of your cat!
- Provide toys that offer a variety of uses – at least one toy to carry, one to “kill”, one to roll and one to “baby”.

“Found” toys are often much more attractive than a toy which is blatantly presented to your pet without any “fun” time attached. “Hide and Seek” is a fun game for cats to play. Tuck yourself behind a door and call your cat’s name. Curiosity will win out and he/she will come looking for you! Then all you have to do is give a little petting and find another door!



## **SOLVING PET PROBLEMS: SHAPING BEHAVIOR**

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“Positive reinforcement” is the presentation of something pleasant or rewarding immediately following a behavior. It makes that behavior more likely to occur in the future, and is one of the most powerful tools for shaping or changing your pet’s behavior.

Timing makes a very real difference in the success of “positive reinforcement”. The reward must occur immediately, or your pet may not associate it with the proper action. For example, if you have your dog “sit”, but reward him after this has happened and he is on all four feet again, he will think he’s being rewarded for “standing”.

Consistency is also essential. Everyone in the family must use the same commands. It might be helpful to post these where everyone can become familiar with them. The most commonly used commands for dogs are “watch me”, “sit”, “stay”, “down” (means lie down), “off” (means off me or off the furniture), “stand” “come”, “heel”, (or “let’s go” or “with me”), “leave it” and “settle”. Consistency means *always* rewarding the desired behavior and *never* rewarding undesired behavior.

“Positive reinforcement” may include food treats, praise, petting or a favorite toy or game. Food treats work especially well for training your dog. A treat should be irresistible to your pet. It may be a very small, soft, piece of food, easily taken from your flat extended hand. That will allow your pet to immediately gulp it down and look to you for more. If you give him something he has to chew or that breaks into bits and falls on the floor, he will be looking around the floor, not at you. Small pieces of soft commercial treats, hot dogs, cheese, cooked chicken or beef, or miniature marshmallows have all proven successful. Your pet will let you know his favorite! Carry the treats in a plastic zip bag in your pocket or a special fanny pack on the front of your belt. There are even special treat packs available in many pet stores. Each time you use a food reward, you should couple it with a verbal reward (praise). Say something like, “Good boy” in a positive, happy tone of voice. Our companion animals are very sensitive to how we sound.

*Note:* Some pets may not be interested in food treats. For those pets, the reward could be a toy or a brief chance to play.

When your pet is learning a new behavior, he should be rewarded every time he does the behavior. This is called “continuous reinforcement”. It may be necessary to use “shaping”, with your pet (reinforcing something close to the desired response and gradually requiring more from your dog before he gets the treat). For example, if you’re teaching your dog to “shake hands”, you may initially reward him for lifting his paw off the ground, then for lifting it higher, then for touching your hand, then for letting you hold his paw and finally, for actually shaking hands with you.

“Intermittent reinforcement” may be used once your pet has reliably learned the behavior. At first, you may reward him with the treat three times out of four, then about half the time, then about a third of the time and so forth, until you’re only rewarding him occasionally with the treat. Continue to praise him every time, although once he’s learned the behavior, the praise

## SHAPING PET BEHAVIOR (CONTINUED)

may be more gentle – a quiet, but positive, “Good boy”. Use a variable schedule of reinforcement, so he doesn’t catch on that he only has to respond every other time. Your pet will learn that if he keeps responding, eventually he’ll get what he wants. If you have a dog who barks until you reward him by paying attention to him, (either in a disapproving tone or some other way) you know the power of intermittent reinforcement.

Understanding “reinforcement”, helps you to see that you are not forever obligated to carry a pocketful of goodies. Your pet will soon be working for verbal praise, because he really does want to please you and he knows that occasionally, he will also get a treat! There are many small opportunities to reinforce the behavior you want from your pet. You may have him “sit” before letting him out the door (helps prevent door-darting), before petting him (helps prevent jumping up on people) or before giving him his food. Give him a pat or a “Good dog” for lying quietly by your feet or slip a treat into his Kong toy when he’s chewing the toy instead of your shoe.

“Punishment”, including verbal threats and angry body actions present something unpleasant immediately following a behavior. In some approaches this may make 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, your pet will feel attacked. From his point of view, the punishment is totally unpredictable, and he’s likely to become fearful, distrusting and/or aggressive. This will only lead to more behavior problems. What we humans interpret as “guilty” looks, are actually submissive postures by our pets. Animals don’t have our moral sense of right and wrong, but they want to please and know when you are unhappy with them.

“Punishment” is not a very successful technique for teaching humans or pets. Physical punishment usually involves some level of discomfort or even pain, which is likely to cause your pet to bite, as that is the only way he knows to defend himself. Scruff shakes and “alpha rolls” are likely to result in bites, especially if the dog doesn’t perceive you to be his superior. Also punishment might be associated with other stimuli, including people, that are present at the time the punishment occurs. For example, a pet that’s punished for getting too close to a small child may become fearful of or aggressive to that child. “Positive Reinforcement” teaches without dangerous side effects and creates a more enjoyable relationship for everyone.



## **ADVERSIVES FOR CATS**

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Determining an effective tool that will prevent your cat from a particular behavior is definitely a case of trial-and-error. These varying approaches, called “aversives” are as individual as each cat. While used to discourage a cat from a particular action or place, they will seldom work effectively without offering an alternative that is both convenient and rewarding. You must create a positive to take the place of the negative.

**If you hope to have your cat stay off certain furniture or areas, try any combination of the following-**

### **Texture**

You may need to weight the “material” firmly or tape it in order for it to stay put. To protect furniture or floor finish from sticky substances, attach them to a piece of foil or heavy plastic and secure that with weights or light tape.

### **Indoors:**

- Shelf paper (sticky side up)
- Double sided carpet tape
- Heavy foil (Be careful! some cats like foil and bite it, swallow it and create dangerous and deadly intestinal blockage. Test your cat’s response in your presence before leaving it out as an aversive to an area.)

### **Outdoors:**

- Irregular or sharp rocks, firmly set into dirt
- Chicken wire, firmly set into dirt (sharp edges rolled under)

### **Both:**

- Heavy plastic carpet runner (pointed side up)

### **Smell**

Soak cotton balls, rags or washcloths in the “stinky” substance. To help protect carpets, upholstery, floors or furniture, place the saturated object on a piece of weighted foil or heavy plastic. To prevent the substance from seeping into the ground, use the same precautions. Outdoor substances need to be reapplied daily, due to quicker dissipation into the air.

### **Indoors & Outdoors:**

- Insect repellent, especially those containing citronella and/or citrus odors (check for toxicity – if safe for young children, it’s generally safe for pets)
- Citric odors – colognes, concentrated juices or fresh peels
- Annoying colognes
- Some muscle rubs (NOTE: some cats react to menthol as they do to catnip – beware!)
- Aloe gel

## CAT AVERSIVES (CONTINUED)

### **Taste**

Some of these substances may damage furniture or floor finishes, so be sure to test them in a hidden location before wide-spread use. Except for hot sauce and cayenne pepper, these substances should be safe to apply to most people's skin, however, some individuals may be sensitive to them.

- Bitter Apple or similar sprays and gels marketed specifically for pet taste aversion
- Insect repellents, containing citronella or citrus odors (check for toxicity, if it is safe for *very* young children, it is generally safe for pets).
- Some hot sauces
- Cayenne pepper
- Some muscle rubs (again, check for toxicity, if it is safe for *very* young children, it is generally safe for pets).
- Citric odors (colognes, concentrated juices or fresh peels)
- Aloe gel

### **Surprise**

#### **Remote Controlled Aversives:**

- Motion detector that reacts with a startling sound
- Snappy Trainer (upside-down mouse trap that's securely taped under paper to avoid contact)
- Aluminum pie plates, taped together containing water, beans or pebbles – preferably balanced precariously on a counter or other undesirable "jumping" surface)
- Scat mat (very slight electrical shock)

#### **Human Controlled Aversives:**

Use these to get your cat's attention, and thereby offer an appropriate alternative.

- Spray bottle or squirt gun filled with water or a combination of water and vinegar (NOTE: avoid the super-duper water guns that have a very forceful spray)
- Loud air horn
- Whistle
- Rattle can (soda can containing nails, pennies, beans or pebbles – securely taped shut)

**WARNING:** For fearful cats, try everything else before trying surprise techniques, especially those using noises!



## **YOUR TALKATIVE CAT**

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Vocalizing is one way for your cat to communicate with you and with other animals. Some cats “talk” more than others, but most cats do make noise some of the time. We’re all familiar with the meaning of hissing and growling, but there are also many other sounds that your cat can express, and a variety of reasons for those sounds. Some families enjoy a “chatty” cat, but there are some vocal responses that indicate trouble and you need to be able to hear the difference.

### **Medical Reasons**

If your cat’s behavior changes suddenly, the first thing you should do is take her to your veterinarian for a thorough health examination. Cats often hide symptoms of illness until they are seriously ill. Any change in behavior may be an early indication of a medical problem. A new vocalizing behavior in particular, may indicate physical discomfort stemming from an urgent need for medical attention.

### **Breed Tendency**

Oriental breeds, such as the Siamese, are known to be very vocal. If your cat has a pointed face and a long, lean body, chances are she has some oriental heritage. “Talking” may be part of her character. Avoid giving her any attention when she is vocal because this will only encourage the vocal behavior. Instead, give her attention when she is quiet.

### **Attention-Seeking Behavior**

Some cats “talk” because they know they’ll get a reaction. Good or bad, at least she is gaining attention. Any response will encourage an attention-seeking cat. To discourage this behavior, simply ignore your cat when she does this. When she is *quiet*, pour on the love, feed her or give her some treats. This will teach your cat which behaviors you would like her to continue.

### **Your Cat Wants To Go Outside**

If your cat was previously an outdoor cat and you plan to keep her inside, then good for you! Following are some suggestions to help make the transition easier on both of you.

- **Spay or Neuter:** Spaying or neutering will rid your cat of those hormonal urges to go out and seek a mate. This will result in a calmer, friendlier cat. All APA of MO adoptions include spay/neuter.
- **Play Schedule:** Schedule play times during the times your cat would normally be outside. This will distract her from her normal routine and establish another, safer routine.
- **Window Seat:** Be sure your cat has a view of the outdoors and a sunny place to lie. Cats like to watch birds, so putting a bird feeder outside a window with a ledge or furniture “perch” will provide a favorite spot for your cat.
- **Scavenger Hunt:** Give your cat a game to play by hiding bits of dry food around the house. Hide the food in paper bags, boxes and behind open doors. This will give her exercise and keep her interested and busy indoors. This is especially good to do right before the family leaves the house for the day.
- **Attention:** Try to give your cat extra love and attention during this transition.

## YOUR TALKATIVE CAT (CONTINUED)

- **Aversives:** If your cat continues meowing by the door, try an aversive. Leave strong citrus scents by the door or hide behind a wall and shake a pop can filled with coins to interrupt the behavior. When she is quiet, walk out and give her a food treat and encourage her to play or cuddle.

### **Grief**

Sometimes after the death or departure of a person or animal in your cat's life, she will vocalize to express her grief. This can be a normal part of the grieving process. The best thing you can do for her is keep her schedule the same (or as close as possible) and spend some extra cuddle and playtime with her. With time, your cat will make this difficult adjustment.

### **Transition**

If your cat is new to your home or has just gone through a change (a move, new person/animal in the household, person moved out) and has just started her talkative behavior, be patient. This may be happening due to the transition and will stop on its own if the behavior is not encouraged. Remember, even scolding can be perceived by your cat as attention, and thus, encourage the behavior.

**NEVER punish any cat by physical response.** Swatting, slapping or any other action like that will only increase fear in your cat and create other behavioral problems.



## **THE FEARFUL CAT**

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When cats feel threatened, they usually respond in one or all of the following ways: fight, flee or freeze. Some cats become so frightened they lose control of their bladder or bowels and eliminate right where they are. Each cat has his/her preferred way of dealing with a crisis. You will notice that your cat probably tends to try one option first, and if that doesn't work, she's forced to try a different option. For instance, if your cat is afraid of dogs and a friend brings his dog to your home to visit, you might notice the following: first, your cat puffs out her fur to make herself look big, then hisses and spits at the dog. If the dog doesn't retreat, your cat may flee the situation, find a hiding spot, and freeze until she deems the situation safe.

### **Your cat may show the following behaviors when she is fearful:**

- Hiding
- Aggression (spitting, hissing, growling, swatting, biting, scratching)
- Loss of control over bladder and/or bowels
- "Freezing" in place

It's normal for you to want to help and comfort your cat when she's frightened. However, this may not be the best thing to do from your cat's point of view. It is normal for a cat to feel insecure or frightened in a new environment. Often, your new cat will hide for a day or two when you first bring her home. Sometimes a traumatic experience like a visit to the veterinarian, or introducing a new animal into the household, can disrupt her routine and send her under the bed for a few days. Don't panic. Speak to her in calm tones and continue the regular household routine. This will be reassuring and offer a sense of security.

### **What Causes Fearful Behavior?**

You'll need to closely observe your cat to determine what is responsible for her fearful behavior. Keep in mind that your cat wants to feel safe. Some common triggers for fearful behavior are:

- A particular person that your cat has associated with a frightening activity
- A stranger that requires time to get to know
- Another animal that may or may not want to be friendly
- A child that may pull too hard, be too loud or rough or simply be a small stranger
- Loud noises (just like all of us)

### **What You Can Do**

Take the following steps to reduce your cat's anxiety and help her become more confident:

- First, schedule an appointment with your veterinarian for a physical examination to rule out any medical reasons for your cat's fearful behavior. Cats don't always act sick in a way humans might recognize, even when they are seriously ill. Any sudden behavior change could mean that your cat is ill and should be taken seriously. Some common symptoms that your cat may be ill are aggressiveness, hiding and eliminating outside of the litter box, and vocalizations in a normally quiet cat.

## THE FEARFUL CAT (CONTINUED)

- If your cat is healthy, but hiding, leave her alone. She'll come out when she's ready. To force her out of her hiding spot will only make her more fearful. Make sure she has easy access to food, water and her litter box from her hiding place. Clean the litter box and change the food and water every day so you know whether she is eating and drinking.
- Keep any contact with what might be making her fearful to a minimum.
- Keep your cat's routine as regular as possible. Cats feel more confident if they know when to expect daily feeding, playing, cuddling and grooming.
- Try to desensitize your cat to whatever is causing the fear-
- Determine what distance your cat can be from the fear stimulus without responding fearfully.
- Introduce the fear stimulus at this distance while you're feeding your cat tasty treats and praising her.
- Slowly move the fear stimulus closer as you continue to praise your cat and offer her treats.
- If at any time during this process your cat shows fearful behavior, you've proceeded too quickly. Start again. Work in *short sessions*, paying careful attention to your cat so that you don't progress too rapidly for her.
- You may need help from a professional animal behavior specialist with the desensitization process.

### **A Note About Aggression**

If your cat is threatening you, another person or an animal, you should seek help from a professional animal behavior specialist and be sure she has visited the vet. To keep everyone safe in the meantime, confine your cat to an area of the house where all interactions with her are kept to a minimum and are supervised by a responsible person. Cat bites and scratches are serious and can easily become infected. If your cat bites someone report it to your local animal control agency. They will ask that you quarantine your cat to eliminate any chance of rabies. The safety of your cat and the other animals and humans she encounters, should be your first consideration.

### **What Not To Do**

- *Don't punish* your cat for her fearful behavior. Animals associate punishment with what they're doing at the time they're punished, this will only cause her to become fearful of you and she still won't understand why she's being punished.
- *Don't force* her to experience the object or situation that is causing her fear. For example, if she is afraid of a certain person, don't let that person try to pick her up and hold her. This will only make her more frightened of that person.

She can learn to be more confident with your help, guidance and affection.



## **YOUR CAT: INDOORS OR OUT**

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If you want your cat to live a long and healthy life, be sure it is spayed/neutered and keep him/her inside. A wandering cat is vulnerable to any of the following tragedies:

- Being hit by a car
- Ingesting deadly poisons like antifreeze or pesticides
- Becoming 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 his/her way home
- Being stolen
- Encountering an adult or child with cruel intentions.

Do you recognize yourself in any of the following comments? Please take a look at our suggestions.

### **“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. Even if you do have special fencing, you need to make sure that it can keep other cats or animals from getting in to your yard to get to your cat. (By the way, this same logic applies to dogs and electric fences. It isn’t just about getting out-what can get IN to your yard?)

### **“My last cat went outdoors and he loved it.”**

Your cat may enjoy being outdoors. However, allowing him/her to go outside unsupervised places your cat at risk and shortens life span. Most cats that are allowed to roam outdoors usually don’t live for more than 3 - 4 years. Cats living strictly indoors have an average lifespan of 18 – 20 years. We have learned a great deal about animal behavior, animal health and pet care responsibilities since we were children.

### **“My cat’s litter box smells.”**

Of course it does! Scoop your cat’s litter box on a daily basis. How often you 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. Be sure to rinse the box thoroughly to avoid strong smelling chemical residue. Those smells may cause your cat to avoid the litter box.

### **“My cat likes to sun herself.”**

Our cats can sun in any window or sunbeam in our living space. There is no reason to risk your pets health and safety for the warmth of the sun.

### **“I can’t keep this cat in.”**

With windows closed, and sturdy screens in place, you can manage your living space. Keep your doors closed and teach your children the importance of keeping the doors closed, too.

## YOUR CAT INDOORS (CONTINUED)

Everyone will be safer. It may take a few days or even a few weeks, but if you offer attention and interesting toys for your cat he/she will enjoy being indoors. Don't forget a scratching post for scent marking and paw satisfaction.

### **"We've always let her out."**

That doesn't mean it's a good idea. You can change your cat's behavior. With a little time and patience you can 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. Soon she'll be happy to stay indoors with you and you will be showing how much you care by lengthening her life and keeping her safe.

### **"My cat knows to avoid cars."**

It's just not true. All of us get distracted or frightened, even our cats. Also, keep in mind that some people may *not* swerve to miss a cat in the road.

### **"My cat needs exercise and likes to play with other cats."**

Stray cats are often carriers of viruses, like feline leukemia, and other fatal diseases. If your cat needs a friend, adopt another cat from the shelter. We can help you make a good match.

### **"My cat yowls and acts like he really needs to go outside."**

Is your cat neutered or spayed (for females)? If not, your cat may be feeling the physiological need to mate. Be sure your cat is neutered (males) or spayed (females). Sterilized cats don't experience the frustration or desire to breed and they offer their friendship and attention to their owners. They live longer and are much less vulnerable to certain cancers.

You can make a difference in the life of your pet. Keep your cat indoors and enjoy many years of wonderful companionship from that special feline friend.



## **TERRITORIAL MARKING BEHAVIOR IN CATS**

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Dogs and cats are territorial animals. This means that they “stake out a claim” to a particular space, area or object. They let other people and animals know about their claim by marking it with a variety of methods and at many levels of intensity. For example, a dog may bark to drive away what he perceives as intruders to his territory (the postman, door to door solicitors, etc.). A cat may mark a valued object by rubbing it with his/her face.

Some pets may go to the extreme of urinating or defecating to mark a particular area as their own. Urine-marking is not a house soiling problem, but is a territorial behavior.

### **House Soiling or Urine-Marking? How to Tell the Difference!**

Your pet may be urine-marking if:

- The problem is primarily urination. Dogs and cats rarely mark with feces.
- The amount of urine is small and is found primarily on vertical surfaces. Dogs and cats do sometimes mark on horizontal surfaces. Leg-lifting and spraying are dominant versions of urine-marking, but even if your pet doesn't assume these postures, he may still be urine-marking.
- Any pet in your home is not spayed or neutered. Both intact males and females are more likely to urine-mark than are spayed or neutered animals. However, even spayed or neutered animals may mark in response to other intact animals in the home.
- Your pet urinates on new objects in the environment (a shopping bag, a visitor's purse!), on objects that have unfamiliar smells, or on objects that have another animal's scent.
- Your pet has conflicts with other animals in your home. When there's instability in the pack hierarchy, a dog may feel a need to establish his dominance by urine-marking his territory. If one cat is intimidating another cat, the bullied cat may express his anxiety by urine-marking.
- Your pet has contact with other animals outside your home. A cat that's allowed outdoors may come home and mark after having an encounter with another cat outside. If your pet sees another animal through a door or window, he may feel a need to mark his territory.
- Your dog marks frequently on neighborhood walks.

What you **can** do:

- Spay or neuter your pet as soon as possible. All animals adopted from the APA of MO are spayed or neutered before being allowed to leave. Spaying or neutering your pet may stop urine-marking altogether; however, if he has been urine-marking over a long period of time, a pattern may already be established.
- Resolve conflicts between animals in your home (see our handouts: “Canine Rivalry” and “Feline Social Behavior and Aggression between Family Cats”).
- Restrict your pet's access to doors and windows through which they can observe animals outside. If this isn't possible, discourage the presence of other animals near your house (see our handout: “Discouraging Roaming Cats”).
- Keep your cat indoors. He'll be safer, will live longer, and will feel less need to mark his territory.
- Clean soiled areas thoroughly and make previously soiled areas inaccessible or unattractive (see our handout: “Successful Cleaning to Remove Pet Odors and Stains”).
- If making soiled areas inaccessible or unattractive isn't possible, try to change the significance of those areas. Feed, treat and play with your pet in the areas he is inclined to mark. Pets will rarely use the same space for food, fun and marking.

- Keep objects likely to cause marking out of reach. Guests' belongings, new purchases and so forth, should be placed in a closet or cabinet.
- If your pet is marking in response to a new resident in your home (a new baby, roommate or spouse), have the new resident make friends with your pet by feeding, grooming and playing with your pet. Make sure good things happen to your pet when the new baby is around (see our handout: "Preparing Your Pet for Baby's Arrival").
- For dogs: watch your dog at all times when he is indoors for signs that he is thinking about urinating. When he begins to urinate, interrupt him with a loud noise and take him outside, then praise him and give him a treat if he urinates outside. When you're unable to watch him, put your dog in confinement (a crate or small room where he has never marked).
- For cats: try to monitor your cat's movements. If he even sniffs in an area he has previously marked, make a loud noise or squirt him with water. It is best if you can do this without him seeing you, then he'll associate the unpleasantness with his intent to mark, rather than with you.
- Practice "Nothing in Life is Free" with your dog (see our handout: "Nothing In Life Is Free"). This is a safe, non-confrontational way to establish your leadership and requires your dog to work for everything he wants from you. Have your dog obey at least one command (such as "sit") before you pet him, give him dinner, put on his leash or throw a toy for him. Establishing yourself as a strong leader can help stabilize the hierarchy and thus diminish your dog's need to mark his territory.

What NOT to do:

**Don't punish your pet after the fact.** Punishment administered even a minute after the event is ineffective because your pet won't understand why he/she is being punished.

### **Pets Are Not People**

Dogs and cats don't urinate or defecate out of spite or jealousy. If your dog urinates on your baby's diaper bag, it is not because he is jealous of, or dislikes your baby. The unfamiliar scents and sounds of a new baby in the house are simply causing him to reaffirm his claim on his territory. Likewise, if your cat urinates on your new boyfriend's backpack, this is not his opinion of your taste in men. Instead, he has perceived the presence of an "intruder" and is letting the intruder know that this territory belongs to him.

### **Dominance or Anxiety?**

Urine-marking is usually associated with dominance behavior. While this may be the case, some pets mark when they feel anxious or upset. For example, a new baby in the home brings new sounds, smells and people, as well as changes in routine. Your dog or cat probably isn't getting as much attention as he was used to getting. All of these changes cause him to feel anxious, which may cause him to mark. Likewise, a pet that is generally anxious may become more so by the presence of roaming neighborhood animals in your yard, or by the introduction of a new cat or dog into your household. If your pet is feeling anxious, you might consider talking to your veterinarian about medications to reduce his anxiety while you work on behavior modification.



## **UNUSUAL EATING HABITS IN DOGS AND CATS**

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### **Definitions**

Dogs and cats will sometimes eat socks, rocks or other objects. Such a dangerous diet may result in a variety of problems for both you and your pet. Not only can your possessions be destroyed or damaged, but objects such as clothing and rocks can produce life-threatening blockages in your pet's intestines. Eating non-food items is called **pica**. A specific type of pica is stool eating (either their own or that of another animal) and, while not necessarily dangerous to the animal, this may be unacceptable to you and can cause illness in your pet. Stool-eating is called **coprophagy**.

The causes of pica and coprophagy are not known. Many ideas have been proposed by various experts, but none have been proved or disproved. Such behaviors may sometimes be attention-getting behaviors. If engaging in one of these behaviors results in some type of social interaction between the animal and his owner (even a verbal scolding) then the behavior may be reinforced and occur more frequently. These behaviors may be attempts to obtain a necessary nutrient lacking in the diet, although no nutritional studies have ever substantiated this idea. They may also stem from frustration or anxiety. It's possible the behaviors begin as play, as the animal investigates and chews on the objects, then subsequently begins to eat or ingest them.

It has been suggested that coprophagy is carried over from the normal parental behavior of ingesting the waste of young offspring. Some experts believe coprophagy occurs more often in animals that live in relatively barren environments, are frequently confined to small areas and/or receive limited attention from their owner. Coprophagy is fairly common in dogs, but is rarely seen in cats and is seen more often in dogs who tend to be highly food-motivated. It's also possible that dogs learn this behavior from other dogs.

Because pica and coprophagy are behaviors that are not well understood, stopping them may require assistance from an animal behavior professional who works individually with owners and their pets. A variety of specialized behavior modification techniques may be necessary to resolve these problems.

### **Coprophagy**

Suggested Solutions:

Because the cause of coprophagy isn't known, there are no techniques or solutions that are consistently successful. The following techniques may, or may not be, effective in resolving the problem.

- Treat your pet's food with something that causes his stool to have an aversive taste. A commercial product called "4-BID" is available through your veterinarian, or the same result may be achieved by using the food additive, "MSG". Based on owners' reports, both of these products appear to work in some cases, but not always. Before using either of these products, please check with your veterinarian.

## UNUSUAL EATING HABITS (CONTINUED)

- Any time your pet goes outside, he must be on a leash with you. If you see him about to ingest some stool, interrupt him by using a squirt bottle or shake can (only for pets who are *not* afraid of loud noises), then substitute a toy to capture his interest. Praise for playing with the toy.
- Treat your pet's stools directly with an aversive taste by sprinkling them with cayenne pepper or a commercial product, such as "Bitter Apple". For this method to be effective, every stool your pet has access to must be treated in order for him to learn that eating stools results in unpleasant consequences. Otherwise, he may discriminate by odors which stools have been treated and which have not.
- The simplest solution may be to clean your yard daily in order to minimize your pet's opportunity to eat his stools. Your neighbors may also appreciate it.
- To stop a dog from eating cat feces from a litter box, install a baby gate in front of the litter box area. Your cat shouldn't have any trouble jumping over it, while most dogs won't make the attempt. Or, you could place the box in a closet or room where the door can be wedged open from both sides, so your cat has access, but your dog doesn't. Any type of environmental "booby trap" to stop a dog from eating cat feces from a litterbox must be attempted with caution because *if it frightens your dog, it's likely to frighten your cat.*

### What Doesn't Work:

- Interactive punishment (punishment that comes directly from you, such as verbal scolding) is usually not effective because it may be interpreted by your pet as attention. With interactive punishment, many animals learn to refrain from the behavior when their owner is present, but still engage in the problem behavior when their owner is absent.
- Punishment after the fact is **never** helpful. Animals don't understand that they're being punished for something they did hours, minutes or even seconds before. This approach won't resolve the problem and is likely to produce either fearful or aggressive responses from your pet.

### **Health Risks:**

If your pet is parasite-free and is eating only his own stools, he can't be infected with parasites by doing so. If your pet is eating the stools of another animal that has parasites, it may be possible, although still unlikely, for your pet to become infected. Some parasites, such as giardia, cause diarrhea, and most coprophagic dogs ingest only formed stools. There is also a delay period before the parasites in the stools can re-infect another animal.

Most parasites require intermediate hosts (they must pass through the body of another species, such as a flea) before they can re-infect another dog or cat. Thus, your pet is much more likely to become infected with parasites through fleas or by eating birds and rodents than by coprophagy. Most parasites are also species-specific, meaning that dogs cannot be infected by eating cat stool. Health risks to humans from being licked in the face by a coprophagic animal are minimal. There is still no getting around that it is unappealing! For more information, please contact your veterinarian.

### **Pica**

Pica can be a serious problem because items such as rubber bands, socks, rocks and string can severely damage or block an animal's intestines. In some instances, the items must be

## UNUSUAL EATING HABITS (CONTINUED)

surgically removed. Because pica can be potentially life-threatening, it's advisable to consult both your veterinarian and an animal behavior professional for help.

Suggested Solutions:

- Make the objects your pet is eating taste unpleasant with some of the substances mentioned above.
- Prevent your pet's access to these items.
- If your pet is food-oriented, it may be possible to change to a low-calorie or high-fiber diet to allow him to more food, more often, which may decrease the behavior. Check with your veterinarian before changing your pet's diet.
- If you suspect that anxiety of frustration is the reason for pica, the cause of the anxiety of frustration must be identified and the behavior changed by using behavior modification techniques.
- Sometimes pica is an attention-getting behavior. If this is the case, try to startle your pet with a loud noise or a spray of water when you catch him ingesting the items. If possible, avoid letting him know that the startling noise or spray came from you, and be sure to praise him when he leaves the items alone. Try to set aside 10-15 minutes twice a day to spend with your pet, so that he doesn't need to resort to pica to get your attention.
- If pica is a play behavior, keep plenty of toys around for your pet to play with. Cats, especially, tend to play with string, rubber bands and tinsel, and ultimately ingest them. Keep these items out of reach and provide a selection of appropriate toys.

### **What Doesn't Work:**

- Interactive punishment (punishment that comes directly from you, such as verbal scolding) is usually not effective because it may be interpreted by your pet as attention. With interactive punishment, many animals learn to refrain from the behavior when their owner is present, but still engage in the problem behavior when their owner is absent.
- Punishment after the fact is NEVER helpful. Animals don't understand that they're being punished for something they did hours, minutes or even seconds before. This approach won't resolve the problem and is likely to produce either fearful or aggressive responses from your pet.



## **YOUR NEW CAT IN THE LITTER BOX**

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Most cats have a specific preference about where they want to eliminate. By following the suggestions outlined here, you and your cat will start off right!

### **Location**

Humans are inclined to place the litter box in an out-of-the-way spot so there is minimal odor and dust or particles of cat litter in human living space. Often, the litter box ends up in the basement, sometimes next to an appliance and/or on a cold cement floor. This type of location can be undesirable from your cat's point of view for several reasons.

If you have a kitten or an older cat, she may not be able to get down a long flight of stairs in time to get to the litter box. New pets may not remember the location if it is out of the way of most family activity. Your cat may be startled while using the litter box if a furnace, washer or dryer or other system suddenly comes on. Fear will keep your cat away from this very important part of daily life. If your cat likes to scratch the surface surrounding her litter box, (and many do) she may find a cold cement floor unappealing.

Consider a compromise. The litter box is best kept in a location that affords your cat some privacy, but 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, in order to prevent her from being trapped in or out. Depending on location, you might cut a hole in a closet door and adding a flap or swinging door. If the litter box sits on a smooth, slick or cold surface, put a small washable throw rug underneath the litter box.

### **Type Of Litter**

Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litters, presumably because they have a softer feel and they have sensitive paws. The new scoopable litters usually have finer grains than the typical clay litter. However, high-quality, dust free, clay litters are relatively small-grained and may be perfectly acceptable to your cat. Potting soil also has a very soft texture, but is not very absorbent. But remember, your cat will not be able to tell any real difference between potting soil in one location and potting soil in a planter! Pellet-type litters or those made from citrus peels are not recommended. Once you find a litter your cat likes, don't change brands. Cats appreciate consistency. Buying the least expensive litter or whatever brand happens to be on sale, could result in your cat not using the litter box.

Many cats dislike 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. Odor shouldn't be a problem if the litter box is kept clean. If you find the litter box odor offensive, your cat probably finds it even more offensive and won't want to eliminate there.

## THE LITTER BOX (CONTINUED)

### **Number of Litter Boxes**

Have at least as many litter boxes as you have cats. That way, no cat will be prevented from eliminating in the litter box because it's already occupied. You might also consider placing them in several locations around the house, so that no one cat can "guard" the litter box area and prevent the other cats from using it. 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 will use any litter box that's available. Occasionally, a cat may refuse to use the 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.

### **To Cover or Not To Cover**

Some people prefer to use a covered litter box, however, there are some potential problems with using this type of box. Let's face it-if your cat won't use it there is no point in doing it. You may want to experiment by offering both types at first, to discover what your cat prefers.

### **Potential 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 covered litter box may not allow a large cat sufficient room to turn around, scratch, dig or position herself in the way she prefers.
- 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 may be preferred by timid cats.

### **Cleaning The Box**

To meet the needs of the most discriminating cat, feces should be scooped out of the litter box daily. How often you change 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 you may need to change it every other day or once a week. If you scoop the litter daily, "scoopable" or "clumping" litter can remain for two or three weeks before it needs to be changed. 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 and be sure to rinse thoroughly. Cats are repelled by such strong scents. Washing with a standard soap and hot water should be sufficient.

### **Liners**

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. They can make more mess than they save in clean up and if they snag and scare your cat it creates one more litter box problem.

### **Depth Of Litter**

Some people think that the more litter they put in the box, the less often they will have to clean it. This is not true. 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

## THE LITTER BOX (CONTINUED)

of the litter box. The litter box needs to be cleaned on a regular basis and adding extra litter is not an opportunity to avoid that chore.

### **“Litter-Training” Cats**

There’s really no such thing as “litter-training” a cat in the same way one would house-train a dog. Unless it was taken from its mother at a very young age, a cat doesn’t need to be taught what to do with a litterbox. 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. This may actually be an unpleasant experience for your cat and may cause a negative association with the litter box.

### **If Problems Develop**

If your cat begins to eliminate in areas other than the litterbox, 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 behavioral. Most litterbox behavior problems can be resolved by using behavior modification techniques. Retraining, confinement and affection will help as long as there is no physical problem. Punishment is not the answer. For long-standing or complex situations, contact an animal behavior specialist who has experience working with cats.



## **SOLVING LITTER BOX PROBLEMS**

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Cats tend to have surface and location preferences for where, and on what, they like to eliminate. Most cats prefer a loose, sandy substance, which is why they will use a litter box. It's only when their preferences include the laundry basket, the bed or the Persian rug, that normal elimination behavior becomes a problem. With careful analysis of your cat's environment, specific factors that have contributed to the litter box problem can usually be identified and changed, so that your cat will again use the litter box for elimination.

Some common reasons why cats don't use the litter box are: an aversion to the box, a preference for a particular surface not provided by the box, a preference for a particular location where there is no box, or a combination of all three. You'll need to do some detective work to determine the reason your cat is house soiling. Sometimes, the reason the litter box problem initially started may not be the same reason it's continuing. For example, your cat may have stopped using the litter box because of a urinary tract infection, and has now developed a surface preference for carpet and a location preference for the bedroom closet. You would need to address all three of these factors in order to resolve the problem.

Cats don't stop using their litter boxes because they're mad or upset and are trying to get revenge for something that "offended" or "angered" them. Because humans act for these reasons, it's easy for us to assume that our pets do as well. Animals don't act out of spite or revenge, so it won't help to give your cat special privileges in the hope that she'll start using the litter box again.

### **Medical Problems**

It's common for cats to begin eliminating outside of their litter box when they have a medical problem. For example, a urinary tract infection or crystals in the urine can make urination very painful. Cats often associate this pain with the litter box and begin to avoid it. If your cat has a house-soiling problem, check with your veterinarian first to rule out any medical problems for the behavior. Cats don't always act sick, even when they are, and only a trip to the veterinarian for a thorough physical examination can rule out a medical problem.

### **Cleaning Soiled Areas**

Because animals are highly motivated to continue soiling an area that smells like urine or feces, it's imperative that you thoroughly clean the soiled areas (see our handout: "Successful Cleaning to Remove Pet Odors and Stains").

### **Aversion To The Litter Box**

Your cat may have decided that the litter box is an unpleasant place to eliminate if:

- The box is not clean enough for her.
- She has experienced painful urination or defecation in the box due to a medical problem.
- She has been startled by a noise while using the box.
- She has been "ambushed" while in the box either by another cat, a child, a dog, or by you, if you were attempting to catch her for some reason.

## SOLVING LITTER BOX PROBLEMS (CONTINUED)

- She associates the box with punishment (someone punished her for eliminating outside the box, then placed her in the box).

### **What You Can Do**

- Keep the litter box extremely clean. Scoop at least once a day and change the litter completely every four to five days. If you use scoopable litter, you may not need to change the litter as frequently. This will vary according to how many cats are in the household, how many litter boxes you have, and how large the cats are that are using the box or boxes. A good guideline is that if you can smell the box, then you can be sure it's offensive to your cat.
- Add a new box in a different location than the old one and use a different type of litter in the new box. Because your cat has decided that her old litter box is unpleasant, you'll want to make the new one different enough that she doesn't simply apply the old, negative associations to the new box.
- Make sure that the litter box isn't near an appliance that makes noise or in an area of the house that your cat doesn't frequent.
- If ambushing is a problem, try to create more than one exit from the litter box, so that if the "ambusher" is waiting by one area, your cat always has an escape route.

### **Surface Preferences**

All animals develop preferences for a particular surface on which they like to eliminate. These preferences may be established early in life, but they may also change overnight for reasons that we don't always understand. Your cat may have a surface preference if:

- She consistently eliminates on a particular texture. For example, soft-textured surfaces, such as carpet, bedding or clothing, or slick-textured surfaces, such as tile, cement, bathtubs or sinks.
- She frequently scratches on this same texture after elimination, even if she eliminates in the litter box.
- She is or was previously an outdoor cat and prefers to eliminate on grass or soil.

### **What You Can Do**

- If your cat is eliminating on soft surfaces, try using a high quality, scoopable litter, and put a soft rug under the litter box.
- If your cat is eliminating on slick, smooth surfaces, try putting a very thin layer of litter at one end of the box, leaving the other end bare, and put the box on a hard floor.
- If your cat has a history of being outdoors, add some soil or sod to the litter box.
- Make the area where she has been eliminating aversive to her by covering it with an upside down carpet runner or aluminum foil, or by placing citrus-scented cotton balls over the area (see our handout: "Aversives For Cats").

### **Location Preferences:**

Your cat may have a location preference if:

- She always eliminated in quiet, protected places, such as under a desk downstairs or in a closet.
- She eliminates in an area where the litter box was previously kept or where there are urine odors.

## SOLVING LITTER BOX PROBLEMS (CONTINUED)

- She eliminates on a different level of the house from where the litter box is located.

### **What You Can Do**

- Put at least one litter box on every level of your house.
- Make the area where she has been eliminating aversive to her by covering it with upside down carpet runner or aluminum foil, or by placing citrus-scented cotton balls over the area (see our handout: "Aversives For Cats").
- Put a litter box in the location where your cat has been eliminating. When she has consistently used this box for at least one month, you may gradually move it to a more convenient location at a rate of an inch per day.

### **Oops!**

If you catch your cat in the act of eliminating in the house, do something to interrupt her like making a startling noise, but be careful not to scare her. Immediately take her to where the litter box is located and set her on the floor. If she wanders over to the litter box, wait and praise her after she eliminates in the box. If she takes off in another direction, she may want privacy, so watch from afar until she goes back to the litter box and eliminates, then praise her when she does.

Don't ever punish your cat for eliminating outside of the litter box. If you find a soiled area, it's too late to administer a correction. Do nothing but clean it up. Rubbing your cat's nose in it, taking her to the spot and scolding her, or any other type of punishment, will only make her afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. Animals don't understand punishment after the fact, even if it's only seconds later. Punishment will do more harm than good.

### Other Types Of House Soiling Problems

- **Marking/Spraying:** To determine if your cat is marking or spraying, please see our handout: "Territorial Marking in Dogs and Cats."
- **Fears Or Phobias:** When animals become frightened, they may lose control of their bladder and/or bowels. If your cat is afraid of loud noises, strangers or other animals, she may house soil when she is exposed to these stimuli (see our handout: "The Fearful Cat").



## **SUCCESSFUL CLEANING TO REMOVE PET ODORS AND STAINS**

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“Accidents”, illness and behavior problems may cause cleaning challenges. Has your pet left “scent marks” of urination and/or defecation on your floor or furniture? Or had cause to “throw-up” indoors? To successfully re-train your pet to avoid those areas, follow these basic steps:

- Find all soiled areas using your nose and your 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 plain white chalk.
- Clean the soiled areas appropriately to remove the odors (see below). Check with your veterinarian or local shelter for brand names of cleaners in your area. These folks have dealt with the problem many times before.
- Make the areas unattractive and/or unavailable (we can help you learn about humane methods for dogs and cats).
- Make the appropriate “bathroom” area attractive (we can make some suggestions that will work with your lifestyle).
- Teach your pet the appropriate place to eliminate by using positive reinforcement. Praise is a wonderful tool and easy to use. Just be sure to offer it at a time when your pet will associate your enthusiasm with proper bathroom habits.

These steps work as a team! In order for your efforts to be successful, you need to follow them *all*.

### **Cleaning**

If you fail to completely clean the area, your other re-training efforts will not succeed. As long as your pet can smell that personal scent, he/she will continue to return to the “accidental zone”. Even if *you* can’t smell traces of urine, your pet can. You must remove (neutralize) that odor.

### **Methods to Avoid**

Avoid using steam cleaners as your *first* response to clean urine odors from carpet or upholstery. The heat will permanently set the odor and the stain by bonding the protein into any man-made fibers. Do not use cleaning chemicals 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 competition to mark and reinforce the urine scent mark in that area.

### **To Clean Washable Items**

- Machine wash as usual, adding a small box of baking soda to your regular detergent. If possible, it’s best to air dry these items.
- If you can still see the stain or smell the urine, machine wash the item again and add an enzymatic cleaner (ie Biz). Be sure to follow the directions carefully.
- During the re-training period, a good way to discourage your pet from using the bedding is to cover the bed with a vinyl flannel backed tablecloth. They’re machine washable, inexpensive and unattractive to your pet.

### **To Clean Carpeted Areas and Upholstery**

- Soak up as much of the urine as possible with paper towels. Do not use newspaper directly on the spot as the newsprint may come off onto the floor surface. If you are able to remove most of the urine before it dries, your clean up is much easier. Place a thick layer of paper towels on the wet spot and cover that with a thick layer of newspaper. Stand on this padding for about a minute. Wipe the bottom of your shoe, otherwise you are simply moving the smell with you! Remove the padding and repeat the process until the area is barely damp.
- If possible, and if your pet is present, take the fresh, urine soaked paper towel to the area where it belongs – your dog's designated outdoor "bathroom area" or your cat's litterbox – and let your pet see you do it. Don't act or sound angry when you do this, but try to project a positive attitude to your dog/cat. This will help to 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", "shop-vac" or "extractor".
- If you've 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. The cleaner will use up its "energy" on the old cleaners instead of on the protein stains you want removed.
- To remove all traces of old chemicals and clean old or 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 again. 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 you should use a high-quality pet odor neutralizer available at pet supply stores. Test the affected surface and read and follow the instructions.
- If the area still looks stained after it's completely dry from extracting and neutralizing, try any good carpet stain remover.
- Make the "accident zone" unattractive, the appropriate "bathroom" area attractive, and teach your pet where you want him/her to eliminate. Don't forget a trip to your veterinarian to rule out any physical cause for the problem!
- The re-training period may take a week or more. Remember, it took time to build the bad habit, and it will take time to replace that with a new, more acceptable behavior. Treat your pet with patience and give him/her a lot of encouragement!

### **To Clean Floors and Walls**

If the wood on your furniture, walls, baseboard or floor is discolored, the varnish or paint has been affected by the acid in the urine. You may need to remove and replace the layer of varnish or paint. Employees at your local hardware or building supply 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.



## **INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO YOUR OTHER PETS**

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Let's be realistic. Each of us likes to choose our own friends, but when it comes to family sometimes we need time to adjust! It's important to understand this when introducing a new pet to a resident pet. 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 like sharing her territory (and her people) with other pets in the household. Tolerate, maybe, but like maybe not. However, an eight-week-old kitten separated from her mom and littermates for the first time, might prefer to have a cat or dog companion. Cats are cautious by nature and territorial. Each one needs to be introduced to other animals very slowly in order to allow time for adjustment to smells and sounds **before** there is a face-to-face confrontation. Pacing your new pet's introduction may help prevent fearful and aggressive behavior problems. PLEASE be aware that, when introduced, one of your pets may send "play" signals which the other pet may misinterpret as aggression. You must handle the situation as understood by the animal in fear, no matter what the motive of the playful pet.

Be sure each pet is healthy! If one of your pets has a medical problem or is injured, this could stall the introduction process. Check with your veterinarian. It is worth the time and expense you invest now, to avoid problems as you work to make a happy household.

You want to have at least one litter box per cat, and you'll probably need to clean all of the litter boxes more frequently.

### **Confinement**

Confine your new cat to one medium sized room with litter box, food, water and a bed. Feed your resident pets and the newcomer on each side of the door to this room. This will help all of them to associate something enjoyable (eating!) with each other's smells. Don't put the food so close to the door that the animals are too upset by each other's presence to eat. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until you pets can eat calmly, directly on either side of the door. Next, use two doorstops to prop open the door just enough to allow the animals to see each other, and repeat the whole process. Be sure to allow time for adjustment. A week or more is not uncommon.

### **Swap Scents**

Switch sleeping blankets or beds between your new cat and your resident animals so they have a chance to become accustomed to each other's scent. Rub a towel on one animal and put it underneath the food dish of another animal. Allow time for each pet to learn all the associated smells. Do this with each animal in the house and you increase your chances for a calmer first meeting.

### **Switch Living Areas**

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

## INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO OTHERS (CONTINUED)

meeting. It also allows the newcomer to become familiar with the new surroundings without being frightened or intimidated by the other animals.

### **Avoid Fearful and Aggressive Meetings**

Although you are excited and eager to have your pets meet each other, they need the time to learn to share. Instincts for territory and ownership are strong and trust is built slowly. Avoid any interactions between your pets that result in either fearful or aggressive behavior. If these responses are allowed to become a habit, they can be difficult to change. You can expect mild forms of these behaviors, but don't give them the opportunity to intensify. If either animal becomes fearful or aggressive, separate them, and start over with the introduction process as we have outlined.

### **Precautions**

Make sure that none of the cats are being "ambushed" by another while trying to use the litter box. They may try lying in doorways to or at the top of the stairs to block access. You will need to intervene by a foot stomp or light squirt from the water bottle if this becomes a habit.

Cats can make lots of noise, pull each other's hair, and roll around quite dramatically during an argument without either cat being injured. If small spats do occur between your cats, don't try 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 re-introducing them to each other. Be sure each cat has a safe hiding place—a closet or under the bed location that they can use for a safety zone.

### **Cat To Dog Introductions**

Dogs can kill a cat very easily, even if when they only intend to play. All it takes is one shake and the cat's fragile neck can break. Some dogs have such a high prey drive 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. Use the techniques described above to begin introducing your new cat to your resident dog. But do a stay alert and work with the following ideas:

### **Practice Obedience**

If your dog doesn't already know the commands "sit", "down", "come" and "stay", this is the perfect time to begin! Everyone will benefit. Our helpful information called "Nothing is for Free" can get you started. Small pieces of food will increase your dog's motivation to perform, which will be necessary in the presence of such a strong distraction as a new cat. Even if your dog already knows these commands, this is a great time to practice in return for a small treat.

### **Controlled Meeting**

The same "get acquainted methods of swapping smells and sharing eating areas are useful as you introduce your new feline friend to your resident canine. 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, attempt a face-to-face introduction in a controlled setting. Put your dog's leash on, and using treats, have him either "sit" or "lie down" and "stay". Have another family member or friend enter the room and quietly sit next to your new cat. It is important not to physically restrain her at this time. Now, have this person offer your cat some special pieces of food or treat. 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. It may only be a visit of

a less than 5 minutes, but it will begin the process! 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**

Now, after several short visits, allow your cat the freedom to explore your dog at her own pace. Keep your dog on-leash and in a "down-stay". Give 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 becomes aggressive, you're progressing too fast. Go back to the previous introduction steps.

### **Positive Reinforcement**

Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with your cat is unacceptable behavior, he must also be taught how to behave appropriately. Reward your canine pal for responding to "sit", "come", or "down-stay" 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 on-leash and with you 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. Keep your dog and cat separated when you aren't home until you're certain your cat will be safe. For some dogs and cats, it may always be a good idea to separate them when you are not around.

### **Precautions**

Dogs like to eat cat food. You should keep the cat food out of your dog's reach (in a closet or on a high shelf). As gross as it may seem to us, eating cat feces is also a relatively common behavior in dogs. Although there are no health hazards to your dog, it's probably distasteful to you. It's also upsetting to your cat to have the litter box "invaded". Unfortunately, attempts to keep your dog out of the litter box by "booby trapping" it will also keep your cat away as well. Punishment after the fact will not change your dog's behavior. The best solution is to place the litter box where your dog can't reach it, for example: behind a baby gate; in a closet with the door anchored open from both sides and just wide enough for your cat; or inside a tall, topless cardboard box with easy access for your cat.

### **A Word About 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, and even then she should never be left alone with the dog. Usually, a well socialized adult cat will be able to keep a puppy in its 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 introductions don't go smoothly, seek professional help immediately. The Animal Protective Association of MO can offer some good ideas and don't forget to consult your veterinarian. Pets can be severely injured in fights, and the longer the problem continues, the harder it may be to resolve. Conflict between pets in the same family can often be resolved with professional help. Punishment won't work, this is a time for positive action and there are many professional people who can want to help.



## **FELINE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND AGGRESSION BETWEEN FAMILY CATS**

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It's impossible to estimate how well any particular pair or group of cats will ultimately tolerate each other. Some cats are unusually territorial, may never adjust to sharing their house, and may do best in a one-cat family. However, many aggressive problems between cats can be successfully resolved. To do this, you may need help, both from your veterinarian and from an animal behavior specialist who is knowledgeable in cat behavior. Cats with aggression problems may never be best friends, but can often learn to mutually tolerate each other with a minimum of conflict. Working with aggression problems between family cats will take time and commitment from you. Don't give up without consulting the appropriate experts.

### **Common Types of Aggressive Behaviors Between Cats**

**Territorial Aggression:** Cats are very territorial, much more so than dogs. Territorial aggression occurs when a cat feels that his territory has been invaded by an intruder. Depending on where you cat spends his/her time, he/she may view your whole neighborhood as his/her territory. Female cats can be just as territorial as males. The behavior patterns in this type of aggression include chasing and ambushing the intruder, as well as hissing and swatting when contact occurs. Territorial problems often occur when a new cat is brought into a household, when a young kitten reaches maturity, or when a cat encounters neighborhood cats outside. It's not uncommon for a cat to be territorially aggressive toward one cat in a family, and friendly and tolerant to another.

**Intermale Aggression:** Adult male cats normally tend to threaten, and sometimes fight, with other males. These behaviors can occur as sexual challenges over a female, or to achieve a relatively high position in the cats' loosely organized social dominance hierarchy. This type of aggression involves much ritualized body posturing, stalking, staring, yowling, and howling. Attacks are usually avoided if one cat "backs down" and walks away. If an attack occurs, the attacker will usually jump forward, directing a bite to the nape of the neck, while the opponent falls to the ground on his back and attempts to bite and scratch the attacker's belly with his hind legs. The cats may roll around biting and screaming, suddenly stop, resume posturing, fight again or walk away. Cats don't usually severely injure one another this way, but you should always check for puncture wounds which are prone to infection. Intact males are much more likely to fight in this way than are neutered males.

**Defensive Aggression:** Defensive aggression occurs when a cat is attempting to protect himself/herself from an attack he/she believes he/she cannot escape. This can occur in response to punishment or the threat of punishment from a person, an attack or attempted attack from another cat, or any time he/she feels threatened or afraid. Defensive postures include crouching with the legs pulled in under the body, laying the ears back, tucking the tail, and possibly rolling slightly to the side. This is not the same as the submissive postures dogs show because it's not intended to "turn off" an attack from another cat. Continuing to approach a cat that's in this posture is likely to precipitate an attack.

**Redirected Aggression:** This type of aggression is directed toward another animal that didn't initially provoke the behavior. For example, a household cat sitting in the window may see an outdoor cat walk across the front yard. Because he/she can't attack the outdoor cat, he may

## FELINE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR (CONTINUED)

instead turn and attack the other family cat that's sitting next to him in the window. Redirected aggression can be either offensive or defensive in nature.

### **What You Can Do**

- If your cat's behavior changes suddenly, your first step should always be to contact your veterinarian for a thorough health examination. Cats often hide symptoms of illness until they're seriously ill. Any change in behavior may be an early indication of a medical problem.
- Spay or neuter any intact pets in your home. The behavior of one intact animal can affect all of your pets.
- Start the slow introduction process over from the beginning (see handout: "Introducing Your New Cat To Your Other Pets") You may need professional help from an animal behavior specialist to successfully implement these techniques.
- In extreme cases, consult with your veterinarian about medicating your cats while you're working with them on a behavior modification program. Your veterinarian is the only person who is licensed and qualified to prescribe any medication for your cats. Don't attempt to give your cat any over-the-counter or prescribe medication without consulting your veterinarian. Animals don't respond to drugs the same way people do, and a medication that may be safe for a humane could be fatal to an animal. Keep in mind that medication, by itself, isn't a permanent solution, and should only be used in conjunction with behavior modification.

### **What NOT To Do**

- If your cats are fighting, don't allow the fights to continue. Because cats are so territorial, and because they don't establish firm dominance hierarchies, they won't be able to "work things out" as dogs sometimes do. The more often cats fight, the worse the problem is likely to become. To stop a fight in progress, make a loud noise, such as blowing a whistle, squirting the cats with water, or throwing something soft at them. Don't try to pull them apart.
- Prevent future fights. This may mean keeping the cats totally separated from each other while you're working on the problem, or at least preventing contact between them in situations likely to trigger a fight.
- Don't try to punish the cats involved. Punishment is likely to elicit further aggression and fearful responses, which will only make the problem worse. If you attempt punishment, you may become a target for redirected and defensive aggression.

Because their social organization is somewhat flexible, some cats are relatively tolerant of sharing their house and territory with multiple cats. It's not uncommon for a cat to tolerate some cats, but not get along with others in the house. However, the more cats sharing the same territory, the more likely it is that some of your cats will begin fighting with each other.

When you introduce cats to each other, one of them may send "play" signals which can be misinterpreted by the other cat. If those signals are interpreted as aggression by one of the cats, then you should handle the situation as "aggressive".

The factors that determine how well cats get along together are not fully understood. Cats that are well-socialized (they had pleasant experiences with other cats during kittenhood) will likely be more sociable than those that haven't been around many other cats. On the other hand, "street cats" that are in the habit of fighting with other cats in order to defend their territory and food resources, may not do well in multi-cat household. Genetic factors also influence a cat's temperament, so friendly parents are probably more likely to produce friendly offspring.



## **PREPARING YOUR PET FOR BABY'S ARRIVAL**

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Helping your pet adjust to the arrival of a new baby is much like preparing a young child for the same event. Handling your pet's curiosity, anxiety and increased insistence for attention may seem like an overwhelming task, in addition to preparing yourself and your household for the baby's arrival. You can, however, help your pet adjust to the big changes ahead with minimal time and effort by making gradual adjustments to your lifestyle before the baby arrives.

### **Sounds and Smells**

Your pet is very sensitive to sounds and smells and uses these special abilities to gather information. From your pet's point of view, you and your home have specific identifying smells that are uniquely yours. There are also certain sounds that your pet considers "normal" for your household. Even the different tones of voice you use send important signals. Your baby won't actually change those scents and sounds that are part of your identity, but the baby's arrival will certainly add some new and very different ones. It's important that you introduce these new smells and sounds to your pet gradually in a calm and pleasant atmosphere. Each time you introduce something new to your pet, make sure the experience is positive. Stroke him/her, give treats and praise good behavior when he/she is faced with a new sound or smell. Relax. If you act anxious, your pet will be anxious too. This is great practice for staying calm with your baby as well!

In order to prepare your pet for the new baby, borrow some baby sounds and smells. Visit a friend's baby or a nursery and make a tape recording of baby sounds like gurgling, laughing, screaming, crying and kicking. Start out with the volume turned fairly low and if your pet doesn't react strongly to the sounds, gradually increase the volume to a normal level. As you play the tape, look at your pet and speak calmly, using your pet's name. Smile! It adds a special tone to your voice that helps your pet relax. Repeat these sessions daily until the baby's arrival.

Handle a baby and absorb some of the smells of baby lotion, powder and food. Go directly home and spend some positive, relaxed time with your pet. Give him/her a massage or play with him while the baby smells mingle with your own odors and you play the recorded baby sounds. After a week or so, add the actual sources of the odors to the sound-and-smell sessions with the supplies you'll be using for your own baby. Think about your pet's perspective. How does a baby bottle smell when it's freshly sterilized? When it's dirty? Borrow a dirty diaper and let your pet become accustomed to that smell, too.

Borrow a baby! After a few weeks, combine baby sounds and smells (which should be familiar to your pet by now) with the bustle and attention of a visiting baby. This is an excellent "dress rehearsal" for the extra visitors and attention you and your baby will receive during the first few weeks after delivery.

Pets tend to feel alarmed and defensive when faced with unexpected sounds. Take a little time to become familiar with the "normal" sounds of your household. Is your home normally quiet, with little background noise? If so, how does your pet react to "extra" sounds like a

## INTRODUCING BABY (CONTINUED)

vacuum cleaner, a ringing telephone or a whistling teakettle? If your home is normally noisy, your pet may simply sleep through the usual sounds, but how does he react when something unusual occurs? The more strongly your pet reacts to unexpected sounds, the more important it is for you to help him adjust to the “baby sounds” which will become a regular part of your home environment.

Try to recognize what smells are prominent in your home, including your own personal scent. Your home has its own mixture of smells that makes it feel familiar and safe – cleaning products, kitchen odors, even dust. Also be aware of the products you use that help create your own individual scent, such as soaps, hair care products, toothpaste, deodorant, laundry detergent and cologne. Any new smells should be added gradually, layered on over a period of weeks. Be aware of the effect these changes have on your pet. While you do this, try to keep one part of your home smelling “right” for your pet.

After you bring your baby home, be aware of the ways you use your voice. Do you only speak to your pet with negative tones when the baby’s in the room (“no”, “off”, “don’t”, “stop”)? If so, your pet will certainly connect unhappy feelings with the baby’s presence. While you hold your baby, smile at your pet and use his name. Your baby won’t mind. Give your pet a small treat when the baby is fed to distract your pet from the smell of the baby’s food. Make time with the baby a pleasant time for your pet as well.

### **Environment**

If you will be redecorating or rearranging your home, do it long before the baby arrives. With your supervision, let your pet explore any off-limits areas, then exclude him from these areas *before* the baby arrives. Screen doors are excellent, inexpensive barriers for off-limits areas like the baby’s room. Your pet can still see, smell and hear all the action and so can you. If an off-limits room has been a favorite area for your pet, this will be a major change for him. Move his favorite things from that room into another area, if possible in the same arrangement.

To boost your pet’s confidence, establish a private, comfortable place that your pet can use as a safe retreat. Select an area you can close off, if necessary. The “safe-zone” should include a water bowl; a nest composed of a soft towel or your pet’s bed and some worn, unwashed clothing with your smell on it. If your pet is a cat, you should include a litter box in this area also.

Your pet can choose to retreat here, or you can choose to confine him to this “safe zone” when things get extra hectic. Spend some positive time with your pet in this area every day, and if he must be confined for an hour or so, it must not seem like punishment. If you are considering crate training and the crate as a safety zone, you **MUST** do this *before* baby’s arrival. During the transition, respect your pet’s need for rest and privacy. This will become especially important when your baby reaches the crawling stage. In addition to a “safe-zone”, cats should also have access to plenty of escape routes, hiding places and perches.

### **Routine**

Routine is important to pets because they need to know what to expect. Think ahead and gradually begin establishing new routines. Include in your adjusted schedule, at least once a day, quality time for you and your pet, with no competition for your attention. This “non-baby” time is very important for your pet and for you!

## INTRODUCING BABY (CONTINUED)

Some of the changes in your post-baby routine won't be permanent, like getting up at all hours of the night. Help your pet handle temporary schedule adjustments by ignoring any extra attention-getting ploys used at those times.

Try to get back to your normal routines as soon as possible.

### **Social Order**

The first priority for an animal faced with a new family member is to determine who will be top dog (or cat) in the relationship. Dogs and cats live by an unwritten code of ranking in their relationships. For most dogs and cats, it isn't really important which one comes out on top, only that the rank be decided.

Whether you have one pet or several, your own position in the family's social order should be clear – you must *always* be the top-ranking animal in your family. This will be especially important as your baby's arrival approaches. When your position as leader of the family is secure and it's clear that the baby belongs to you, your pet should not challenge the baby's important rank in your home.

If your pet is very protective of you or your home, is a little pushy about food and toys, has been known to behave aggressively toward other animals and/or challenges your rank as a leader, then you probably have a dominant pet. In this situation, it's especially important that family rank and household rules be firmly established before your baby's arrival. You may need to seek the help of an animal behavior specialist.

Reinforce house rules and manners to remind your pet that you are the leader in your family (see our information sheet "Nothing in Life is Free"). If your pet hasn't learned basic manners or obedience commands, now is the time to start. It can become a very special time for you and your dog during this "waiting for baby" time. Train your dog to sit and lie down on command. This physical control will be especially important when your arms are filled with your baby and various baby paraphernalia.

Be sure that your pet understands when, if ever, jumping onto people or things is appropriate. If cats have always had access to any surface in your home (counters, tables and so forth) you need to decide which places will be off-limits after the baby's arrival. Start training your pet now to discourage him from jumping onto those places. Be sure to allow your cat access to some high-up places in your home. Dogs should only be allowed to jump when specific permission is given.

If your pet likes to spend time in your lap, teach him/her to ask permission before jumping up. Teach your pet that your voice, your look and your presence are also positive forms of attention –you don't always need to touch him to show affection. You can do this simply by talking calmly and pleasantly to your pet as he lies or sits nicely at your feet. Use his name, smile and make eye contact with him. When he/she tries to move onto your lap, stop the praise. As this is repeated they will learn to wait for the tone, look and action that indicate permission.

Insist on good manners. Don't accept any whining, growling or pushy behavior in an attempt to gain attention. Give your pet plenty of time and attention whenever you can, but not when he or she has demanded it!

## INTRODUCING BABY (CONTINUED)

Plan short periods of play time, treat time and snuggle time with your pet – with and without your baby in the room. Meals should be eaten in the same room and at the same time whenever possible.

Whenever anything inappropriate is in your pet's mouth, offer him a treat as "trade" for the object, say "drop it" and when he takes the treat praise him enthusiastically and offer him a toy that he's allowed to have. If you don't want it in your pet's mouth, don't leave it on the floor. Pets often simply cannot determine a baby toy from a pet toy.

Encourage a positive relationship between your baby and your "furry child" by involving them in activities you can all enjoy. Settle into your favorite chair by a sunny window, with your baby in your lap and your cat on a table beside you, so you can stroke them both at the same time! Walk with your baby in a stroller and your dog on a leash, just like you did before the baby came, but with this nice addition. (Be sure to practice with an additional caretaker for the first few times.) Share mealtimes, and when your baby gets a treat or a toy, be sure your pet has something nice to hold, chew or enjoy, too.

It can be a joyful and wondrous experience to watch two cherished members of your family grow and learn together. They both need your love and guidance to understand how your family "works".



## **CHILDREN AND CATS: IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

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Living with a cat can be beneficial to children. Cats can enhance children's self-esteem, teach them responsibility and help them to learn empathy. However, children and cats may not always automatically have a wonderful relationship. Parents must be willing to teach the cat and the child acceptable limits of behavior in order to make their interactions pleasant and safe.

### **Selecting A Cat**

What age is best? Many people have a warm and fuzzy image of a kitten and a child growing up together. If you have a young child and are thinking of adopting a kitten (less than 1 year old) there are a few things you need to consider.

- **Time and Energy:** Kittens require a lot of time, patience, and supervision. If you have a young child who already requires a lot of care and time, you should ask yourself if you will have enough time to care for a kitten as well.
- **Safety:** Kittens, because they're babies, are fragile creatures. A kitten may become frightened or even injured by a well meaning, curious child who wants to constantly pick him/her up, hug him/her, or explore his/her body by pulling on his/her tail or ears.
- **Rough Play:** Kittens have sharp teeth and claws with which they may inadvertently injure a small child. Kittens also tend to climb up on small children and accidentally scratch. All interactions between your child and kitten will need to be closely supervised in order to minimize the chances of either being injured.
- **Advantages of Getting an Adult Cat:** Adult cats require less time and attention once they've adjusted to your family and household routine. You can better gauge how hardy and tolerant an adult cat will be of a child's enthusiasm and you can work with your local animal shelter to adopt a cat that has previously lived with children.

As a general rule, if your child is under six years old, it's best to adopt a cat that's over two years old. Although kittens can be a lot of fun and it's exciting and rewarding to help them grow into wonderful companions, they do require significantly more time to supervise than an adult cat.

### **Who Will Care For The Cat?**

It's unrealistic to expect a child, regardless of age, to have the sole responsibility of caring for a cat. Cats need basic things, like food, water, shelter, and litter box maintenance. They also need to be played with and given opportunities to exercise on a consistent basis. Teaching a cat the rules of the house and helping him/her become a good companion is too overwhelming a task for a young child. While responsible teenagers may be up to the task, they may not be willing to spend an adequate amount of time with the cat, as their desire to be with their friends usually takes over at this age. If you're adopting a cat "for the kids," you must be prepared and willing to be the cat's primary caretaker.

### **Starting Off Right**

Below are some guidelines to help you start off on the right foot. Remember, small children should never be left alone with a cat or kitten without adult supervision.

## CHILDREN AND CATS (CONTINUED)

**Holding:** Because kittens often squirm and wiggle they can easily fall out of a young child's arms and become injured. If held too tightly or forcibly restrained, the kitten may respond by scratching or biting. It is safest for everyone if your child is sitting down where he/she wants to hold the kitten.

For adult cats, have your child sit in your lap and let the cat approach both of you. This way you can control your child and not allow him/her to get "carried away" with pets that are too rough. You are also there to teach your new cat to treat your child gently. Some cats do not want to be held, but will sit next to you and your child if offered treats or petting. Keep in mind that the cat should always be allowed to leave when it feels like it.

**Petting and Giving Affection:** Children often want to hug cats or grasp them too firmly. Your cat may view this as a threatening gesture, rather than an affectionate one, and may react with scratching and biting. You should teach your child to let the cat approach on his own terms and pet lightly. You should also teach your child to avoid staring at, or looking directly into, your cat's eyes.

**Giving Treats:** When children offer a treat from fingers held together as a pincher, the cat may accidentally bite fingers instead of only taking the treat. Have your child place the treat in on open palm, rather than holding it in his/her fingers. You may want to place a hand underneath your child's hand to help guide.

**Supervising Play:** Cats interpret quick and jerky hand movements as an invitation to play. You should teach you child to offer the cat or kitten a toy on a string in order to maximize the distance between the child's hands and the toy. Encouraging a cat to play with hands and fingers may result in scratches or bites.

**Be Patient:** Your new cat may take some time to feel comfortable with your child's actions and sounds and will approach when he/she feels ready. Your cat must also learn which behaviors on his/her part are appropriate and which are not. Our handout "Managing Your Kitten's Rough Play" outlines procedures for discouraging rough play and encouraging appropriate play. Punishing your cat for inappropriate behavior will not help. If he/she learns that being around children always results in "bad things" happening to him, he may become defensive in their presence.

If your cat is growling, hissing, or biting at your child for any reason, the situation needs IMMEDIATE attention. Punishing your cat is likely to make matters worse.



## **CREATING A CAT FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT**

Having a cat in your home can be very rewarding and making the environment can just add to the reward for you and you kitty. There are several things you can do to make your home ideal for your new kitty.

Kittens and cats are very playful and need lots of play things to burn their energy on. Each kitty has preferences to what they like to play with; you just have to figure out what yours prefers. Generally, kittens and cats play is motivated by their predatory nature. Balls, play mice and basically anything they can bat around and chase provide hours of play and exercise. Lots of cats like big boxes to find toys in and paper bags that make a funny noise when they get in and romp around.

Vertical space is something that cats need. Whether it is a tall scratching post, refrigerator, or kitchen cabinets, they like a high space to climb and sit on. Especially if you have dogs or children, they need somewhere to get away. Hiding spaces are another must for cats. These are probably already accessible in your home, like under the beds or in a closet.

The litter box is something that needs to be worked out with your cat, and their preferences may change at any time. Generally, most cats like their litter box in a quiet area (not in the laundry room or next to the garage). Most cats tend to like the scoopable or finely grained litter; some prefer to not use the deodorized. Although the liners make cleaning easier for you, some cats do not like them. Same with the hooded litter boxes, especially if you have other pets, they may feel like the hood makes the box more like a cave and it's not easy to see or get out of quickly in case someone is walking up on them. Also, if you have multiple cats you need at least 1 litter box per cat. If you have multiple floors to your house, you probably need at least 1 box per floor, maybe 2 depending on how big your house is. The key is to make it as easy on your cat as you can.

There are just a few tips on how you can create a cat friendly environment. If you have any more questions please call the APA at (314) 645-4610.



## **MOVING WITH YOUR PET**

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A common reason people give when surrendering a pet to our shelter is “moving”. Recognizing there may be exceptional circumstances, we remain hopeful you will consider your pet a true member of the family and not surrender unless there are no other choices. However, moving to a new home can be just as stressful on your pet as it is on you. Here are a few tips to help you and your pet through a “change of address”.

- Update your pet’s vaccinations at least three weeks before the move. Talk with your veterinarian to determine if your pet will need medication for nervousness or car sickness.
- Gather the supplies your pet will need during the move – food, water, medications, medical records, beds and toys. It also helps to bring along some of your dirty laundry because the familiar scent of these belongings is comforting to your pet and will help them travel and settle in.
- Keep your pet away from the moving-day activity. Confine him/her to a room where they feel safe and be aware that your pet could become frightened and bolt out the door unnoticed. It’s difficult to pack, move furniture, and keep an eye on your pet at the same time. You might consider a friendly place where your pet can stay during the packing and moving, like a neighbor, friend or already visited boarding kennel. As much as possible, try not to disrupt your pet’s daily routine.
- Be sure your dog or cat has a tag with your new phone number or the number of a friend so there will be someone to contact if your pet gets lost during the move. Microchipping is also helpful, but does not take the place of a tag.
- Move small animals, like birds and hamsters in their cages, covered with a lightweight fabric. Remove water and any other objects that might loosen and injure them. You must keep the temperature constant for these small friends to survive.
- Unpack and settle in a bit before turning your pet loose at the new place. Keep the doors to your extra rooms closed and slowly give your pet access to them as they become accustomed to their new home.
- Orient your dog or cat to the new surroundings. IF possible, try to place their favorite resting place (dog bed, chair or cushion) in the same position or area, as it was in your old home. Put their food and water bowls and toys in familiar places as well.
- Be vigilant in your new surroundings for dangerous openings, sharp items and the potential for darting out a door into trouble.
- Before you allow your pet (and we do NOT encourage cats to live outdoors), into your yard, check for any gaps in fencing, sharp or dangerous items or potential climbing and escaping opportunities.
- If you have a dog, walk him/her around the house, the yard and the block. If you have a cat. Sit quietly and pet her, preferably while sitting in a familiar chair. Provide a place for your cat to hide (she’ll do this anyway). Make sure she’s eating, drinking and using her litter box.
- Be patient, loving and reassuring with your pet, and they will adjust to the sights, sounds and smells of their new home.