Biting Behaviors- Cats

- **Play Biting:** This occurs when play goes too far or when a cat misdirects play behavior. Many owners roughhouse with their cats, especially as kittens, using their hands as objects for the cats to mouth or kick. While it may seem cute and harmless at first, it can teach your cat that the correct way to get your attention is to play fight. To prevent this behavior from becoming a problem, use toys as the target. If playing with your cat causes them to get too aroused or worked-up, the play becomes rough or escalates to aggression toward you, end the session and walk away or try to redirect their focus onto a toy. Another sign of play-related aggression is stalking and attacking moving feet. Cats often use predatory behavior when playing, therefore try to redirect your cat to appropriate objects. Waving wand toys, tossing toy mice, or even skittering pieces of kibble across the floor can help satisfy the desire for that predatory style of play.

- **Petting-induced Biting:** Petting can often overstimulate your cat. Understanding why this happens is the tricky part. It seems like your cat wanted attention and petting in the first place. Just because your cat wants your attention or closeness doesn't necessarily mean they want to be petted. Sometimes, cats only want to be near you without being petted or prefer to be petted only in certain areas. Most cats enjoy petting on the top of the head, cheeks, or under the chin. Many cats do not like long strokes down the back or having their tail touched; every cat has their individual preferences. The key is for you to find out what your cat likes and stick to those areas. For cats who only tolerate brief bouts of petting, try petting for a few seconds and then stop. If they ask for more by nudging or leaning into you, then keep going for a few seconds more.

  Another common misconception is that when cats roll over, they want you to pet them on their belly, but this isn't always an invitation to touch them on their tummy. Remember to respect your cat's likes and dislikes.