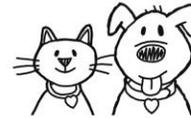




Resources for Pet Owners



Aversives For Cats

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Determining an effective aversive reaction for your cat is definitely a case of trial-and-error, as individual preferences will vary with each cat. This is often the best method to discourage a cat from a particular action or place, but will seldom work effectively without offering an alternative that is both convenient and rewarding.

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

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

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 taste aversion
- ❖ Insect repellents, especially those containing citronella or citrus odors (check for toxicity, if it's safe for young children, it's generally safe for pets)
- ❖ Some hot sauces
- ❖ Cayenne pepper
- ❖ Some muscle rubs
- ❖ 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 plate 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
- ◆ Shaker 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!

Cat Toys and How to Use Them

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"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 your cat spends her time. Although we can't guarantee your cat's enthusiasm or her safety with any specific toy, we can offer the following guidelines.

Be Cautious

The things that are usually 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.

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.

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.

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.”
- ❖ “Hide and Seek” is a fun game for cats to play. “Found” toys are often much more attractive than a toy which is blatantly introduced.

Cats: Destructive Scratching

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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, the goal in resolving scratching problems is to redirect the scratching onto acceptable objects.

Training Your Cat To Scratch Acceptable Objects

1. You must provide objects for scratching that are appealing, attractive and convenient from your cat's point of view. Start by observing the physical features of the objects your cat is scratching. The answers to the following questions will help you understand your cat's scratching preferences:
 - ◆ Where are they located? Prominent objects, objects close to sleeping areas and 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 each day) to a location more suitable to you. It's best, however, to keep the appropriate scratching objects as close to your cat's preferred scratching locations as possible.
 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.

Coping with Pet Allergies

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Pets can be a wonderful addition to our lives but if you suffer from pet allergies, a fluffy cat or playful pup can be torturous. It is estimated that approximately 15 percent of the population suffer from some type of allergy to pets. However many people with pet allergies still have a companion animal. This shows that the benefit of having a pet outweighs the discomfort from the allergen. Fortunately, there are some things you can do to alleviate the symptoms of pet allergies.

Dogs and cats both cause reactions in people allergic to pets. There is not a single breed that doesn't cause allergic reactions. Some people are more sensitive to certain breeds and more people are allergic to cats than dogs. Do not believe that buying a certain breed of dog will prevent you from having an allergic reaction. Try to take these steps to alleviate some of your discomfort.

Solutions:

- Keep your pet brushed. This will remove some excess fur that may cause a reaction. Do not have the more allergic person in the family brush the dog or cat.
- Create an area of the house the pet is not allowed to go. It might be helpful to not allow the pet in the room where the allergic person sleeps. A person suffering from allergies will not be able to sleep as well in a room covered with fur and dander. Research HEPA filters to use in the living rooms of the house.
- Keep furniture, curtains and bedding clean. Wash bedding, blankets and throws often. Dust electronic equipment where static attracts hair. Regularly vacuum furniture and blinds. Use lint rollers or a damp cloth on curtains and furniture to clean quickly.
- Regularly vacuum and clean carpets and flooring. Baking soda or static remover on carpets can help loosen hair. Fur can also collect around baseboards. Use rubber dishwashing gloves, slightly dampened, around baseboards then dispose of the hair. Change the vacuum bag or empty the canister frequently.
- Use a vacuum attachment on your car's interior or use the technique above for removing hair from baseboards.
- Don't over bathe your pet. Bathing your dog too frequently will actually create more dander. Between baths use wipes specially designed to remove pet dander. They will not remove all the allergens but they can temporarily help. See handout "Grooming: Brushing and Bathing Basics."
- Talk to your doctor about treatments for allergies. They may need to test to see what the specific allergen is. Your pet may not actually be to blame. Seasonal changes bring on other allergy problems such as hay fever, pollen and mold. Unfortunately, this often coincides with seasonal shedding cycles.
- Keep your pet's bedding clean. Regular cleaning of their bed will reduce the overall allergens in your house. Every time the dog or cat gets on or off the bed they put hair and dander in the air.

Do not bring a new pet into the home until you are certain your family can deal with the allergens they produce. Spend time around friends' pets to find out how you will respond to dander. Most people will not overcome allergies after they get used to the pet. Fortunately, steps can be taken to reduce allergens in the environment. Please consult a physician to get more information about controlling your allergies.

Developmental Stages of Kitten Behavior

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Well-socialized cats are more likely to have well-socialized kittens. Kittens "feed" off of their mothers' calm or fearful attitude toward people. Although feeding time is important, it's also vital to include petting, talking and playing in order to build good "people-skills" in your kitten.

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 inappropriate 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 send and receive signals, what an “inhibited bite” means, how far to go in play-wrestling and so forth. Play is important for kittens because it increases their physical coordination, social skills and learning 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 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. Skills not acquired during the first eight weeks may be lost forever. While these 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

- ❖ Learning to orient toward sound.
- ❖ Eyes are opening, usually open by two weeks.
- ❖ Competition for rank and territory begins. Separation from their mother and littermates at this point can lead to poor learning skills and aggression toward people and other pets, including other cats.

2 - 7 weeks = Socialization

- ❖ By the third week smell is well-developed and they can see well enough to find their mother.
- ❖ By the fourth week smell is fully mature and hearing is well-developed. They start to interact with their littermates, they can walk fairly well, and they’re teeth are erupting.
- ❖ By the fifth week sight is fully mature, they can right themselves, run, place their feet precisely, avoid obstacles, stalk and pounce, and catch “prey” with their eyes.
- ❖ Start to groom themselves and others.
- ❖ 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 object play increases their physical coordination and social skills. Most learning is by observation, preferably from their mother.
- ❖ Social play includes belly-ups, hugging, ambushing and licking.
- ❖ Object play includes scooping, tossing, pawing, mouthing and holding.
- ❖ Social/object play includes tail chasing, pouncing, leaping and dancing.

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.

Discouraging Roaming Cats

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Many people have a problem with roaming cats that attack wild birds as they feed or nest in their yards, that use their garden as a litter box, or that upset their pets by invading their territory. You certainly have the right to enjoy your yard and the birds that visit it, and to protect your own pets. However, it's your responsibility to use only humane methods to solve the problem.

Why Are They Picking On Me?

Although a destructive neighborhood cat can be very frustrating, don't take it personally. The cat isn't acting out of spite or picking on you for some unknown reason. He's behaving naturally, just in places that are inappropriate. The solution lies in making those places undesirable so the cat will behave naturally somewhere else.

Unless they're literally starving, most cats won't eat birds, but they do enjoy the "thrill of the hunt." Cats have preyed upon birds for thousands of years and there's no foolproof way to discourage this natural instinct. Fortunately, birds have developed survival techniques over the years, and it's unusual for a cat to actually catch a healthy, mature bird.

Another natural instinct for a cat is to relieve himself in an area where he can cover his scent by burying the waste. Therefore, a cat that spends most of his time outdoors, appreciates the soft, pre-dug dirt of your garden, or your child's sandbox, as a handy toilet.

When a cat naps on the hood of your car or in the center of your flowerbed, he's simply sunning himself in a nice, warm spot and doesn't realize the damage he's doing. He won't connect your negative reaction with the place where he naps, and although he may learn to avoid you, he won't avoid the place or the activity.

A roaming cat may approach your window or patio door and challenge your cat or dog through the glass with blatant body language and/or vocal insults. The best way to relieve your pet from this type of situation, is to keep the outside cat away from the areas that your pet can see.

Of course, the ideal solution is for all cat owners to keep their cats safely indoors. Unfortunately, not all cat-owners are willing to do this, so you'll need to take steps to solve the problem without harming the cat, the birds, the yard or other innocent animals. Since each situation is different, you may need patience and ingenuity to find the appropriate deterrent through trial and error.

Repellents

Repellents and devices designed to startle the cat "in the act" will work best to condition him to avoid the area. Never use poisons. Not only is poisoning animals inhumane and illegal, it's not an effective solution to the problem. Poisons will only rid you of one pest, but won't deter any others. You'd have no way of knowing or controlling what, or who, might find and ingest the poisonous substance.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has registered over thirty compounds for safe use in repelling domestic cats. Check with any pet supply store or garden suppliers for commercial cat repellents. Most commercial repellents are based on the simple mothball compound. Mothballs or moth crystals, encased in cheesecloth bags to help protect the soil, work quite well to keep cats from digging in garden areas or potted plants.

Keep in mind that the effectiveness of any repellent will deteriorate with moisture and/or time. Whether you use mothballs or a sophisticated, commercial mixture, you'll need to re-apply the solution after each rain, heavy dew or watering. Check with your garden supplier to be certain that the solution you choose won't harm plants growing in that area, especially if you use fertilizers or other additives.

For areas where cats want to dig, ornamental pebbles may be an effective deterrent. Avoid those that are very round or smooth, as they make a great cat bed. Rocks or pebbles should be firmly secured into the dirt or mulched area so they can't easily be moved or overturned. Small-gauge chicken wire can also be buried under a light layer of dirt or mulch, and may even restrain some weeds. The sharp pebbles and/or rough wire will be uncomfortable to soft paws.

"Surprise" Devices

To teach a cat to avoid a specific area, you must make that area unattractive to him. The best method is to surprise the cat "in the act," but the villain should be the area itself, not you. Simple devices can be used to effectively "booby-trap" the area that a cat has found attractive.

- ❖ **Sound & Movement:** Scatter dry beans, macaroni or birdseed on a metal tray (disposable pie pans or cookie sheets work great and are inexpensive). Balance several trays along the fence, porch or deck railing, the windowsill, or around the edge of any vehicle where the cat jumps onto the surface. Birds can still land safely if the trays are balanced properly, but the weight of a cat leaping onto the surface will upset the tray. The cat will be startled by the noise and by the unsteady, collapsing perch.
- ❖ **Texture:** To keep a cat from jumping onto flat surfaces (railings, vehicles or decks), criss-cross double-sided tape onto a piece of sturdy plastic - either a heavy, plastic drop cloth or a vinyl tablecloth would work well. Drape the plastic over the surface, and secure it with cord, or at least one weighted object, to keep it in position. The

sticky tape on the cat's paws is annoying (without causing pain or panic), and the slick plastic rattles and offers no foothold.

- ❖ **Water:** This method works especially well for those areas where birds feed on the ground or where cats are using a garden area as a litter box. When the temperature permits, turn on a water sprinkler during the usual time of disturbance (dawn or dusk if the cat is on your property to hunt). A timing device for the sprinkler, set to a staggered schedule, will help discourage those intelligent cats who would otherwise simply avoid the area at "regularly wet" times of day. As a variation on the "falling tray" method, set shallow plastic lids filled with water on each end of the tray to add a shower to the noise and movement of the falling tray.
- ❖ **Obstacle:** If your bird feeder or birdhouse is mounted on a post, nail a galvanized metal guard in the shape of an inverted cone to the post to protect the platform.

Responsibility

If these suggested remedies fail to provide relief, we encourage you to call our Behavior Helpline. The "problem cat" may be an owned cat that's allowed to roam or the cat may have no real owner. If the cat belongs to a neighbor, your problem is a shared one. It's not always easy to discuss neighborhood issues diplomatically. Remember that the cat is your neighbor's pet, even though he's a pest when he's on your property. By emphasizing your concern for the cat's safety, instead of the problems he's causing, you have a greater chance of gaining your neighbor's cooperation.

If you're unable to establish the cat's ownership, the problem is in your hands. It's often impossible to distinguish a feral cat from a potentially friendly stray, so play it safe and don't touch the cat. Assuming you've already tried the above re-conditioning tactics without success, you may need to resort to a humane trap.

Humane Traps

Don't use anything other than a humane cage trap designed to lure a cat into the cage with food, and to safely contain him until he can be moved to another area. Most animal control agencies and humane societies loan or rent out these traps and some will even deliver and/or pick them up.

If you have any reason to believe that the cat has an owner, please think twice before trapping the cat, unless you plan to return him to his owner.

To trap a stray cat, bait the trap with canned cat food. Place the trap in an area that's sheltered, as much as possible, against the weather. Although you may hear some alarming noises when the cat realizes he's trapped, he's only angry, not hurt. If the cat is confined with no access to water or shelter from inclement weather or predators, it's important that you remove the trap from the area as soon as possible. Using gloves to prevent scratches or bites, put the trap in a protected area until you can take the cat to an animal shelter. Please don't release a stray cat. This will only cause further overpopulation problems and inevitably, a painful life and death for the cat.

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 your cat spends his time, he may view your whole neighborhood as his 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 from an attack he believes he 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 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 can't attack the outdoor cat, he may 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. 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 prescription medication without consulting with your veterinarian. Animals don't respond to drugs the same way people do, and a medication that may be safe for a human 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 will 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 a multi-cat household. Genetic factors also influence a cat's temperament, so friendly parents are probably more likely to produce friendly offspring.

Grieving the Loss of Your Pet

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It's never easy to experience the death of a pet. Whether it's an older animal, who may have been part of your family longer than most of the furniture and some of the children, or a pet who has been with you for only a few years, the loss is always traumatic. When you have to make a decision to have your pet euthanized, other emotions become entangled with your feelings of loss. Once your pet is gone, you may think the experience is behind you, but unfortunately, it's not.

There will be an empty place in your household and in your life for awhile, and for the first part of that "while" the void may seem huge. Even though there are ways to fill the void, the loss you've experienced isn't something you can simply ignore by assuming your world will adjust itself. Instead, you must deal with it, just as you would deal with the loss of any good friend. You can't expect yourself to think of your pet as a friend and, yet, dismiss those feelings as disposable because this friend happened to be an animal. It's not silly to miss your pet, and it's not overly sentimental to grieve for him. Nevertheless, he was a pet not a person, and that makes it more complicated to sort out exactly what it is you're supposed to do and feel.

Although we recognize the individual personalities of pets, it doesn't mean they're just “little people.” The relationship you have with your pet is different from any human relationship you may have.

Another difference lies in the complicated question of "what happens next?" Many people believe that animals have no souls and are concerned that they won't see their animals in the next life. Perhaps you're unsure about what "the next life" holds for any of us. If having a soul means being able to feel love, trust and gratitude, then some animals may be better equipped than some humans.

When an animal becomes the pet of a responsible, caring person, he is given exactly what he needs and wants – a secure and comfortable home, companionship, and the opportunity to return the favor through loyalty and affection. Dogs, especially, are naturally eager to please their “leader” and are happiest when doing so. When a dog is

too old or too sick to respond in the way he thinks he should, he can't understand why, and feels the anxiety of failure.

Because their natural life spans are shorter than ours, we usually outlive our pets. Nevertheless, the life you shared together can't simply be erased. Don't deny yourself the thoughts, memories and feelings that your pet's life deserves. You may decide to fill the empty place in your home and heart with another pet, but you'll never replace the special bond you held with the one you've lost.

Introducing Your New Cat to Your Other Pets

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It's important to have realistic expectations 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 share her territory (and her people) with other pets in the household. 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 territorial and need to be introduced to other animals very slowly in order to give them time to get used to each other before there is a face-to-face confrontation. Slow introductions help prevent fearful and aggressive problems from developing. PLEASE NOTE: When you introduce pets to each other, one of them may send "play" signals which can be misinterpreted by the other pet. If those signals are interpreted as aggression by one animal, then you should handle the situation as "aggressive."

Confinement

Confine your new cat to one medium-sized room with her litter box, food, water and a bed. Feed your resident pets and the newcomer on each side of the door to this room. 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 your 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.

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. You should do this with each animal in the house.

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

Avoid Fearful And Aggressive Meetings

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. It's better to introduce your pets to each other so gradually that neither animal becomes afraid or aggressive. 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 in a series of very small, gradual steps, as outlined above.

Precautions

If one of your pets has a medical problem or is injured, this could stall the introduction process. Check with your veterinarian to be sure that all of your pets are healthy. You'll also want to have at least one litter box per cat, and you'll probably need to clean all of the litter boxes more frequently. Make sure that none of the cats are being "ambushed" by another while trying to use the litter box. Try to keep your resident pets' schedule as close as possible to what it was before the newcomer's appearance. Cats can make lots of noise, pull each other's hair, and roll around quite dramatically without either cat being injured. If small spats do occur between your cats, you shouldn't attempt to intervene directly to separate the cats. Instead, make a loud noise, throw a pillow, or use a squirt bottle with water and vinegar to separate the cats. Give them a chance to calm down before re-introducing them to each other. Be sure each cat has a safe hiding place.

Cat To Dog Introductions

Dogs can kill a cat very easily, even if they're only playing. All it takes is one shake and the cat's 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. In addition:

Practice Obedience

If your dog doesn't already know the commands "sit," "down," "come" and "stay," you should begin working on them. 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, work with obeying commands in return for a tidbit.

Controlled Meeting

After your new cat and resident dog have become comfortable eating on opposite sides of the door, and have been exposed to each other's scents as described above, you can attempt a face-to-face introduction in a controlled manner. Put your dog's leash on, and using treats, have him either sit or lie down and stay. Have another family member or friend enter the room and quietly sit down next to your new cat, but don't have them physically restrain her. Have this person offer your cat some special pieces of food or

catnip. At first, the cat and the dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Lots of short visits are better than a few long visits. Don't drag out the visit so long that the dog becomes uncontrollable. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other's presence without fear, aggression or other undesirable behavior.

Let Your Cat Go

Next, allow your cat freedom to explore your dog at her own pace, with the dog still on-leash and in a "down-stay." Meanwhile, keep giving your dog treats and praise for his calm behavior. If your dog gets up from his "stay" position, he should be repositioned with a treat lure, and praised and rewarded for obeying the "stay" command. If your cat runs away or 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, and be rewarded for doing so, such as sitting, coming when called, or lying down in return for a treat. If your dog is always punished when your cat is around, and never has "good things" happen in the cat's presence, your dog may redirect aggression toward the cat.

Directly Supervise All Interactions Between Your Dog And Cat

You may want to keep your dog 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.

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). 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 such an important object "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 access 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, of being 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 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. Animals can be severely injured in fights, and the longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to resolve. Conflicts between pets in the same family can often be resolved with professional help. Punishment won't work, though, and could make things worse.

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, and in cats that live in one-cat households. When cats play they incorporate a variety of behaviors into their play, such as exploratory, investigative and predatory behaviors. Play provides young cats with opportunities to practice skills they would normally need for survival. Kittens like to explore new areas and investigate anything that moves, and may bat at, pounce on and bite objects that resemble prey.

Kittens learn how to inhibit their bite 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 isn't acceptable behavior.

Encourage Acceptable Behavior

Redirect your kitten's aggressive behavior onto acceptable objects like toys. 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.

Since kittens need a lot of playtime, try to set up three or four consistent times during the day to initiate play with your kitten. This will help her understand that *she* doesn't have to be the one to initiate play 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.

- ❖ **Use aversives to discourage your kitten from nipping.** You can either use a squirt bottle filled with water and a small amount of vinegar or a can of pressurized air to squirt your kitten with when she becomes too rough. To use this technique

effectively, you'll always need to have the spray bottle or can handy. You can either place one in each room, or carry one with you as you move around the house.

- ❖ **Redirect the behavior after using the aversive.** After you startle your kitten with the aversive, 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 to leave the room.

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

What Not To Do

- ❖ Attempts to tap, flick or hit your kitten for rough play are almost guaranteed to backfire. 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. In these 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. Also, be sure to thoroughly clean all bites and scratches and consult your physician, as cat scratches and bites can easily become infected.

Moving with Your Pet

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Moving to a new home can be just as stressful on your pet as it is on you. Following are some tips to help you help your pet through this change of address.

- ❖ Talk to your veterinarian at least three weeks before the move 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, bedding 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.
- ❖ Keep your pet away from the moving-day activity by confining him to a room where he feels safe, otherwise, 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. Maybe you have a friendly place where your pet can stay during the packing and moving, like a neighbor, friend or boarding kennel. As much as possible, try not to disrupt his 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.
- ❖ 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 in the house. 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.
- ❖ If you have a dog, walk him around the house, yard and 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'll adjust quickly to their new home.

Positive Reinforcement: Training Your Cat With Treats And Praise

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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.

Correct timing is essential when using 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 he's already stood up again, he'll think he's being rewarded for standing up.

Consistency is also essential. Everyone in the family should 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 of 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.

For your pet, 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 enticing and irresistible to your pet. It should be a very small, soft, piece of food, so that he will 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’ll 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. Experiment a bit to see what works best for your pet. You may carry the treats in a pocket or a 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.

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

When your pet is learning a new behavior, he should be rewarded every time he does the behavior (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 can 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 can be less effusive - 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, you’ve seen the power of intermittent reinforcement.

By understanding reinforcement, you can see that you’re not forever bound to carry a pocketful of goodies. Your pet will soon be working for your verbal praise, because he really does want to please you and he knows that occasionally, he’ll get a treat, too! There are many small opportunities to reinforce his behavior. 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 it, instead of your shoe.

Punishment, including verbal, postural and physical, is the presentation of something unpleasant immediately following a behavior which makes it less likely that the behavior will occur again. To be effective, punishment must be delivered while your pet is engaged in the undesirable behavior, in other words, “caught in the act.” If the punishment is delivered too late, your pet will feel “ambushed.” 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 a moral sense of right and wrong, but they are adept at associating your presence and the presence of a mess, with punishment.

If you’ve tried punishment and it hasn’t worked, you should definitely stop using punishment and use positive reinforcement instead. 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.

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 the experience positive. Stroke him, give him treats and praise him for his good behavior when he's faced with a strange new sound or smell. Relax! If you act anxious, your pet will be anxious too.

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 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.

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. 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 a massage or play with him while the baby smells mingle with your own odors and you introduce the recorded baby sounds.

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. 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.

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. 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'll 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 mustn't seem like punishment. 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 early on. Include in your adjusted schedule at least once a day, quality time for just you and your pet, with no competition for your attention. This "non-baby" time is very important for your pet and for you!

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 leader, then you probably have a dominant pet (see our handout "Dealing with Dominance in Dogs"). 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 handout "Nothing in Life Is Free"). If your pet hasn't learned basic manners or obedience commands, now is the time to start. 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 considerate, though, and 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 to ask permission before jumping up. You don't have to eliminate lap-time completely, just limit access to those times when you can give him your full attention and an entire lap. Teach your pet that your voice, your look and your presence are also positive forms of attention -- that 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.

Insist on good manners from the beginning. 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's demanded it!

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 in 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. As a "rule of thumb," if you don't want it in your pet's mouth, don't leave it on the floor.

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 leash, just like you did before the baby came, but with this nice addition. Share mealtimes, and when your baby gets a treat or a toy, be sure your pet has something nice to hold, too.

Removing Pet Stains and Odors

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Dogs and cats often prefer to urinate and defecate on soft absorbent surfaces. Unfortunately, that may include carpets and bedding. After a pet finds a surface they prefer, they will continue to use the same area unless the behavior is interrupted. To

keep the pet from going on these indoor surfaces you must thoroughly clean stains. What seems clean to you may not smell clean to the pet. Regular household cleaners will not remove proteins found in urine and feces. Follow these helpful tips to remove stains and odors from your house.

Find Old Stains

Before you can fix a housetraining problem or litter box issue, you must thoroughly clean all stains even if they are old and dry. Even if there is just one spot in the house, your pet will smell the scent and think it is an appropriate place to eliminate.

- Carefully check for stains in the corners of the house and even on walls. Use a black light in a dark room to find hidden urine stains.
- Look for any discoloration on carpet or tile.
- Search for spots around the dog or cat's bed or place they sleep.
- Do what your animal does. Get down on their level and use your nose to sniff it out.

Fixing the Problem

Before you begin cleaning, mark all areas that need to be cleaned with a Post-It note. You will lose track of stains once you start cleaning. Purchase a high quality enzymatic cleaner and some paper towels. Take the pet out of the room where you will be working. Do not put them in a room where they can have more accidents. Remove any objects or bedding that can go in the washing machine.

Clean Washable Items

- Add a pound box of baking soda to your wash with normal detergent.
- Air dry items if possible.
- If stain is still present, add an enzymatic cleaner to the wash cycle. There are enzymatic detergents available at some pet stores and online catalogs.

Clean Carpets and Tile

- For fresh stains, remove as much liquid and solid matter as possible. Do not rub liquids into the carpet, blot carefully with a dry towel or rag. Rubbing will put the stain into the padding.
- On tile, remove all traces of liquid and dispose of paper towels or newspaper outdoors. If you are cleaning cat urine, you can place the paper towel or newspaper in the litter box.
- Thoroughly soak the entire area with an enzymatic cleaner. Do not rinse or wipe off the cleaner. Allow cleaner to soak through to the pad and let it air dry. The smell will remain until the area is completely dry. If the animal keeps going back to the same area, cover the stain with aluminum foil and place a heavy dish on top of it. Animals should not be allowed in the room until the stain is completely dry and you have them tethered to you or can watch them closely.
- For old or stubborn stains, rent a carpet-cleaning machine or wet-dry vac. Follow cleaning with an enzymatic cleaner.

Clean Walls

- If urine has soaked through drywall, you will probably need to replace the area. Once drywall has been saturated, it is impossible to remove the enzymes. If wall is

brick or slump block, clean majority of stain off wall and follow with an enzymatic cleaner.

Additional Help

- If animals are engaging in marking behavior, it is very beneficial to have them neutered. Marking behavior decreases when the animal is no longer able to reproduce.
- Do not allow animals free access to areas where they urinate in the house. Restrict access to the house until the animals are housetrained or litter box trained. See handouts on housetraining and crate training.
- If an animal has been using a particular surface for a long period of time, you may need to replace the area. As mentioned above, soiled drywall can rarely be salvaged. Cats will continue to spray walls if left untreated. Urine often soaks through to padding under carpet and needs to be replaced.
- Avoid using a steam cleaner. Steam can make the area spread and thoroughly soak through to the padding.
- Do not use regular household cleaners, especially ones containing vinegar or ammonia.
- If you find your dog or cat is repeatedly using the same item to urinate on, put the item out of reach or make it unattractive. Potted plants and other organic material are common targets.
- Carefully test items before using an enzymatic cleaner. Enzymatic cleaners are not appropriate for all surfaces. Varnishes and paints can react with urine making it impossible to use an enzymatic cleaner. These surfaces will need to be stained, painted or replaced.
- Restart the housetraining process. If you have noticed a sudden change in urinating habits from a cat or dog that is housetrained, take them to the vet immediately to have a urinalysis done. The animal may be suffering from a painful infection that is making good behavior impossible.
- Check your animal's bed to see if urine may be leaking while they sleep. If your dog is leaking small amounts of urine, have him checked out by a veterinarian. He may be suffering from incontinence. Keep bed and sleeping area as clean as possible while pet is being treated.
- Watch for any changes the dog has experienced in his routine. Keep a journal of accidents as well as feeding and exercise schedule.
- For litter box issues, make sure you have not changed litter or location of the litter box. Cats are very sensitive to where the litter box is placed and what is in the box. Keep litter as clean as possible and do not make sudden changes to litter. Many cats do not like scented litter, watch for preferences in your cat.
- It will take time for your animal to be retrained. It took time for him to develop this habit and it will take time to unlearn the behavior. Do not punish the pet for accidents in the house. Follow tips outlined in the handouts on housetraining.
- Be patient during the housetraining process. Your anxiety will only make your pet more stressed. Consult a behaviorist if the problem continues or you need additional support.

Selecting the Right Pet for You

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Puppies and kittens are babies. All babies are cute, cuddly and fun to watch whether they're playing or sleeping. It's wonderful to watch a baby grow, explore and learn. However, we can't predict what kind of personality that baby will have as an adult. It's impossible to look at the rows of human babies in a hospital nursery and know who will be athletic or academic, quiet or talkative, high-or low-energy, artistically or mechanically gifted, sociable or a "loner."

Many physical traits of certain types or breeds of dogs and cats can be fairly predictable. Some are good traits like size, coat and hair types, and some are bad, such as over-breeding, health problems and so forth. Some have general personality traits: retrievers like to have things in their mouths; terriers like to dig; and Siamese-type cats tend to be very talkative. These traits can be predicted to a limited degree, however, it's hazardous to make too many assumptions about any infant's individual personality based solely on what traits his or her "group" is expected to have.

Each baby, whether human, canine or feline, will develop into an individual with a unique personality and special characteristics all their own. Their personality will be based on some inherited and some learned traits, and that combination is what makes each individual unique. When we choose our friends, we look for certain characteristics that fit into our lives, traits we share, and attitudes that help us mesh. Physical characteristics may play a part in those choices, but the real "click" comes from those combined traits that are unique to each individual. The same is true when we choose pets to share our lives with us for ten to 20 years.

How do I decide what age pet is right for me? Many people assume that puppies or kittens are the only "right" age for a new pet to be introduced into the family, when in fact, an older pet is more suitable for many situations. There are important differences between the needs and abilities of adult dogs or cats and puppies or kittens. Puppies and kittens learn many of their most important skills, such as how to be a dog or a cat, from their mothers and littermates until they're ten to twelve weeks old (see our handouts: "General Developmental Stages of Puppy Behavior" and "General Developmental Stages of Kitten Behavior"). Baby animals taken from their families before that age need specialized lessons and care. Just because they can eat grown-up food doesn't mean they have grown up. However, those first few weeks aren't the only time for learning.

The first six months of life are vital to the development of puppies and kittens and require a lot of time, care and energy. Many households are not able to provide what is needed during this busy period of high-rate learning and growing. Baby animals that are not properly taught and cared for during this time find it difficult to develop the proper social skills. Depending on the type of cat or dog, most pets can be considered "teenagers" or young adults from six months to 16 months old. These puppies and kittens are still growing and developing through adolescence, but are beginning to show

the direction that their individual personalities will probably take. They're still high-energy "kids" at this stage and will test your patience at every turn.

Every pet has a history, no matter how young or how old. Some animals come with details about their backgrounds, and some have histories that remain mysterious. A pet of any age can bond with the people who love and care for him, giving as much to the relationship as he receives in return. Some animals may have very negative memories of humans who mistreated them, and need extra time to adjust and to learn to trust. The majority of adult cats and dogs, however, can bond with their new families as deeply as puppies or kittens raised from babyhood.

If you're looking for a pet with certain personality traits, it's more likely that you'll find the right companion to fit your lifestyle if the candidate is at least six months old. If you don't have the patience or energy for a teenager, you should consider an adult dog or cat that is at least one year to eighteen months old. Dogs and cats this age learn quickly, have more coordination and control over their physical functions, and have more predictable natures.

You must first decide if you have the time, energy, space and money for a pet – it's a huge commitment (see our handout: "Is This the Best Time to Adopt a Pet?"). You then need to determine whether a baby animal or a mature pet is more appropriate for your lifestyle and your expectations for this new member of the family.

To help you weigh the "pros" and "cons" of adopting a dog or cat versus a puppy or kitten, ask yourself these important questions:

- ❖ **How much time do you spend at home on an average day?** Puppies and kittens need more physical and emotional involvement with their people than you can give if you are away from home more than six hours a day (see our handouts: "Houstraining Your Puppy," "Dealing with Normal Puppy Behavior: Chewing" and "The Educated Dog"). Most adult pets can easily adjust to your schedule, however, they also need time to learn what is expected of them. Some dogs never grow accustomed to being left alone. If all of your family members are away from home more than eight hours most days, a dog may not be the appropriate choice for your household, and you might want to consider adopting an adult cat (or two) instead.
- ❖ **Are there children in my home? How many? How old?** While many families think they want "a pet for the children," it actually takes a very special combination of parent/child/pet to have a successful relationship. If the child is under six years old, the pet should be over four months old. Puppies and kittens play roughly, and without careful supervision and training, both your child and your pet could have a bad experience with potentially serious consequences.

An adult pet is usually past the stage of becoming overly excited, and you can better gauge how hardy and tolerant he'll be toward childish enthusiasm. It's your responsibility, to your pet and to your child, to monitor their interaction. You can help to strengthen the relationship between your pet and child by showing your respect for your pet's needs and feelings. Teach by example that your pet is an important family member, not a "plaything" to be neglected and tossed away when no longer new and exciting.

While a family pet offers children a wonderful opportunity to learn about caring and responsibility, regular pet-care duties need to be carefully supervised by an adult. A child should never be solely responsible for a pet. You also need to keep in mind that your child's life and interests will change over the next ten to 15 years. The ultimate responsibility for a pet's care and safety is that of the adults in the household.

- ❖ **Will this pet be a companion to another pet?** It's best to introduce a younger animal to an adult resident pet in your household, but not too young. Your resident cat or dog may respond to a very young kitten or puppy as prey to be hunted. In addition, the older pet may not like the constant bother and play. Very young pets lack the social graces to read your older pet's irritation and the reflexes to escape if the situation becomes tense. From four to 14 months old is a good age range to introduce a puppy or kitten to your adult pet.

Most pets like to have at least one "buddy." You might want to consider adopting a pair of adult pets that are already accustomed to and attached to each other? Many pets (especially cats) are surrendered to shelters in "pairs" because their human families are no longer able to care for them. There are many benefits to keeping a pair together.

- ❖ **Do I want a pet that will participate with me in outdoor activities?** If you want a dog to take hiking and camping, to play ball or swim in the lake with, or to train to catch flying discs, you should consider a teenage or young adult dog. For major outdoor activities a dog should be a certain size and have natural hardiness. Not all dogs (even retrievers) are naturally inclined toward catching things. This is an excellent example of finding the right combination of traits to fit your particular criteria.

In addition, dogs that are involved in these types of activities must have excellent manners, and you must be willing and able to build a strong relationship with your dog, including ongoing obedience training. Many pets, like many people, don't travel well. Some reasons for chronic carsickness can be remedied, but if you specifically want a pet to travel with you to local activities or on short vacations, don't expect miracles from a young animal. There is no way to tell which pet will have the stomach for it.

- ❖ **Do I want a "lap-pet" that will be physically affectionate and cuddly?** Most puppies and kittens will accept some physical affection, but they don't all grow up to be pets that like to be cuddled. This is another good example of a specific personality trait, which if it's important to you, will be easier to find in an adult animal.
- ❖ **Do I prefer a certain physical appearance, coloring or coat?** If you like big cats, shiny dogs or fluffy coats, you can do some "educated guessing" with a puppy or kitten, but you'll still be guessing. By the time a cat or dog is about six months old, these physical traits will be clear, plus you'll be able to see what kind of personality traits go along with the "package."
- ❖ **How large is "too large" for my lifestyle?** If you're renting your "home," you'll want to check the pet policies in your rental contract or lease -- especially regarding

size limitations. Puppies and kittens grow up, and believe it or not, thousands of puppies and kittens lose their homes each year because someone didn't think about what their adult size might be. If you have a specific size in mind for your ideal pet, it's not a good idea to guess. By the time cats and most dogs are six or seven months old, you can usually tell what size they'll be when they're fully grown. Many large dogs are surrendered to animal shelters because they were cute, little, fluffy puppies one week and big, clumsy, enthusiastic teenagers the next. It takes time to teach any dog basic manners, like not to pull on the leash, not to jump on people and not to play too roughly, and even more time and patience with a puppy.

You can benefit from someone else's poor planning if you adopt an adult or teenage dog, but only if you're willing to do what they did not - teach him the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. This training may take weeks or months, but it can begin very simply with a dog over six months old that's ready and able to learn quickly, and has good muscular coordination and some knowledge of social skills.

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.
- ❖ 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 as well.
- ◆ 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 just 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 eliminates 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.
- ❖ 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”) OR
- ◆ 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").

Starting Out Right With Your New Cat And The Litter Box

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Most cats have a specific preference about where they want to eliminate. By following the suggestions outlined in this handout, you'll be able to start off on the right foot with your new cat.

Location

Most people are inclined to place the litter box in an out-of-the-way spot in order to minimize odor and loose particles of cat litter in the house. 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. Since she is new to the household, she may not remember where the litter box is if it's located in an area she seldom frequents. Your cat may be startled while using the litter box if a furnace, washer or dryer suddenly comes on and that may be the last time she'll risk such a frightening experience! If your cat likes to scratch the surface surrounding her litter box, she may find a cold cement floor unappealing.

Therefore, you may have to compromise. The litter box should be 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 where it's located, you might consider cutting a hole in a closet door and adding a swinging door. If the litter box sits on a smooth, slick or cold surface, put a small 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. 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. If you suspect your cat has a history of spending time outdoors and is likely to eliminate in your houseplants, you can try mixing some potting soil with your regular litter. Pellet-type litters or those made from citrus peels are not recommended. Once you find a litter your cat likes, don't change types or brands. 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 are put off by the odor of scented or deodorant litters. For the same reason, it's not a good idea to place a room deodorizer or air freshener near the litter box. A thin layer of baking soda placed on the bottom of the box will help absorb odors without repelling your cat. 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.

Number Of Litter Boxes

You should have at least as many litter boxes as you have cats. That way, none of them will ever be prevented from eliminating in the litter box because it's already occupied. You might also consider placing them in several locations around the house, so that no one cat can "guard" the litter box area and prevent the other cats from accessing 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. 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 wants.**
- ♦ **A covered litter box may also 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 depending on the circumstances, you may need to change it every other day or once a week. If you scoop the litter daily, scoopable litter can go two to three weeks before the litter 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, as it may cause your cat to avoid it. Washing with soap and water should be sufficient.

Liners

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

Depth Of Litter

Some people think that the more litter they put in the box, the less often they will have to clean it. 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 of the litter box. The litter box needs to be cleaned on a regular basis and adding extra litter is not a way around that chore.

"Litter-Training" Cats

There's really no such thing as "litter-training" a cat in the same way one would house-train a dog. 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 is likely to initiate a negative association with the litter box.

If Problems Develop

If your cat begins to eliminate in areas other than the 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. Punishment is not the answer. For long-standing or complex situations, contact an animal behavior specialist who has experience working with cats.

The Fearful Cat

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When cats feel threatened, they usually respond in three ways to the object, person or situation they perceive as a threat: 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'll 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, piloerection, 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 isn't necessarily the best thing to do from your cat's point of view. It's 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.

What Causes Fearful Behavior?

You'll need to closely observe your cat to determine the trigger for her fearful behavior. Keep in mind that just because you know that the person or animal approaching your cat has good intentions, doesn't mean that she feels safe. The trigger for her fearful behavior could be anything. Some common triggers are:

- ❖ A particular person
- ❖ A stranger
- ❖ Another animal
- ❖ A child
- ❖ Loud noises

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 thorough physical examination to rule out any medical reasons for your cat's fearful behavior. Cats don't always act sick, even when they are. 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.
- ❖ 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 the fear stimulus 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 the fear stimulus:

- ◆ 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 and will need to start over from the beginning. This is the most common mistake people make when desensitizing an animal, and it can be avoided by working 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. 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. Bites should be reported to your local animal control agency so that your cat can be quarantined and watched for signs of rabies. If you can't keep your cat separated from the stimuli that brings on her aggressive behavior and you're unable to work with a professional animal behavior specialist, please consider having your cat humanely euthanized. 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, so your cat is likely to associate any punishment you give her with you. 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.

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 patterns 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 all normal cat behaviors, whether they're seen during play or are part of an actual predatory sequence. Most play aggression can be successfully redirected to appropriate targets, however, it may still result in injury.

"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 your hand

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 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 the cat's unacceptable behavior has been rewarded.

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.

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.**

Unusual Eating Habits In Dogs and Cats

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Definitions

Dogs and cats will sometimes eat socks, rocks or other objects, which 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, is probably unacceptable to you. 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 proven or disproven. 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 owners. *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 (see our handout: "When the Behavior Helpline Can't Help").

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.
- ◆ 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 odor which stools have been treated and which have not.
- ◆ 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 aren't afraid of loud noises) then give him a toy to play with, instead. Praise him for taking an interest in the toy.
- ◆ The simplest solution may be to clean your yard daily in order to minimize your pet's opportunity to eat his stools.
- ◆ 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, as well.

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:

In Arizona's dry climate, parasites are not as much of a problem as in other parts of the country. 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 stools. Health risks to humans from being licked in the face by a coprophagic animal are minimal. 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 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 (see our handouts: “Cat Aversives” and “Dog Aversives”).**
- ◆ **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 eat more food, more often, which may decrease the behavior. Check with your veterinarian before changing your pet’s diet.**
- ◆ **If you suspect that anxiety or frustration is the reason for pica, the cause of the anxiety or 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 (see our handouts: “Cat Toys and How to Use Them” and “Dog Toys and How to Use Them”).**

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Your Cat: Indoors Or Out

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If you want your cat to live a long and healthy life, keep her inside. If you allow your cat to wander around on her own, without your supervision, she is susceptible to any of the following tragedies:

- ❖ becoming hit by a car
- ❖ ingesting a deadly poison like antifreeze or a pesticide
- ❖ 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 her way home
- ❖ being stolen
- ❖ encountering an adult or child with cruel intentions

Following are some of the reasons people have provided for allowing their cat to be outdoors without their supervision, along with our comments and 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 into your yard to get to your cat.

"My last cat went outdoors and he loved it."

Your cat may enjoy being outdoors, but by allowing him to go outside, unsupervised, you're putting him at risk and shortening his life span. Most cats that are allowed to roam outdoors usually don't live for more than a few years. Cats who live strictly indoors can live up to 18 - 20 years of age.

"My cat's litter box smells."

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. Don't use strong smelling chemicals or cleaning products when washing the litter box, as it may cause your cat to avoid it.

"My cat likes to sun herself."

Your cat can sun herself by any window indoors. If you're really set on letting your cat sun herself outdoors, put her on a harness and leash and stay with her while she's taking in the rays.

“I can't keep him in.”

Keep your windows closed or put in screens. Remember to always keep your doors closed and teach your children the importance of keeping the doors closed, too. It may take a few days or a few weeks, but if there are enough interesting things for your cat to play with indoors, he'll come to enjoy being indoors. Be sure to provide him with a scratching post and safe toys to bat or carry around (see our handout: “Cat Toys and How To Use Them”).

“We've always let her out.”

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

“My cat knows to avoid cars.”

Even if this were true, all it would take is another car, a dog or a shiny object to lure your cat into the street and into the path of traffic. 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 likely to spread viruses like feline leukemia and other fatal diseases. If your cat needs a friend, adopt another cat that's healthy and disease-free.

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

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

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 is capable of, and a variety of reasons for vocalizing.

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're 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, so “talking” may be a 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. People may talk back, feed her, yell at her, pick her up and lock her in another room, or pick her up and soothe her. All of these responses will encourage an attention-seeking cat. To discourage this behavior, simply ignore your cat when she does this, and 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.
- ❖ **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 this window is likely to make it 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 busy so she doesn’t think of going outside. 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 difficult transition.
- ❖ **Aversives:** If your cat still won’t give up 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, this problem should take care of itself.

Transition

If your cat is new to your home or has just gone through a change (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.