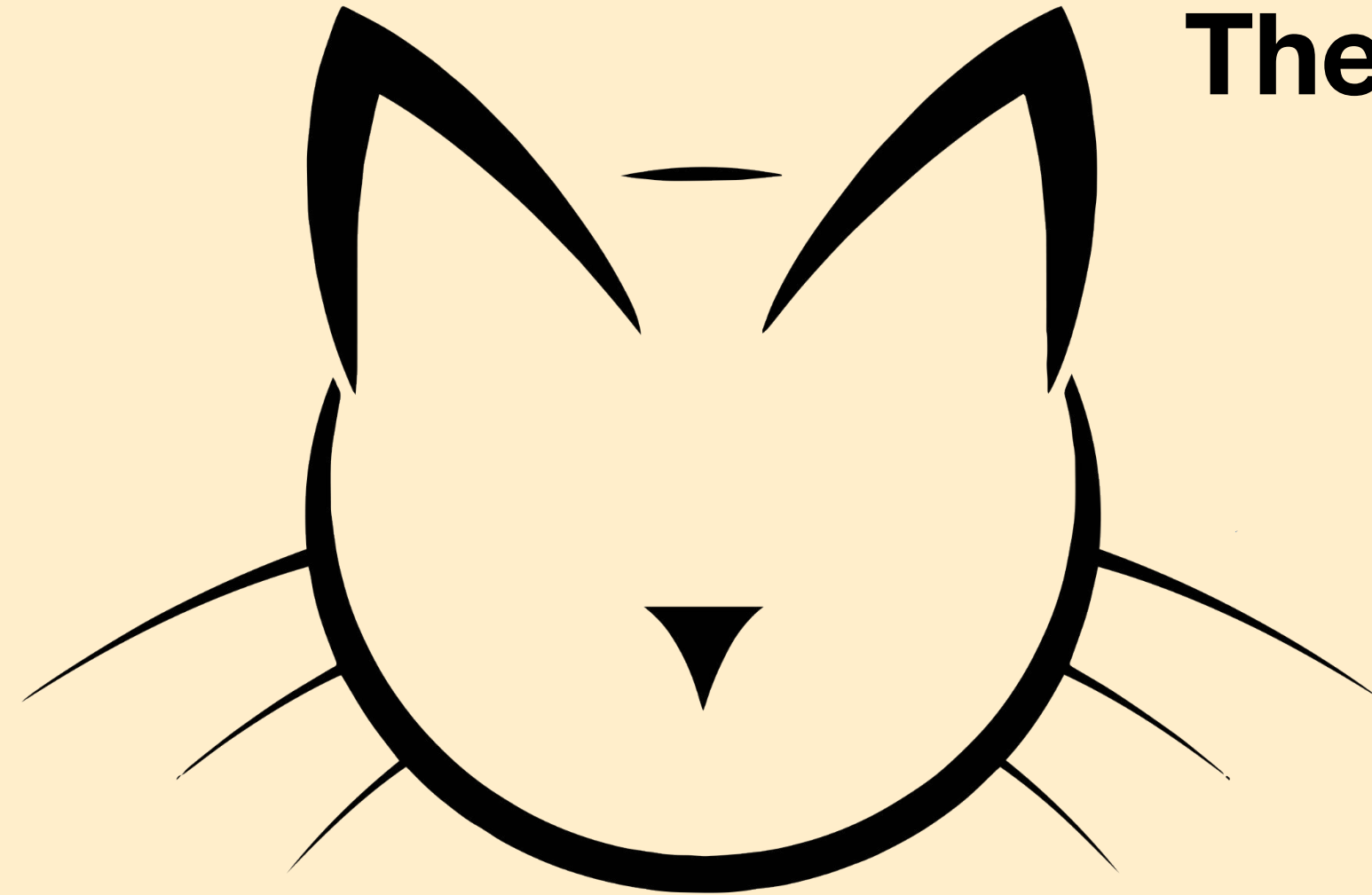


The Ultimate Guide To Cat Care



Presented By:



Newport Harbor
Animal Hospital

OUR MISSION

Our primary and guiding philosophy is to provide the safest and most up-to-date veterinary care to the animals that are brought to our facility, and to be compassionate and considerate to their owners.

To educate our community about the importance of veterinary healthcare

To treat our staff with the utmost respect at all times, and provide them with educational opportunities to enrich their skills, and encourage them to share their passion for animals with everyone they meet.



GENERAL HOSPITAL INFORMATION



OUR DOCTORS:

Dr. Renee Owen is a board certified specialist in general practice in canine/feline. She loves complex medical cases and running with her Pointer 'Dieter'.

Dr. Mary Sebzda is a board certified specialist in reproduction. She loves working with complex reproductive health and paddle boarding with her Labrador 'Sertoli' (Ask how her where his name comes from!)

Dr. Cindy Wade is a general practitioner who strongly believes in the power of prevention and good medicine. She loves walking her neighborhood with her Greyhound 'Callie'.

Dr. Kevin Ashbran is a general practitioner who strongly believes in the power of prevention and good medicine. He enjoys fishing trips with his Labrador 'Wooly' (Ask him how he got his name!)

Dr. Sarah Wind is a general practitioner who strongly believes in the power of prevention and good medicine. She enjoys reading a good book with her cat 'Oden' and teaching him tricks!

Dr. Chris Bates is a general practitioner who strongly believes in the power of prevention and good medicine. He enjoys hiking with his dog 'Loki' who lives up to his name.

Dr. Nicole Guastamacchio "Dr. G" is a general practitioner who strongly believes in the power of prevention and good medicine. She enjoys working with her newest kitty 'Roxy' and taking her on a walk around the neighborhood.



GENERAL HOSPITAL INFORMATION



Newport Harbor
Animal Hospital

OUR HOURS OF OPERATION:

We are open 7 days a week!

Monday	7:00am to 7:00pm
Tuesday	7:00am to 7:00pm
Wednesday	7:00am to 7:00pm
Thursday	7:00am to 7:00pm
Friday	7:00am to 7:00pm
Saturday	7:00am to 5:00pm
Sunday	8:00am to 5:00pm

*We are closed New Year's, Easter, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas day. There may be shortened hours on New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve.

IN EMERGENCY:

If your pet is experiencing an emergency outside of our hours of operation - please call or take them directly to Southern California Veterinary Specialty Hospital. (949) 833-9020



THE PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

The physical examination begins with a brief visit from the veterinary technician who will collect information about your pet's current activity, overall health status, appetite and activity level. If your pet is experiencing abnormal behavior any information you can provide will be helpful in pinpointing potential problems. The technician will obtain your pet's temperature (normal temperature for a cat varies between 100 and 102.5 degrees) and body weight. They will also review some basic preventive health measures. This is a great time for us to provide you with educational information about your pet's health or behavior and answer any questions you may have.

Once the technician has collected information about your pet, the doctor will perform a complete head to tail physical examination. Your pet's eyes, ears, and mouth will be checked for any abnormalities. In addition, the veterinarian will palpate your pet's entire body, feeling for appropriate organ size and looking for any skin growths or masses. During the examination, you will be asked additional questions in order to obtain an overall assessment of your pet's current health status. Depending on your pet's particular circumstance, your veterinarian may recommend certain laboratory or diagnostic tests for further evaluation.

Because our pet's age at a much faster rate than we do, it is important to have your pet examined at least once a year during the first eight years of life and then increase the frequency to at least once every six months.

Following your veterinarian's recommendations will help ensure the health and happiness of your pet.



VACCINATIONS



When should my kitten be vaccinated?

There are many diseases that are fatal to cats. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent many of these by the use of very effective vaccines. In order to be effective, these vaccines must be given as a series of injections. Ideally, they are given at about 6-8, 12 and 16 weeks of age, but this schedule will vary depending on several factors.

The routine vaccination schedule will protect your kitten from five diseases: Distemper, three respiratory organisms, and rabies. The first four are included in a combination vaccine that is given at 6-8, 12, and 16 weeks old. Rabies vaccine is given between 12 to 16 weeks of age. Leukemia vaccine is appropriate for any kitten but a necessity if your cat does or will go outside or if you have another cat that goes in and out. This deadly disease is transmitted by contact with other cats, especially when fighting occurs.

Why does my kitten need more than one vaccination for feline distemper, upper respiratory infections, and leukemia?

When a kitten nurses its mother, it receives a temporary form of immunity through the mother's milk. This immunity is in the form of proteins called antibodies. For about 24-48 hours after birth, the kitten's intestines allow absorption of these antibodies directly into the bloodstream. This immunity is of benefit during the first few weeks of the kitten's life, but at some point, this immunity fails and the kitten must be able to make its own long-lasting antibodies. Vaccinations are used for this purpose. As long as the mother's antibodies are present, vaccinations do not "take." The mother's antibodies will neutralize the vaccine so the vaccine does not get a chance to stimulate the kitten's immune system.

Many factors determine when the kitten will be able to respond to the vaccines. These include the level of immunity in the mother cat, how much of the antibody has been absorbed, and the number of vaccines given to the kitten. Since we do not know when an individual kitten will lose the short-term immunity, we give a series of vaccinations. We hope that at least two of these will fall in the window of time when the kitten has lost the immunity from its mother but has not yet been exposed to disease. A single vaccination, even if effective, is not likely to stimulate the long-term immunity that is so important.

Rabies vaccine is an exception to this, since one injection given at the proper time is enough to produce long-term immunity. This vaccine is repeated yearly as we choose to use the safest vaccine available for your kitty.

INTESTINAL PARASITES

Do all kittens have worms?

Intestinal parasites are common in kittens. Kittens can become infected with parasites almost as soon as they are born. For example, the most important source of roundworm infection in kittens is the mother's milk. The microscopic examination of a stool sample will usually help us determine the presence of intestinal parasites. We recommend this examination for all kittens and then once a year for the lifetime of your cat. Even if we do not obtain a stool sample, we recommend the use of a broad- spectrum de-worming product that is safe and effective against almost all of the common worms of the cat. It is given now and repeated in about 3-4 weeks, because the de-worming medication only kills the adult worms. Within 3-4 weeks the larval stages will have become adults and will need to be treated. Cats remain susceptible to re-infection with hookworms and roundworms. Periodic de-worming throughout the cat's life is recommended for cats that go outdoors.



INTESTINAL PARASITES

What is the most common parasite in cats?

Tapeworms are the most common intestinal parasite of adult cats. Cats become infected with them when they swallow fleas; the eggs of the tapeworm live inside the flea. When the cat chews or licks its skin as a flea bites, the flea may be swallowed. The flea is digested within the cat's intestine; the tapeworm hatches and then anchors itself to the intestinal lining. Therefore, exposure to fleas may result in a new infection in as little as two weeks. Cats infected with tapeworms may pass small segments of the worms in their stool. The segments are white in color and look like grains of rice. They are about 1/8 inch long and may be seen crawling on the surface of the stool. They may also stick to the hair under the tail. If that occurs, they will dry out, shrink to about half their size and become golden in color. Tapeworm segments do not pass every day or in every stool sample; therefore, inspection of several consecutive bowel movements may be needed to find them. We may examine a stool sample in our office and not see them then you may find them the next day at home. If you find them at any time, please notify us so we may provide the appropriate treatment.

Are there other parasites cats can get in their intestinal tract?

Yes, cats can also be susceptible to infections from Coccidia. Coccidia can cause loose stool, sometimes with blood and is especially prevalent in kittens. It is found by analyzing a fecal sample but because the parasite only sheds its eggs intermittently it can be missed on a single sample. For a kitten with persistent diarrhea we may treat for this parasite even if it is not found.

Cats can also be infected with giardia, a protozoa that can also infect people and dogs. It also causes persistent diarrhea and can be found either on fecal smears or by sending a stool sample to a laboratory for specific analysis. Cats with persistent diarrhea may also be tested for Tritrichomonas another protazoa the we see more often in exotic breeds of cats or cateries.



FLEA CONTROL



One female flea can lay up to 2000 eggs in her lifetime which is why just **a few fleas can cause a terrible infestation in a very short period of time.** The flea life cycle occurs in four stages: the egg stage, the larval stage, the pupae stage and finally the adult. Most typically, all you see is the adult portion of this life cycle that accounts for only 5% of the total population. The presence of fleas can pose many health problems as well. Infection to the skin, tapeworms and anemia are a few of the health threats fleas can introduce. For an allergic pet, one flea can cause such intense itching that your pet may chew out his hair and traumatize his skin. In addition, fleas can be carriers of several zoonotic diseases that can be dangerous to you and your family.

For cats a topical prevention called **Revolution** may be recommended. This product is a topical **parasiticide** applied monthly or as needed depending on your pets needs. **Revolution (selamectin)** kills and prevents adult fleas, flea eggs, ear mites, zoonotic round and hookworms, as well as preventing heartworms. There is also a topical called **Bravecto** that kills and prevents adult flea infestations for 12 weeks.





Determining the most effective pest management approach can be confusing, there are so many products touting their own protocols and recommendations. The doctors at our hospital have spent a great deal of time researching the most effective products on the market in order to make flea control simple and easy for you. We hope you will follow our recommendation, as we are confident that the above approach is the most ideal and cost effective method available.

EFFECTIVE FLEA CONTROL REALLY IS EASIER THAN EVER BEFORE!

WE RECOMMEND

Revolution- topical medication.
Bravecto – topical medication.
Capstar – oral medication.

EAR MITES

What are ear mites?

Ear mites are tiny insect-like parasites that live in the ear canal of cats (and dogs). The most common sign of ear mite infection is scratching of the ears. Sometimes the ears will appear dirty because of a black material in the ear canal; this material is sometimes shaken out. The instrument we use for examining the ear canals, an otoscope, has the necessary magnification to allow us to see the mites. Sometimes, we can find the mites by taking a small amount of the black material from the ear canal and examining it with a microscope. Although they may leave the ear canals for short periods of time, they spend the vast majority of their lives within the protection of the ear canal. Transmission generally requires direct contact. Ear mites are common in litters of kittens if their mother has ear mites.



NUTRITION

What should I feed my kitten?

Diet is extremely important in the growing months of a cat's life. There are two important criteria that should be met in selecting a food for your kitten. We recommend a **PET STORE QUALITY FOOD** made by a national cat food company (not a generic or local brand), and a form of food **MADE FOR KITTENS**. This should be fed until your kitten is about 12 months of age. We recommend that you only buy food that has the AAFCO certification. Usually, you can find this information very easily on the label. AAFCO is an organization that oversees the pet food industry. It does not endorse any particular food, but it will certify that the food has met the minimum requirements for nutrition. Most of the commercial pet foods will have the AAFCO label. Generic brands often do not have it. Iams kitten and Hill's Science Diet Growth are both excellent diets for a growing kitten.

Feeding a dry or canned form of cat food is acceptable. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Dry food is definitely the least expensive. It can be left in the cat's bowl at all times. If given the choice, the average cat will eat a mouthful of food about 12-20 times per day. The quality brands of dry food are just as nutritious as the canned diets and can be fed as the sole source of nutrition. As a rule, most veterinarians will recommend dry food for your kitten or a mixture of canned and dry. Canned food is often more appealing to the cat's taste; however, they are not more nutritious. If you feed a very tasty food, you are running the risk of creating a cat with a finicky appetite. The semi-moist foods are high in sugar and not recommended for routine feeding.



NUTRITION

Table food is not recommended. Because it is generally very tasty, cats will often begin to hold out for this and not eat their well-balanced cat food. If you choose to give your kitten table food, be sure that at least 90% of their diet is good quality commercial kitten food. We enjoy a variety of things to eat in our diet however; most cats prefer not to change from one food to another unless they are trained to do so by the way you feed them. Do not feel guilty if your cat is happy to eat one food day after day, week after week.

Commercials for cat food can be misleading. Most commercials promote cat food on one basis, TASTE. Nutrition is rarely mentioned. Most of the “gourmet” canned foods are marketed to appeal to owners who want the best for their cats; however, they do not offer any nutritional advantage over a good quality dry food and are considerably more expensive. If your cat eats a gourmet food very long, it will probably not be happy with other foods. If it needs a special diet later in life due to a health problem, it is very unlikely to accept it. Therefore, we do not encourage feeding gourmet cat foods.



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NEUTERING/SPAYING

Why should I have my female cat spayed?

Spaying offers several advantages. The female's heat period result in about 2-3 weeks of obnoxious behavior. This can be quite annoying if your cat is kept indoors. Male cats are attracted from blocks away and, in fact, seem to come out of the woodwork. They seem to go over, around, and through many doors. Your cat will have a heat period about every 2-3 weeks until she is bred - cats do not ovulate until they are bred.

Spaying is the removal of the uterus and the ovaries. Therefore, heat periods no longer occur. In many cases, despite your best efforts, the female will become pregnant; spaying prevents unplanned litters of kittens.

It has been proven that as the female gets older, there is a significant incidence of breast cancer and uterine infections if she has not been spayed. Spaying before she has any heat periods will virtually eliminate the chance of either. This can be done any time after four months of age.



NEUTERING/SPAYING



Why should I have my male cat neutered?

Neutering offers several advantages. Male cats go through significant personality changes when they mature. They become very possessive of their territory and mark it with their urine to ward off other cats. The intact male cat's urine develops a very strong odor that will be almost impossible to remove from your house. They also try to constantly enlarge their territory that means one fight after another. Fighting results in severe infections and abscesses and often engenders rage in your neighbors. We strongly encourage you to have your cat neutered at about 4 months of age. If he should begin to spray his urine, he should be neutered immediately. The longer he sprays or fights, the less likely neutering will stop that behavior.

Can you recommend something for pet identification?

The latest in pet retrieval is microchipping. This tiny device is implanted with a needle so the process is much like getting an injection. Our scanner can detect these chips; humane society and animal shelters across the country also have scanners. A national registry permits the identification of microchipped pets throughout the United States and Canada.



DENTAL DISEASE

What kinds of dental problems do pets have?

Dental disease is as common in dogs and cats as it is in humans. The most common form of dental disease in humans is caries (cavities). However, this is not the case in our pets. The most common form of dental disease is tartar buildup. This causes irritation of the gums around the base of the teeth (gingivitis), resulting in exposure of the roots. Ultimately, this leads to infection and tooth loss. One of the main factors determining the amount of tartar buildup is the individual chemistry in the mouth. Some dogs and cats need yearly cleanings; others need a cleaning only once every few years.

What does tartar do to the teeth?

If tartar is allowed to remain on the teeth, several things may happen:

- 1) The tartar will mechanically push the gums away from the roots of the teeth. This allows the teeth to loosen in their sockets and infection to enter the root socket. The teeth will loosen and fall out or have to be extracted.
- 2) Infection will accumulate in the mouth, resulting in gingivitis, tonsillitis, and Pharyngitis (sore throat). Although antibiotics may temporarily suppress the infection, if the tartar is not removed from the teeth, infection will return quickly.
- 3) Infection within the mouth will be picked up by the blood stream and carried to other parts of the body. Kidney and liver infections, as well as infections involving the heart valves, frequently begin in the mouth.



DENTAL DISEASE

What is involved in cleaning my pets' teeth?

Proper cleaning of the teeth requires complete cooperation of the patient so plaque and tartar can be removed properly. Anesthesia is required to thoroughly clean the teeth. Although anesthesia always carries a degree of risk, the modern anesthetics in use in our hospital minimize this risk, even for older animals.

There are several steps in the cleaning process that was used on your pet today:

1. **Scaling** removes the tartar above and below the gum line.
This is done with hand instruments and ultrasonic cleaning equipment.
2. **Polishing** smooths the surface of the teeth, making them resistant to additional plaque formation.
3. **Flushing** removes dislodged tartar from the teeth and helps to remove the bacteria that accompany tartar.
4. **Fluoride** coating decreases teeth sensitivity, strengthens enamel, and decreases the rate of future plaque formation.



How can I prevent this from recurring?

Seek regular veterinary care and have teeth cleaned professionally when advised. Maintain home dental care with regular brushing of the teeth. Special toothbrushes and toothpaste are available for cats. Our technicians can demonstrate proper home dental care and recommend an appropriate schedule.

FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

The Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) is an important disease agent of the cat. It is likened to the AIDS virus which affects humans because of the similarities in the two diseases. Fortunately, most viruses are species specific. This is the case with the human AIDS virus and with **FIV**. The AIDS virus affects only humans, and the FIV affects only cats.

What cats are likely to be infected with the FIV?

The **FIV** is transmitted primarily through bite wounds that occur when cats fight. Other interactions among cats, such as sharing common food and water bowls or grooming each other, have not been shown to be significant in transmission.

What are the clinical signs?

An **FIV** infected cat will generally go through a prolonged period of viral dormancy before it becomes ill. This incubation period may last as long as six years. Thus, we generally do not diagnose FIV in sick cats that are relatively young.

When illness occurs, we can see a variety of severe, chronic illnesses. The most common illness is a severe infection affecting the gums around the teeth. Abscesses from fight wounds, which would normally heal within a week, or two may remain active for several months. Respiratory infections may linger for weeks. The cat may lose weight and go through periods of not eating well; the hair coat may become unkempt. The cat may have episodes of treatment-resistant diarrhea. Ultimately, widespread organ failure can occur.



FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

How is the diagnosis made?

Evidence of exposure to the FIV can be detected by a simple blood test. A positive test means the cat has been infected with the virus and will likely remain infected for the remainder of its life. A negative may mean that the cat has not been exposed; however, false negatives occur in a few situations.

Adult cats

1. From the time of initial virus inoculation into the cat, it may take up to three months for the test to turn positive. Therefore, for up to three months, the test may be negative even though the virus is present in the cat.
2. When some cats becomes terminally ill with FIV, the test may again turn negative. This occurs because antibodies (immune proteins) produced against the virus become attached and bound to the large amount of virus present. Since the test detects antibodies that are free in circulation, the test may be falsely negative. This is not the normal occurrence, but it does happen to some cats.



FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS



Newport Harbor
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The vast majority of kittens under 4 months of age that test positive have not been exposed to the virus. Instead, the test is detecting the immunity (antibodies) that was passed from the mother to the kitten. These antibodies may persist until the kitten is about 6 months old. Therefore, the kitten should be retested at about 6 months of age. If it remains positive, the possibility of true infection is much greater. If the kitten tests negative, there is no cause for worry.

If an **FIV**-infected cat bites a kitten, it can develop a true infection. However, the test will usually not turn positive for several months. If a mother cat is infected with the FIV at the time she is pregnant or nursing, she can pass large quantities of the virus to her kittens. This means of transmission may result in a positive test result in just a few weeks.



Provided by GeniusVets.com

FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

Is treatment possible?

No treatments are available to rid the cat of the FIV. However, the disease state (secondary to the viral infection) can sometimes be treated with antibiotics or with drugs to stimulate the immune system restoring the cat to relatively good health. However, the virus will still be in the cat and may become active at a later date.

If you have a cat that tests FIV-positive but is not ill, it is not necessary to immediately euthanize it. As long as it does not fight with your other cats or those of your neighbors, transmission is not likely to occur. However, if it is prone to fight or if another cat often instigates fights with it, transmission is likely. In fairness to your neighbors, it is generally recommended to restrict an FIV-positive cat to your house. Owners of infected cats must be responsible so that the likelihood of transmission to someone else's cat is minimized.

Can this virus be transmitted to my family or me?

The feline immunodeficiency virus is cat-specific; it does not infect humans.

How can I prevent my other cats from getting infected with the FIV?

Neutering of male cats and keeping cats indoors are the only available preventive measures which can be recommended. A vaccine is currently available to prevent infection from this virus. If your cat is at high risk for development of this disease, please discuss it with your veterinarian.



FELINE HEARTWORM DISEASE



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Key Facts:

- Heartworm parasites are transmitted when a cat is bitten by infected mosquito
- Both indoor and outdoor cats at risk
- Emerging epidemic resulting from a number of factors:
 - Heartworm parasites spread across country in animals rescued during
 - Hurricane Katrina (80% of dogs on Gulf Coast infected by heartworms)
 - More mosquitoes from free-standing water and shipments through local ports from other countries
- Heartworm disease often is different in dogs (heart disease) than cats (respiratory disease)
- Symptoms in cats include coughing, wheezing, lethargy, vomiting, sudden death
- Difficult to diagnose in cats - and the first sign may be sudden death.
- Cannot be cured in cats
- Disease easily prevented in cats:
 - Revolution – a monthly topical treatment



KITTENS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW OWNERS

How should I introduce my new kitten to its new environment?

A cat is naturally inclined to investigate its new surroundings. It is suggested that the cat's area of exploration be limited initially so that these natural tendencies do not create an unmanageable task. After confining the cat to one room for the first few days, you should slowly allow access to other areas of the home.

How should I introduce my new kitten to my other cat?

Most kittens receive a hostile reception from other household pets, especially from another cat. The other cat usually sees no need for a kitten in the household, and these feelings are reinforced if it perceives that special favoritism is being shown the kitten. The existing cat must not feel that it is necessary to compete for food or for attention. The new kitten should have its own food and food bowl, and it should not be permitted to eat from the other cat's bowl. Although it is natural to spend time holding and cuddling the kitten, the existing cat will quickly sense that it is being neglected. The new kitten needs lots of love and attention, but the existing cat should not be slighted. In fact, the transition will be smoother if the existing cat is given more attention than normal.



KITTENS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW OWNERS

The introduction period will usually last one to two weeks and will have one of three possible outcomes.

1. The existing cat will remain **hostile** to the kitten. Fighting may occur occasionally, especially if both try to eat out of the same bowl at the same time. This is an unlikely occurrence if competition for food and affection are minimized during the first few weeks.
2. The existing cat will only **tolerate** the kitten. Hostility will cease, but the existing cat will act as if the kitten is not present. This is more likely if the existing cat is very independent, has been an only cat for several years, or if marked competition occurred during the first few weeks. This relationship is likely to be permanent.
3. **Bonding** will occur between the existing cat and the kitten. They will play together, groom each other, and sleep near each other. This is more likely to occur if competition is minimized and if the existing cat has been lonely for companionship.



AGGRESSION, TERRITORIAL: INTRODUCING A NEW CAT TO THE HOUSEHOLD

What is territorial aggression?

Territorial aggression may be exhibited toward people or other animals (usually cats) that approach or reside on the pet's property. Aggression can occur towards outside cats and also to cats that live in the household, especially new cats coming into the territory. This can occur with the addition of another cat, or when resident cats reach social maturity at 1-2 years of age. Another situation is when one cat is removed from the household (perhaps for routine surgery or boarding), and aggression is exhibited when the cat is brought back into the home. This may be either one or both of territorial and fear aggression (perhaps the returning cat smells, looks or acts unfamiliar in some way).

Territorial aggression can manifest as stalking, chasing and aggressive encounters, which may lead to injury. At times the aggressor will prevent the victim from having access to certain areas of the home resulting in a cat that lives on top of furniture or bookshelves or under beds. This may in part be related to the social relationship (status) of each cat.

How can territorial aggression be prevented?

Territorial aggression can be prevented or minimized with early socialization, patient and slow introductions of new cats and adequate space, litter boxes and food bowls for cats. However, when a new cat is introduced (or reintroduced) into a household with existing cats, problems can best be prevented by slowly introducing the new cat to the environment, by keeping the new cat in a separate room with water and kitty litter, and supervising all interactions. If both cats have had adequate socialization with other cats, and are not too timid or fearful, it is usually only a matter of time before the cats work things out on their own, and are able to share the territory with little or no aggressive displays. However, in some homes, the aggression between cats persists and a more formal desensitization and counter-conditioning program may be required.



AGGRESSION, TERRITORIAL: INTRODUCING A NEW CAT TO THE HOUSEHOLD



What is the best way to safely introduce (or reintroduce) a cat into the household?

In order to ensure that there are no injuries and that all introductions are positive a desensitization and counter-conditioning program is the best way to ease a new cat into a household. Begin by confining the new cat to a room or portion of the home with its own litter and water. Allow the existing cat to continue to have access to the rest of the home. This arrangement provides a separate territory within the home for each cat, and allows both cats an opportunity to adapt to the smell and sounds of each other, without the possibility of direct contact or physical confrontation. If the new cat is housed in a screened-in porch or a room with a glass door, it may also be possible to allow the cats to see each other through a safe partition. When the cats show no fear, anxiety, or threat toward each other, then progress to controlled exposure exercises. Training should occur when the cats can be occupied in a highly “rewarding” activity such as feeding, play, or treats. Provided both cats are far enough apart to minimize the possibility of aggression, and the reward is sufficiently appealing, the cats will focus on the rewards rather than each other. In addition, if the rewards are saved exclusively for these introduction times, the cats will quickly learn to expect “good things to happen” in the presence of each other. In addition to ensuring that the cats are at a safe enough distance to minimize fear, both cats (or at least the one that is likely to be the aggressor) can be confined to an open wire mesh cage or a body harness and leash. This will ensure that the cats can neither escape nor injure each other. It is safest to begin the first few introductions, not only at sufficient distance to reduce fear, but also with one or both cats in cages or on body harness and leash, so that they can neither retreat, or injure the other cat. If the cats have been in cages during the first training session, they can be placed in each other’s cages at the next session (so that the cats are exposed to the other cat’s odor). The cages can be moved progressively closer, provided the cats show no fear or anxiety and remain interested in the food. Once the cats will eat and accept exposure in either cage when close together, keep one cat in the cage and the other out during feeding. The situation is then reversed at the next session. As a final step the distance between cats can be increased again, with both cats out of their cages. A body harness and leash can be used to ensure additional safety. Over time the cats are fed closer together until a point where the cats can eat, or take treats, in each other’s presence.

AGGRESSION, TERRITORIAL: INTRODUCING A NEW CAT TO THE HOUSEHOLD



Another way to integrate cats is with play therapy. Some cats are more interested in play, toys or catnip than they are in food. One of the best toys is a wand type or fishing rod type handle with a stimulating play toy such as a catnip mouse or feathers on the end for chasing and pouncing. Begin by having both cats play at a distance from each other. Over time, introduce the toys between the cats and let them play with the toys together.

What if the aggression between the cats persists?

Introductions must be done slowly. The cats need to be far enough apart that they are relaxed and will take food or a treat while in the presence of the other cat. If the cats will not eat then they are too anxious and probably too close together. Try moving the dishes further apart. If the cats still will not eat, be certain that they remain apart and do not give any food until the next feeding session. If the cats eat at that time repeat the same distance at the next feeding. If things go well, the next time the dishes can be moved closer together, but only by a small amount.

This is a slow process; you cannot rush things. Allowing either cat to interact in an aggressive manner sets the program back. The cats must remain separated except for times such as feeding when the cats are distracted, occupied, and engaged in an enjoyable act. In other words, good things are associated with the presence of the other cat. Another technique, which may help, is to rub the cats with towels and switch from one cat to the other to mix their scents.

Despite slow and careful progression, some cats may continue to display aggression, and it may be necessary to accept that they may never be compatible housemates. The only way to avoid territorial competition in these cats may be to find a new home for one of the cats, or to provide separate living quarters for each cat within the home. If the cats get along at certain times of the day, they can then be allowed limited exposure and interaction at these times. A leash and harness, or perhaps an air horn or water rifle, could be used to safely separate the cats should any aggressive displays emerge. If the problem is too severe, it may be helpful to medicate one or both cats. The option of drug therapy should be discussed with a veterinary behaviorist.

FELINE PLAY AND INVESTIGATIVE BEHAVIORS



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Animal Hospital

How does play develop in kittens?

Young kittens play using chasing and pouncing behaviors that seem to have their origin in predation. Predatory play is an integral part of feline play behavior and early learning. This play in a kitten is often aggressive and intense. Kittens begin social play as early as 5 weeks and continue at a high level until about 12 -14 weeks. Object play develops at 7-8 weeks when kittens develop eye-paw coordination needed to deal with small moving objects. Full development of locomotion occurs between 10-12 weeks and as a kitten becomes more coordinated play may become more intense. Kittens are attracted to moving objects and will chase and stalk them. Play is an important component of kitten development, and proper play and exercise should be encouraged.

What is the best way to play with my kitten?

Kittens use multiple objects as prey items when they play. This play behavior consists of stalking, pouncing, jumping, biting and clawing. Small objects that can easily be moved with paws and grasped in the mouth or between the feet are often preferred. Avoid objects that are so small that they could be ingested and cause intestinal blockage. Some kittens like to play with a linear object like string. This can cause severe intestinal dysfunction if eaten and should only be used under supervision.



FELINE PLAY AND INVESTIGATIVE BEHAVIORS

Why is my cat always getting into mischief?

Another important part of the development of young animals is the need for exploration and investigation of new objects and new environments. These behaviors can lead to damage to the home as well as injury to the kitten. Preventing these problems is quite simple; you accept your cat's needs to play and investigate. Provide suitable opportunities and outlets for your cat to perform these behaviors.

How can I prevent damage when I am not available to supervise?

When the cat cannot be supervised leave it in a cat-proof area, with soft comfortable bedding and a litter box for elimination. Although a large dog kennel may be an acceptable form of confinement for short departures, most cats can be confined in one or a few rooms that have been effectively cat-proofed. This allows the cat some freedom while preventing damage and injuries. Child locks and secure containers can be used to keep your cat out of cupboards or garbage cans. Any of your possessions or household objects that might be clawed, pounced on, explored, or knocked flying, should be either kept out of the cat's reach or booby-trapped. Remember that with their excellent ability to jump and climb, damage prevention may also be needed far above floor level.

Booby-trapping (see below) can be used to teach your cat to "stay away" from specified areas by making the sites unpleasant. Before making an area unpleasant, the cat must have access to appropriate outlets to meet its innate needs.



FELINE PLAY AND INVESTIGATIVE BEHAVIORS



The cat should be provided with a post for scratching, some ledges or shelves for climbing and perching, and a few play toys that can be swatted, batted, or chased. Cat toys on springs and those that are hung from doors or play centers, ping pong balls, “whole walnuts”, or catnip mice are often fun for cats to chase and attack. Cat play centers can be purchased or constructed to provide areas for perching and scratching in a relatively small compact area. Some cats like to explore new objects, so a few empty boxes or paper bags (never plastic) will keep some cats entertained until the owner has time to play. Sometimes the best solution is to get a second cat for companionship and play. Be certain that the second cat is young, sociable and playful.

Although some people think of confinement, cat-proofing and booby-trapping as unnecessary or cruel, they are precautionary measures to keep the cat safe and prevent damage to the household when the owners are not available to supervise. Common owner complaints such as chewing on plants, scratching, climbing or playing in inappropriate locations, or elimination outside of the litter area, are just a few of the potential problems that can best be prevented with a little planning and forethought. Then, when a family member is home and available to supervise, your cat should be given more freedom to explore and become accustomed to those areas of the home where problems might otherwise occur.

How can I successfully booby trap areas where problems persist?

Booby-trapping areas may be a simple matter of making the area less appealing by placing a less appealing surface in the area (such as a sheet of plastic or tin foil) or an uncomfortable surface on the area (double-sided sticky tape, plastic carpet runner with nubs up). Homemade booby traps can be constructed by placing a stack of cups or empty soda cans that tumble down, balloons set to pop, or a water container poised to spill on the cat when disturbed. Commercial products such as motion detectors, mats that emit an alarm or mild electronic stimulation on contact, or mousetrap trainers are also available.

FELINE PLAY AND INVESTIGATIVE BEHAVIORS



What problems are associated with play?

There are a number of behavior problems that arise out of over-exuberant and inappropriate play. Some examples are cats that rambunctiously tear around the household, those that swat at or pounce on the owners (sometimes escalating into bites and injuries), and those that grasp, nip, bite or swat at the owners throughout the night.

How can over-exuberant play and play attacks toward people be prevented?

Before any attempts at stopping or interrupting the behavior are attempted, provide sufficient opportunities and outlets for play. Choose play toys and activities that are appealing to the individual cat. Since play that is initiated by the cat could potentially escalate into overly aggressive play, the owner should select play toys and initiate all play sessions. Sessions initiated by the cat should be ignored or interrupted using a distraction device, such as the ones listed below.

How can over-exuberant play and play attacks toward people be interrupted?

Although interruption devices may be effective, physical punishment should be avoided. First, pain can cause aggression. If you hit your cat you may increase the aggressive behavior. Second, painful punishment causes fear and owner avoidance. Third, owners that attempt to correct the playful aggression with physical contact may actually serve to reward the behavior.

For punishment to be effective it must be timed to occur while the behavior is taking place. Punishment should be species appropriate. Noise deterrents are often effective in cats. For very young kittens, a “hissing” noise may deter excessive play behavior. The noise can be made by you, but if not immediately successful a can of compressed air (used for cleaning camera lenses) may be more effective and less likely to cause fear or retaliation. Some cats need an even harsher noise. Commercially available “rape” alarms or air horns make extremely loud noises that will startle the cat and interrupt the behavior. What is most important in using these techniques is the timing. You must have the noisemaker with you so that you can immediately administer the correction.

FELINE MARKING BEHAVIORS

What is spraying?

Spraying is the deposition of small amounts of urine on vertical surfaces. The spraying cat may be seen to back into the area, the tail may quiver, and with little or no crouching the urine is released. Some cats will also mark their territory by leaving small amounts of urine or occasionally stool on horizontal surfaces.

Why do cats “mark” with urine?

Cats mark the locations where they live or which they frequent in many ways. Cats will mark with scent glands on their feet, cheeks, face and tail as well as with urine. Deposition of an odor communicates that the animal was in a location long after that animal has gone. Cats will mark their territory to signal “ownership” and to advertise sexual receptivity and availability. Marking can occur due to other cats in the vicinity either outdoors, or among cats that live in the same household. Cats will also mark their territory when they feel threatened or stressed. This can occur with a change in household routine, compositions, living arrangements, new living locations and other environmental and social changes. Because marking is a method of delineating territory, urine is often found in prominent locations and near windows, doors and heavily traffic areas in the home.



FELINE MARKING BEHAVIORS



Which cats are more likely to urine mark?

Both male and female cats can mark with urine. Urine marking is most common in intact (non-neutered) male cats. When an intact male sprays urine, it will have the characteristic “tom cat” odor that is strong and pungent. Neutering will change the odor, and may reduce the cat’s motivation for spraying, but approximately 10% of neutered males and 5% of spayed females will continue to spray. While cats in multiple cat households are often involved in spraying behaviors, cats that are housed singly may spray as well.

Instead of spraying, I am finding multiple locations of small amounts of urine. What does that mean?

Some cats will mark their territory with small amounts of urine (and on rare occasions, stool) in various locations. These locations can be similar to those for spraying, i.e. near doors, windows, new possessions in the home or favored locations, but may occasionally be found on owner’s clothing or other favored possessions. However, small amounts of urine deposited outside of the litterbox can also be an indication of numerous other problems including diseases of the lower urinary tract. Similarly stool found outside of the litter box can be due to a multitude of causes including colitis, constipation and any other condition leading to difficult, more frequent or uncomfortable elimination. As with any other elimination problem, a complete physical examination and laboratory tests are necessary to rule out each physical cause.

How do would I treat a spraying or marking problem?

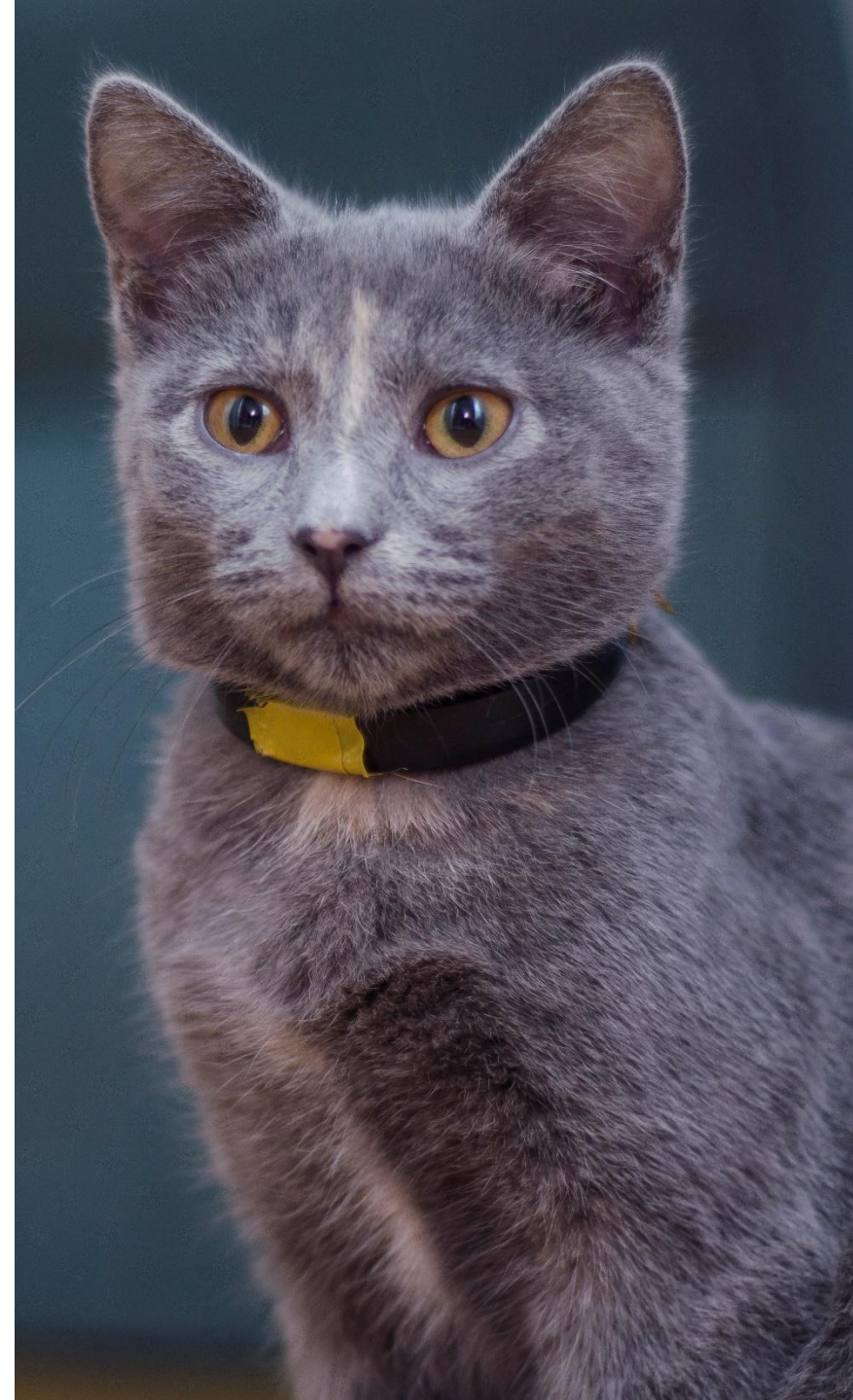
As with all behavior problems, the history will help determine treatment options. The location of the urine marking, the frequency, duration and number of locations are important. The number of cats both inside and as well as contacts outside of the home should be determined. Changes in environment, social patterns of humans and animals, and additions (people, pets, furniture, renovations) to the home should also be examined.

FELINE MARKING BEHAVIORS

If the cat is not already neutered, and is not a potential breeder, castration is recommended. A urinalysis should be performed to rule out medical problems. The location of the urine spots should be determined. Is the urine found on walls, 6-8 inches up from the floor, or are there small urine spots found in multiple locations?

Treatment is aimed at decreasing the motivation for spraying. If the problem is cats outside of the home, then the best options are to find a way to deter the cats from coming onto the property or prevent the indoor cat from seeing, smelling or hearing these cats. It may be helpful to house your cat in a room away from windows and doors to the outdoors, or it may be possible to block visual access to windows. When you are home and supervising you can allow your cat limited access to these areas. It also may be necessary to keep windows closed to prevent the inside cat from smelling the cats outside, and to use odor neutralizers on any areas where the outdoor cats have eliminated or sprayed.

If the problem is due to social interactions inside the home, it may be necessary to determine which cats do not get along. Keep these cats in separate parts of the home with their own litter and sleeping areas. Reintroduction of the cats may be possible when they are properly supervised. Allowing the cats together for positive experiences such as feeding, treats and play sessions, helps them to get used to the presence of each other, at least on a limited basis. However, when numbers of cats in a home reach 7-10 cats you will often have spraying and marking.



FELINE MARKING BEHAVIORS



***I've cleaned up the spot but the cat keeps returning to spray.
What else can be done to reduce the problem?***

Since the “purpose” of spraying is to mark an area with urine odor, it is not surprising that as the odor is cleaned up, the cat wants to refresh the area with more urine. Cleaning alone does little to reduce spraying. Cats that mark in one or two particular areas may cease if the function of the area is changed. It is unlikely that cats will spray in their feeding, sleeping or scratching areas. Some cats are less likely to spray if a little of their cheek gland scent can be placed in the sprayed area. This may change the area to one of cheek gland marking and since the odor remains the desire to spray may be greatly reduced. A commercial product containing feline cheek gland scent has been recently introduced in Europe and is now available in the United States. The product is called Feliway® and is a synthetic pheromone designed to mimic cheek gland secretions from a cat. When sprayed on areas where cats have sprayed urine or on those areas where it can be anticipated that the cat is likely to spray, it may decrease the likelihood of additional spraying in those areas. The scent of the pheromone seems to calm the cat and may stimulate marking in the area by bunting (rubbing with their cheeks), rather than urine spraying. Feliway® has also been used to calm cats in new environments. You can perhaps get the same effect by rubbing a cotton ball or gauze square on your cat’s cheek or chin glands and then rubbing the scent onto the previously sprayed areas.

Where practical, a good compromise for some cats is to allow them one or two areas for marking. This can be done by placing a shower curtain on the vertical surface, tiling the area, or by taking two plastic litter boxes and placing one inside the other to make an L-shape (with the upright surface to catch the marked urine). Another option is to place booby traps in the sprayed areas, but spraying of another area may then develop.

FELINE MARKING BEHAVIORS

Are there any drugs that are available to treat this problem?

Over the years many pharmacological means have been tried to control spraying behaviors. The choices have focused on the theory that one of the underlying causation for spraying and marking behaviors is anxiety. For that reason, anti-anxiety drugs such as buspirone and the benzodiazepines, antidepressants such as amitriptyline, clomipramine, fluoxetine and paroxetine, and female hormones have all been tried with varying degrees of success. None of these are presently approved for use in cats, but your veterinarian can discuss with you the potential indications and contraindications of drug therapy for your cat. Of course, if the underlying reason for spraying is not addressed, the problem is quite likely to occur when the drug is withdrawn.



FELINE SCRATCHING AND DECLAWING



Newport Harbor
Animal Hospital

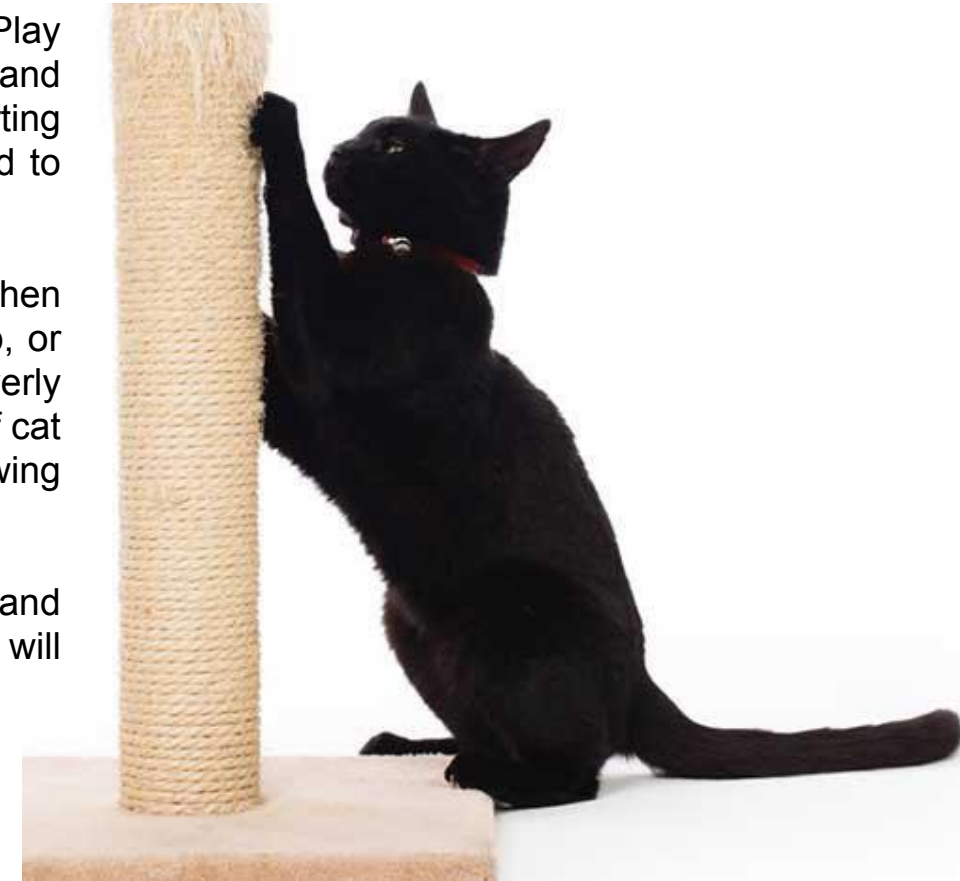
Why do cat's scratch?

Scratching is a perfectly normal feline behavior. Although scratching does serve to shorten and condition the claws, the primary reasons that cats scratch are to mark their territory and to stretch. Cats may also threaten or play with a swipe of their paws.

For cats that live primarily outdoors, scratching is seldom a problem for the owners. Scratching is usually directed at prominent objects such as tree trunks or fence posts. Play swatting with other cats seldom leads to injuries because cats have a fairly thick skin and coat for protection. When play does get a little rough, most cats are pretty good at sorting things out between themselves. Occasionally, rough play or territorial fighting does lead to injuries or abscesses that would require veterinary attention.

Cats that live primarily or exclusively indoors may run into disfavor with their owners when they begin to scratch furniture, walls, or doors, or when they use their claws to climb up, or hang from the drapes. Claws can also cause injuries to people when the cats are overly playful or don't like a particular type of handling or restraint. With a good understanding of cat behavior and a little bit of effort, it should be possible to prevent or avoid most clawing problems, even for those cats that live exclusively indoors.

Cats that go outdoors may be content to scratch when outside, and leave the walls and furniture intact when indoors. Cats that spend most of their time indoors, however, will usually require an area for indoor scratching, climbing, and play.



FELINE SCRATCHING AND DECLAWING



How can I stop my cat from scratching?

It is impractical and unfair to expect cats to stop scratching entirely. Cats that go outside may be content to do all their scratching outdoors, but the urge may still arise when the cat comes back indoors. Cats that spend most of their time indoors will of course, need some outlet for their scratching and marking behaviors so don't be surprised if you come home to objects strewn all over the floor, scratches on your furniture, and your cat playfully climbing or dangling from your drapes. Therefore, while it may not be possible to stop a cat from scratching, it should be possible to direct the scratching, climbing and play to appropriate areas indoors. Building or designing a scratching post, providing appropriate play toys, and keeping the cat away from potential problem areas will usually be adequate to deal with most scratching problems.

How do I design a scratching area for my cat?

Since cats use their scratching posts for marking and stretching, posts should be set up in prominent areas, with at least one close to the cat's sleeping quarters. The post should be tall enough for the cat to scratch while standing on hind legs with the forelegs extended and sturdy enough so that it does not topple when scratched. Some cats prefer a scratching post with a corner so that two sides can be scratched at once while other cats may prefer a horizontal scratching post.

Special consideration should be given to the surface texture of the post. Commercial posts are often covered with tightly woven material for durability, but many cats prefer a loosely woven material where the claws can hook and tear during scratching. Remember, scratching is also a marking behavior and cats want to leave a visual mark. Carpet may be an acceptable covering but it should be combed first to make certain that there are no tight loops. Some cats prefer sisal, a piece of material from an old chair, or even bare wood for scratching. Be certain to use a material that appeals to your cat.

FELINE SCRATCHING AND DECLAWING

How can I get my cat to use its post?

A good way to get the cat to approach and use the post is to turn the scratching area into an interesting and desirable play center. Perches to climb on, space to climb into, and toys mounted on ropes or springs are highly appealing to most cats. Placing a few play toys, cardboard boxes, catnip treats, or even the food bowl in the area should help to keep the cat occupied. Sometimes rubbing the post with tuna oil will increase its attractiveness. Food rewards can also be given if the owner observes the cat scratching at its post. Products have been designed to reward the cat automatically by dispensing food rewards each time the cat scratches. It may also be helpful to take the cat to the post, gently rub its paws along the post in a scratching motion, and give it a food reward. This technique should not be attempted, however, if it causes any fear or anxiety. Placement is important when trying to entice your cat to use a scratching post. Because scratching is also a marking behavior, most cats prefer to use a post that is placed in a prominent location. It may be necessary to place the post in the center of a room or near furniture that the cat was trying to scratch until the cat reliably uses it and then move it to a less obtrusive location. For some cats, multiple posts in several locations will be necessary.



FELINE SCRATCHING AND DECLAWING



What can I do if the cat continues to scratch my furniture?

Despite the best of plans and the finest of scratching posts, some cats may continue to scratch or climb in inappropriate areas. At this point a little time, effort, and ingenuity might be necessary. The first thing to consider is partial confinement or “cat proofing” your home when you are not around to supervise. If the problem occurs in a few rooms, consider making them out of bounds by closing off a few doors or by using childproofing techniques such as child locks or barricades. The cat may even have to be kept in a single room that has been effectively cat proofed, whenever the owner cannot supervise. Of course the cat’s scratching post, play center, toys, and litter box should be located in this cat proof room.

If cat proofing is not possible or the cat continues to use one or two pieces of furniture, you might want to consider moving the furniture, or placing a scratching post directly in front of the furniture that is being scratched. Take a good look at the surfaces of the scratched furniture and ensure that the surface of the post is covered with a material similar to those for which the cat has shown a preference. Some scratching posts are even designed to be wall mounted or hung on doors. Placing additional scratching posts in strategic areas may also be helpful for some cats. Keeping the cat’s nails properly trimmed is a useful techniques for some owners.

Can I trim my kitten's sharp toenails?

Kittens have very sharp toenails. They can be trimmed with your regular fingernail clippers or with nail trimmers made for dogs and cats. If you take too much off the nail, you will get into the quick; bleeding and pain will occur. If this happens, neither you nor your cat will want to do this again.

FELINE SCRATCHING AND DECLAWING

Therefore, a few points are helpful:

- a. If your cat has clear or white nails, you can see the pink of the quick through the nail. Avoid the pink area, and you should be out of the quick.
- b. If your cat has black nails (not common in cats), you will not be able to see the quick so only cut $\frac{1}{32}$ " (1 mm) of the nail at a time until the cat begins to get sensitive. The sensitivity will usually occur before you are into the blood vessel. With black nails, it is likely that you will get too close on at least one nail.
- c. If your cat has some clear and some black nails, use the average clear nail as a guide for cutting the black ones.
- d. When cutting nails, use sharp trimmers. Dull trimmers tend to crush the nail and cause pain even if you are not in the quick.
- e. You should always have styptic powder available. This is sold in pet stores under several trade names, but it will be labeled for use in trimming nails.



FELINE SCRATCHING AND DECLAWING



How do I punish my cat for inappropriate scratching?

All forms of physical punishment should be avoided since they can cause fear or aggression toward the owners, and at best, the cat will only learn to stop the scratching while the owner is around. Indirect, non-physical forms of punishment may be useful if the owner can remain out of sight while administering the punishment. In this way the cat may learn that scratching is unpleasant even when the owner is not present. Long range water rifles, ultrasonic or audible alarms, or remote control operated devices are sometimes useful.

Generally the best deterrents are those that train the pet not to scratch, even in the owners absence. If the surface or area can be made less appealing or unpleasant, the cat will likely seek out a new area or target for scratching, which will hopefully be its scratching post. The simplest approach is to cover the scratched surface with a less appealing material (plastic, a loosely draped piece of material, aluminum foil, or double-sided tape). Another effective deterrent is to booby trap problem areas so that either scratching or approaching the area is unpleasant for the cat (e.g. motion detectors or a stack of plastic cups that is set to topple when the cat scratches). Of course, neither remote punishment nor booby traps will successfully deter inappropriate scratching, unless the cat has an alternative scratching area that is comfortable, appealing, well located, and free of all deterrents.

When should declawing be considered?

Declawing is a drastic but permanent solution for scratching problems, but for most households the scratching post and deterrent techniques discussed previously are generally quite successful. There are some homes however, where declawing may be the only option if the pet is to be kept in the home. This might be the case where the cat continues to damage the furniture, or where the cat causes injuries to people during play or handling. Even the slightest scratch can have serious consequences when a member of the household suffers from a severely debilitating disease. In some cases the issue comes down to whether the owner should be able to keep their cat and have it declawed, or whether it should be removed from the home.

FELINE SCRATCHING AND DECLAWING



What is the effect of declawing on the cat?

Many authors have written of dire behavioral and surgical complications of declawing, but these reports are based on myths and anecdotes. In the past few years, a number of veterinary behaviorists (specialists in pet psychology) have studied the effects of declawing on the cat, the owner, and the cat-owner relationship. Some 10 scientific studies, have examined the consequences of declawing on the pet and on the pet-owner relationship. These studies show that declawing does not alter the cat's behavior. In fact, cats may continue to scratch furniture after declawing, but cause no damage. There is no increase in behavior problems. Declawed cats are not at greater risk of getting bitten or injured in cat fights. Owners of declawed cats report a higher number of good behaviors than the owners of clawed cats. Except for a few days of post-surgical discomfort, quite surprisingly, the only owner concerns have been that some cats were reluctant to use the litter box when litter was replaced with paper strips. (Most veterinarians recommend that cat owners keep cats indoors and replace sandy or clay type litter with strips of paper or for the first few days following declawing). This problem has now been greatly reduced by using recycled newspaper litter following declawing (Yesterday's News).

When owners of declawed cats are asked to assess the effects of declawing on the cat owner relationship, declawing always met or surpassed their expectations, and over 70% indicated an improvement in their relationship with their cat. Declawing allows people to keep their cat and stop household damage. The front claws are all that need to be removed to prevent furniture damage.

CONTROLLING UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOR IN CATS

THE ROLE OF PUNISHMENT



Feline Punishment

Punishment is the application of a stimulus that decreases the chance that a behavior will be repeated. It must coincide with the undesirable behavior, and must be unpleasant enough to deter the cat from repeating that behavior. Keep in mind that you are punishing the behavior not the cat. Punishment should never be considered unless the pet has the means to satisfy its nature and its needs. For example, the scratching cat should be provided with an appropriate scratching post, before any attempts to punish undesirable scratching is initiated.

What is the best way to physically discipline my cat?

One of the most frequently utilized and least successful forms of punishment is where the owner uses a direct swat or hit. Hitting a cat can lead to hand-shyness, fear of the owner, and potential injury for both the owner and the cat. The cat will continue to perform the undesirable behavior in your absence since it learns that it can perform the behavior without punishment when you are out of sight. Physical punishment is therefore ineffective, potentially dangerous, and totally unnecessary.

How can I punish my cat for rough play?

Perhaps the only place where interactive punishment might be successful is for the cat that swats or scratches the owners in play. Even here, species appropriate punishment such as “hissing” or the use of a punishment device is better than using any physical techniques. Before punishment is considered however, the cat must be given ample opportunity to play. Toys that can be chased, swatted, and batted should be provided. Realize that if you give any form of attention (including physical punishment) to a cat that is swatting, or attacking in play, the behavior may actually be rewarded and further encouraged.

CONTROLLING UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOR IN CATS

THE ROLE OF PUNISHMENT



Whenever the cat begins to swat or play attack, immediately stop the play by walking away or by using some non physical form of punishment such as a water sprayer, can of compressed air, cap gun, hand held alarm or perhaps a loud hiss. **Under no circumstances should a cat ever be punished unless it is caught in the act of performing the behavior.** Remember, physical punishment should never be used as it is generally ineffective, and could cause harm to your relationship with your cat, or to the cat itself.

How can I punish my cat for other behaviors?

The key to successful punishment is to associate an unpleasant consequence with the undesirable behavior. However, unless the owner remains out of sight while administering punishment the cat may learn to cease the behavior only when you are present. Punishing the cat remotely, while you remain out of sight, is an effective means of deterring undesirable behavior. It takes a great deal of preparation, time and forethought. Another effective means of punishment is to booby-trap an area, so that the cat learns to “stay away”

How does remote punishment work?

For remote techniques to be successful there are two key elements. First, you must monitor the cat while out of sight so that you know when the problem begins. The second element is that the punishment must be delivered while the inappropriate behavior is occurring (while you remain out of sight).

- 1) Keep a close watch on the problem area while hidden around a corner, in a nearby closet, or behind a piece of furniture. Or, monitor your cat using a video camera, intercom, or a motion detector (such as the Tattle Tale monitor™, which makes a loud beep whenever it is disturbed).
- 2) As soon as the cat enters the area or begins to perform the undesirable behavior (climb, scratch), use a long range water pistol, noise device (such as cap gun) or remote control device (see below) to chase the cat away.
- 3) If the cat cannot determine where the noise or water is coming from, it should quickly learn to stay away from the area whether the owner is present or not.

CONTROLLING UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOR IN CATS

THE ROLE OF PUNISHMENT



An alternative is to set up a remote control switch near the problem area and have a device such as a waterpik, alarm, or hair dryer plugged in. As soon as the cat enters the area, the device can then be turned on by remote control to scare the cat away.

When the owner is not around to supervise and monitor, the cat needs to be left in a room or area that has been cat-proofed and supplied with a litter box, bedding area, toys for play and areas for scratching or climbing.

How can I booby-trap the environment to punish the pet?

Punishing the behavior remotely, with you out of sight, is impractical if the cat cannot be prevented from performing the undesirable behavior, when you are not there to supervise and monitor. Booby-traps are a way of teaching the pet to avoid the area or the behavior itself. The most practical devices are those that are unpleasant enough to deter the behavior, and reset themselves, or remain active should the pet return to the area. One of the simplest ways to discourage a cat from entering an area where an undesirable behavior is likely to be performed (scratching, eliminating) is to make the area less appealing (or downright unpleasant) for scratching or eliminating. If the cat is scratching furniture, a large piece of material draped over the furniture may do the trick, since the cat won't be able to get its claws into the loose fabric. A small pyramid of empty tin cans or plastic containers could also be balanced on the arm of a chair so that it topples onto the cat when scratching begins. A piece of plastic carpet runner with the "nubs" facing up can be placed over a scratched piece of furniture to reduce its appeal, or a few strips of double-sided sticky tape would send most cats looking for another place to scratch (hopefully the scratching post). Mousetrap trainers, shock mats, or motion detector alarms are also very effective at keeping cats away from problem areas. A motion-detecting sprinkler is also available to keep other cats or animals off of the property.

CONTROLLING UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOR IN CATS

THE ROLE OF PUNISHMENT

Most of these same booby traps would also be effective for destructive behaviors such as chewing and sucking. Taste deterrents might also be helpful, provided they are unpleasant enough to deter the behavior. Products such as bitter apple, bitter lime or Tabasco sauce are often recommended, but many cats quickly learn to accept the taste. A little water mixed with cayenne pepper, any non-toxic mentholated product, or one of the commercial anti-chew sprays often work. To be effective, the first exposure to a product must be as repulsive as is humanely possible, so that the cat is immediately repelled whenever it smells or tastes that product again. Never leave any objects or areas untreated until the cat learns to leave the object or area alone.

Perhaps most important, punishment whether interactive or remote should never be a substitute for good supervision and the opportunity to engage in the proper behavior. This is very important with kittens that are learning what is acceptable in a new home.

For very active animals, a room that has been “cat-proofed” and supplied with toys, and objects to scratch and climb, is a good solution when owners are unable to supervise.



BOARDING SERVICES



We would love to care for your special friend while you are away. It is our commitment to provide your pet with excellent care.

All animals boarding at our facility will receive meals that are aligned with our veterinary nutritional recommendations. Fresh water will be available at all times and we will be happy to accommodate any special diet arrangements.

Each day, your pet will receive supervised individual exercise time to run and stretch. If your pet is extremely active, you may wish to add additional exercise time.

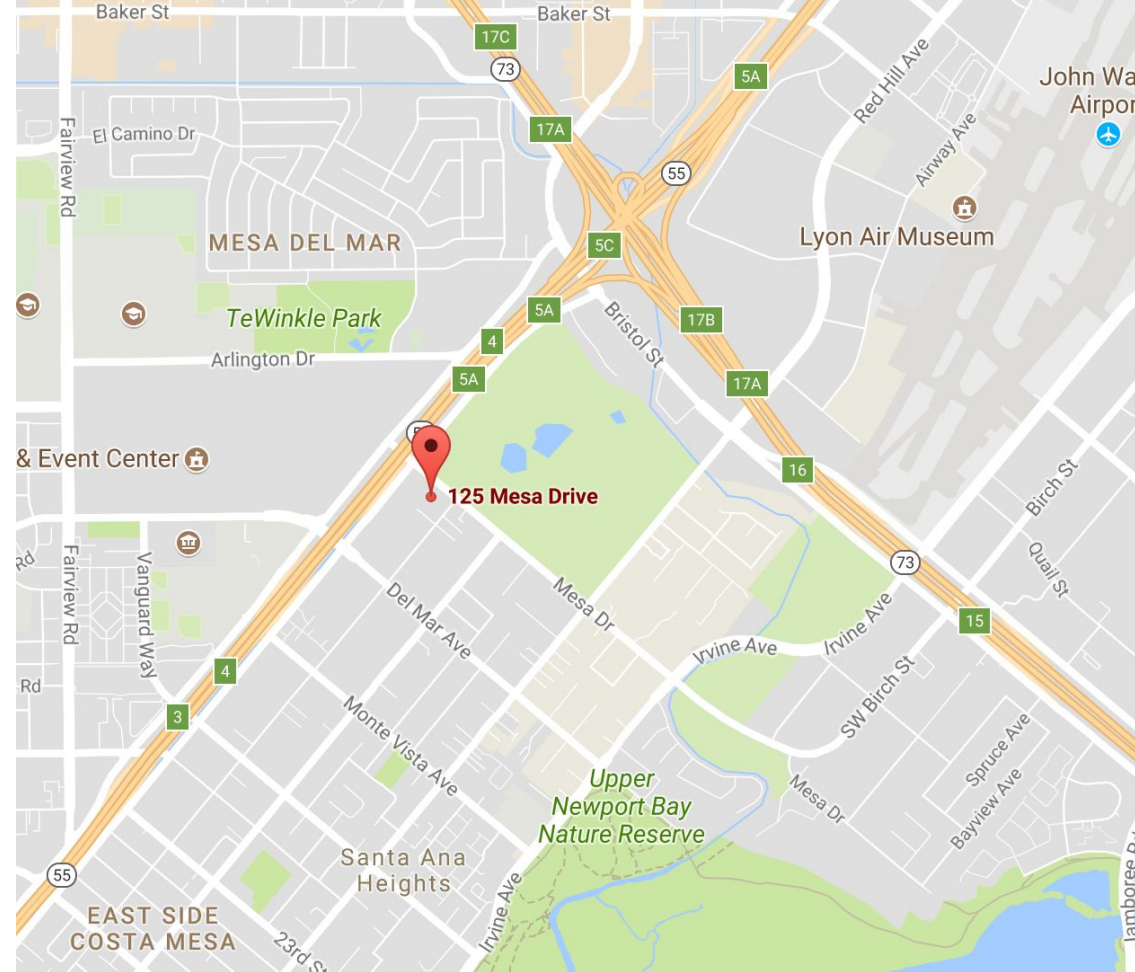
A warm cozy blanket/towel is provided for each boarder. Because we provide all the comforts of home (well almost!) you do not need to bring any blankets or bedding for your pet.

Please call our offices to discuss boarding fees and get your questions answered.

We are here for you!

In general, you know your pet well. You know when things are not normal. Be aware that these subtle signs can be signs of more serious illness. Our pets rely on us to be aware of their general health and take of our health needs by bringing us to the veterinarian.

It is very helpful if you have some type of relationship with your veterinarian and for your veterinarian to know your pet. Semi annual exams allow the best opportunity for you to partner with your veterinarian to provide optimal care for your pet. It is during these visits that your veterinarian can assess weight, nutrition, exercise, dental health, metabolic health and overall good health. During these visits, you and your veterinarian can discuss changes and concerns, make plans for optimal health. When your vet knows your pet, there is a great advantage when something goes wrong because they already have a great knowledge of your pet.



To schedule an appointment:
call: (949) 612-2756 or
visit NewportHarborVets.com
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Costa Mesa, CA 92627