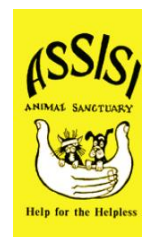


# 1



## Guidance Sheet for Cats

### Is a kitten right for you?

Kittens are undeniably adorable and we know how easy it is to fall in love with a little mewling bundle of fluff. But it's worth remembering that they grow up fast and will reach adulthood in just one year, so do take some time to consider whether a kitten is right for you and consider all of the implications of owning and raising a little feline friend before you welcome a kitten into your home:

### Financial Commitment

Caring for a kitten costs most people between £500 and £700 each year, which will normally cover food, insurance and general health checks at the vets. As your cat gets older this cost may increase with vet bills and, should your cat have an accident or become very ill, you may need to pay for unexpected medical treatment: some cats may develop life-long illnesses, such as diabetes, which can cost thousands of pounds to provide the medicines and veterinary treatment they need. All cat owners should consider insurance for their pet.

If you have decided you want to share your life with a kitten and be responsible for it all through its life, your commitment could last for up to 20 years. This is a serious undertaking and you want to get it as right as you can.

### Do I have the patience to have a kitten?

Kittens have a tremendous amount of energy and curiosity, coupled with extensive athletic ability. They learn about the world around them by exploring, and they exercise their developing muscles by running and leaping and pouncing. While this is all part of normal, healthy kitten behaviour, it can also be frustrating – when your kitten climbs your new curtains, attacks your

ankles for the hundredth time, or knocks over the antique vase on your mantelpiece. Most kittens become less active after about a year of age, but it may take a lot of patience on your part until your pet reaches that point! Young children may not have this much patience.

### **Will my home be safe for a kitten?**

Kittens love to explore small spaces, jump up onto high shelves and perch on narrow ledges. Candle flames can be fascinating to kittens, as can open tumble dryers and washing machines. For your kitten's safety you will need to keep toxic chemicals and plants out of reach, as well as electrical cords. Toilet lids should be kept down. If you are thinking this sounds like childproofing your home, you have got the right idea! Consider whether you are willing and able to make these changes before you bring a kitten into your home.

### **Is everyone in the family ready to have a kitten?**

Young children may not understand that a kitten is a living being, that it is unacceptable to be rough with it, and that it must be left alone while it eats, sleeps or uses the litter tray. Many children are mature enough to have a kitten by primary school age, but some are not.

### **Will the kitten fit in with the pets I already have?**

Not all adult cats and/or dogs will welcome a new kitten. If you already have an adult cat, expect a transition period of at least a month as the older cat adjusts to the kitten. Keep in mind that some breeds of dog may see a small kitten as something to be hunted as prey. Be sure to introduce the kitten slowly to the resident cat or dog, and do not leave them alone until you are certain they will be OK together. A kitten will likely be fascinated by any birds you might have, and this can be very stressful for a bird, even one in a cage.

### **Are we planning to move to a new home any time soon?**

Moving to a big new home can often be very unsettling for a little kitten. If you're planning to move in the near future, it might be worth waiting to adopt your kitten until you're settled into your new home: like most cats, kittens tend to favour familiar surroundings so it may take them a while to adjust to their

new home, particularly if the environment is very different to what they've been used to. But don't worry if this isn't an option: give your kitten a safe place to call their own and reassure them throughout the move to keep them (and you!) calm and happy.

### **Do I work long hours or travel a lot?**

Long periods of time left home alone can be distressing for a little kitten: if your feline friend will be left alone for most of the day, it may be better to adopt an older cat who is more independent, or a pair from the same litter so they have company. If you're adopting a 6-month-old or younger kitten (or kittens!), their tummies will still be very tiny so they'll need small but regular meals throughout the day and can't be left alone for more than a few hours at a time.

If you are regularly away from home, look into local options to make sure your kitten is cared-for while you're away: most cats would rather stay at home in familiar surroundings, so check to see if a cat-friendly neighbour will be happy to feed and play with your kitten several times each day, or if there is a professional cat-sitter in your area who can regularly visit.

### **Inside or out?**

All kittens should be kept indoors until they're fully vaccinated and neutered. We recommend neutering at 14-16 wks old. At approx. 5/6 months the kitten can start to have supervised access to outside. It is recommended that you use a cat harness and lead for the first few times so they cannot stray or get scared by unfamiliar noises and run in a different direction. Unneutered male cats are more likely to stray, get into fights, spray pungent urine everywhere and contract potentially lethal infections such as FIV FELV. Female cats can become pregnant when they're just 4 to 6 months old, which can be very dangerous for such a young kitten.

If your home is close to a busy road, or if you live in a flat or have no garden, you may prefer to keep your cat indoors, but remember that your kitten or cat will need more stimulation to keep them fit and happy: provide them with plenty of toys, scratching posts or mats and take some time to play, stroke and interact with them every day. It's normal for most indoor cats to be less active;

they'll need a little less food each day to keep them sleek and healthy. Some owners of indoor cats provide cat runs attached to the outside of the house: these are secure and enclosed outdoor spaces, usually with perches and areas to shelter from the sun and rain, that their cats and kittens can visit to get fresh air.

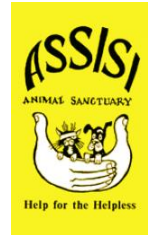
But the most important consideration when deciding whether your kitten should be allowed to explore the great outdoors or be kept inside is their personality: kittens who have begun life in a feral or semi-feral litter, strays or those who are used to having access outdoors will not always adapt well to life as an indoor cat and may become stressed or anxious if restricted to the home.

Whether you opt to keep your cat inside or allow them outdoors, make sure that their vaccinations are up-to-date, and they visit the vets for annual check-ups and boosters.

### **Kitten personalities**

A kitten's personality develops as it gets older and it can completely change as personalities in kittens only matures around 10-12 months. What was once a very affectionate kitten that adored cuddles may now prefer to sit in a different room, be an independent cat, wanting attention only at feeding times. If it is a lap cat and an affectionate cat that you would like then why not have a look at our young cats that will already have a developed personality.

# 2



## Guidance Sheet for Cats

### Kitten Behaviour

Cats have a wide range of personalities. How confident or fearful a cat is in adulthood will be affected by what happens in kittenhood. Much of this 'personality' development has already taken place before we get our kitten. For the cat, learning to enjoy the company of people takes place pretty early in its life – somewhere from about three weeks to seven or eight weeks old. During this time the kitten hasn't yet learned to fear everything, and its mind is open to forming bonds with other animals or people and learning how to deal with new experiences without being overwhelmed by them. Think about human children when they're toddlers, and how fearless they often are – running off without a care, touching and tasting everything, falling over and getting up again. But as they get older they begin to worry and look for reassurance when they do things.

Too often, pet owners resort to punishment when they believe a pet has stepped out of line. Punishment is a poor tool for shaping behaviour in most situations. Physical corrections and harsh scolding are likely to bruise your relationship and can lead to more serious problems, such as aggression.

Never hit, shake or yell at your kitten. If you need to interrupt a behaviour, such as scratching furniture, make a sharp noise by tapping a tabletop or clapping your hands loudly. Avoid doing anything that makes your kitten act frightened or reluctant to approach you.

Cats are good at letting you know what they want, either vocally or with their bodies. It won't be long before you understand what your kitten is trying to tell you.

## **Meows**

As your kitten grows up, you start to hear distinctive "meows" from her. Low-pitched meows usually mean your cat is uncomfortable or unhappy. High-pitched meows mean she's happier, and if she keeps repeating them, she's wanting your attention. Maybe she feels it's time for her favourite kitten food? With a little practice, you'll soon get to know what your kitten's trying to say.

Interestingly, meows are hardly ever directed at other cats, nearly always at humans. So listen up, she's talking to you. Learn more about a cat's meow.

## **Purring**

Purring is usually a sign of contentment, although it doesn't always indicate happiness. A cat that is ill or anxious will sometimes purr as a comfort. However, most of the time if your kitten is rubbing against you and purring loudly, it's a sign of affection or she's asking for something, such as food.

## **Hisses and growls**

If you're hearing these, you've got a frightened little kitten. She's trying to puff herself up to sound scary so she can protect herself. You'll usually hear her hiss and growl during tense encounters with other animals.

## **Rubbing**

When your kitten rubs its face up against you, it means she's really comfortable in your company and is showing she likes you. She is also leaving her scent mark on her 'new mummy'.

## **Rolling over**

If your kitten rolls over onto her back and stretches her legs, she is indicating complete submissiveness and trust in you. She's also asking for attention. And when she hops onto your lap and snuggles down contentedly, there's no doubt how she views her new environment.

## **Tell-tail**

A cat's tail is an excellent indicator of her feelings. A happy kitten will hold her tail straight up; if she's frightened, she'll tuck it between her legs. The broad swishing of an adult cat's tail shows annoyance or impatience. If she's really agitated, her tip of her tail will move rapidly from side to side — this is clearly threatening behaviour. A twitching tail is a sure sign of your kitten's excitement and curiosity.

## **Ears**

Pricked ears are an indication of interest in what's going on around her as well. Ears held erect and inclined forward, she's relaxed and friendly. But when a cat's ears go down, flat against her head, it's a sign of aggression; this is done to keep them out of the way should a fight erupt.

## **My kitten is biting me when we play, what should I do?**

Kittens fight each other when they are young and engage in enthusiastic rough and tumble fights. These are always interrupted if they become a little too violent so that the kittens learn to inhibit their biting when playing.

Unfortunately when humans attempt the same kind of games, using their hands, they often reinforce the highly excitable behaviour and encourage kittens to grow up biting and scratching in the name of play with an intensity that can cause injury. The cat's preferred target of hands soon generalises to bare feet and, as an adult, the cat will pounce on hands and feet at every opportunity.

You need to address this now to ensure your kitten doesn't grow into a cat that plays roughly and gets labelled as 'aggressive'. Play aggression is easily prevented by ensuring that human body parts never form part of any games with your cat. There are numerous toys on the market, many of which are attached to rods or sticks to enable easy manipulation from a distance. Hands are then associated with gentle stroking, holding and feeding rather than predatory play. Don't be tempted to shout or tap your cat's nose or any other form of intended punishment as this will either be seen as part of the game or as a threatening gesture. This will not teach your kitten new, acceptable ways to play.

# 3



## Guidance Sheet for Cats

### Making Friends

#### Introducing Your New Cat to Your Current Animals

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 mother 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.

#### Confinement

Confine your new cat to one medium-sized room with her litter tray, 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 tray 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 behaviour. 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 behaviours, 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 vet to be sure that all of your pets are healthy. You'll also want to have at least one litter tray per cat, and you'll probably need to clean all of the litter trays more frequently. Make sure that none of the cats are being "ambushed" by another while trying to use the litter tray. 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 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.

### **Controlling first impressions**

The first impression a new cat makes when she meets your resident cat is critical. If two cats display aggression during their first meeting, this may set the mood for their future relationship.

The two cats should be able to smell and hear—but not see or touch—each other. Each cat should have her own food and water bowl, litter tray, scratching post, bed, etc. Feed the cats near the door that separates them so they learn that coming together (even though they can't see each other) results in a pleasant experience. In addition to regular cat food, feed the cats extra-special treats near the door as well, like tiny pieces of tuna or chicken.

After two to three days, switch the cats' locations so they can investigate each other's smell. This also allows the new cat to explore a different section of your home. Some behaviourists suggest rubbing the cats separately with the same towel to intermix their scents. First gently rub one cat with the towel. Then rub the other cat. After the towel carries both cats' scents, bring the towel back to the first cat and rub her with it again. After a few more days, play with each of the cats near the door. Encourage them to paw at toys under the door. Eventually the cats may play "paws" under the door with each other.

### **Letting the cats see each other**

After a week or so, assuming that you see no signs of aggression at the door (no hissing, growling, etc.), you can introduce the cats to each other. One method is to replace the door with a temporary screen door so that the cats can see each other. If you can't use a screen door, you can try using two baby gates positioned in the door jam, one above the other.

Ask a friend or family member to help you with the introduction. Have one cat and one person on each side of the door, and start the introduction by setting each cat down a few feet away from the screen or gates. When the cats notice

each other, say their names and toss treats to them, aiming the treats behind them. Over the next few days, continue to encourage feeding, eating treats and playing near the barrier, gradually offering the cats' meals, treats and toys closer to the screen.

### **Letting the cats spend time together**

The next stage is to permit the cats to spend time together without a barrier between them. Supervise these initial face-to-face interactions carefully.

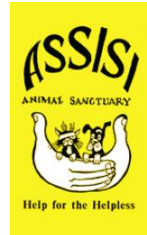
It's good to bring the cats together when they are likely to be relatively calm, such as after a meal or strenuous play. Keep a squirt bottle handy in case the cats begin to fight. As the cats become more familiar with each other, allow them longer and longer periods of time together. If one cat spends most of her time hiding, or if one cat continuously harasses and pursues the other, please consult a professional.

### **Final tips**

If you're bringing a new cat into a household with multiple cats, introduce each resident cat to the newcomer individually. After each of your cats has met the new cat one-on-one, you can start to allow all of the cats to mingle as a group.

Your cats will be more likely to get along if they're happy in their environment. Look at the layout of your home. Make sure there are plenty of hiding spots for your cats. Some like to sit up high, on shelves and large scratching post trees. Frightened cats, on the other hand, tend to hide under and behind things, so make sure you provide spots at floor level as well. Place food, water and litter trays out in the open so your cats don't feel trapped when they access these resources. Make sure you have a litter tray for each cat, plus at least one extra.

# 4



## Guidance Sheet for Cats

### Timid Cats

#### Your shy cat's behaviour

You may notice that your cat's pupils are dilated, that she is licking her lips and that she is creeping about with her body close to the ground, her tail limp. She may look upwards, trying to establish if there are safe, high-up places that she can get to.

Do not be concerned if your new cat is hiding; hissing; spitting; or generally showing signs of distress - these are all perfectly natural behaviours and should subside as your cat becomes used to her new environment. It is not unusual for her to go off her food for the first couple of days or to suffer from diarrhoea. Again, this is stress related. However, if you are concerned about your cat's health, please consult your vet.

Here are some steps to try and help settle your shy cat into their new home

#### Stage one

Through your actions and body language, you can make your first encounters with your shy cat less stressful for her.

To begin with, do not attempt to stroke her (unless your cat approaches you for affection) or pick her up. Simply sit in the room softly talking or reading aloud so she becomes used to the sound of your voice and your scent.

Try to resist the temptation to keep peering at your new pet if she is hiding in her safe place. This will not reassure her: on the contrary it is likely to distress her even further.

Direct eye contact with your cat is very threatening but if you glance away and blink slowly, this can help

comfort and relax her. After a while, you may find she will respond with her own blinks.

Start out with slow movements and a quietly encouraging voice: yawn and look away to show that you are no threat.

Offer delicious treats with a long handled spoon - little bits of warm chicken/tuna are usually the favourites.

Help your cat to slowly get used to the activities in your home: play a radio quietly so that she gets used to background noise, lie on the floor without looking at her and talk to her so that she becomes accustomed to your company.

## **Stage two**

Use two wand toys or sticks with fleece or a feather at the end. Alternatively you could use long-handled artists' paint brushes.

Place one of them on the ground near to your cat's paws and with the other start to touch her gently and slowly around the cheeks. As her attention has been divided by you having two wands, she will more readily accept the touch of the wand on her body.

This may be all you are able to do for the first few days or even longer. As the cat gets used to the cheek touching, continue rubbing with the wand and start to move over more of the body slowly.

Be patient and build on each day's success gradually. This routine may be slow going but it can't be rushed. If your cat seems unhappy or stressed at any point, go back a stage.

## **Stage three**

When your cat is moving freely around the room with her tail erect, she may try to follow you out as you leave, scratch at the door, or meow, letting you know she wants to investigate her surroundings further. Allow her to

do this but always leave the door to her room open so she can retreat to the safety of what she knows should she become anxious.

Let your cat's confidence be your guide. As she becomes more relaxed and happy in your home, you can slowly increase the time you spend stroking her. She may want to play or sit on your lap. Let her make all the first moves and always end any contact with her on a positive note. If your cat particularly enjoys her food, hand feeding rather than putting food in a bowl can be a good way to establish a bond.

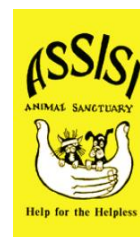
We advise keeping any rescue cat indoors for approximately four weeks. This gives your cat time to bond with you and become used to her new home. When she does begin to go outside, she can find her way home and will want to return. Shy cats can take longer to settle and therefore it is advisable to keep them indoors for a longer period of time. This could mean extending the usual four weeks to six weeks or longer if you feel she is not sufficiently settled.

## **And finally**

There are no definite rules about how long it should take a cat to settle. Some will settle in a matter of days, some will take weeks, others even longer.

It is important not to rush your cat: give her plenty of time, space, and affection when she asks for it. Patience and understanding are the key. Shy cats can be very rewarding pets as you see them slowly changing from an unhappy, timid little ball of fur into a happy, relaxed and loving companion. There is a product on the market called Feliway which is used to help reduce stress/behavioural issues in cats. Feliway works by releasing pheromones into the environment to make the cat feel more at ease. Please contact your vet if you're thinking about buying Feliway.

# 5



## Guidance Sheet for Cats

### Introduction to the 'Big Outdoors'

**Before allowing your new kitten or cat outside, ensure it has a means of identification, either a securely fitted safety collar and ideally, a microchip identification implanted under the skin on the scruff of the neck.**

Prior to any trips outside it is worth considering how you intend to give your cat or kitten access outdoors in the long-term. If you are at home for large periods of the day you may wish to consider allowing access 'on demand' via the back door or a conveniently positioned window, for example. However if you are out at work during the day you may prefer to install a cat flap. The local environment will dictate what rules you put in place regarding any time limits on access outside. You may wish to confine your kitten or cat at dusk, so that it can remain indoors at night, or limit its access outside at times when traffic may be busy locally.

Before you allow your kitten free access outdoors, make sure it has been neutered (at around 14-16 weeks). You should also ensure your garden is safe for your kitten first by covering any ponds, blocking up any holes in the fencing and removing any potentially hazardous garden substances or objects, such as wood preservatives, insecticides, sharp implements etc. We recommend starting to introduce your kitten to outdoors at approx 20 wks old.

It's useful to get your kitten or cat used to being called to come to you – you can do this by offering it little treats so that it's happy to respond. You then have a little bit of control when you go outside to call them in.

Choose a dry day (if possible) and a quiet time when you can accompany your kitten outside, allowing it to explore the new environment. Excitements, such as other cats, dogs which might bark or children

screaming in the neighbour's garden, are best avoided for the first couple of excursions, so that your kitten (or cat) can concentrate on you and isn't spooked. Continue to accompany your kitten until it is used to your garden and can find its way back to the house without difficulty. It is best not to leave your kitten outside alone until it is at least 6-8 months old and it is essential that it is neutered (from 4 months of age) before allowing it unsupervised access.

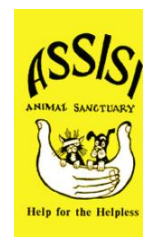
If you have adopted an adult cat you probably will have been advised to keep it in for at least 4 weeks to settle into its new home. Some cats will tolerate this period well yet others will look to go outside sooner rather than later. It is probably best to stick to this timescale, particularly if you feel there have been any signs of anxiety since its arrival. When you first decide to allow your cat outside, choose a quiet, dry period when you are at home all day and do so a short while before a routine mealtime. Accompany your cat outside but don't be alarmed if it disappears into some shrubbery; this is a normal strategy to enable it to get acclimatised to its new environment in a place where it can observe without being seen. Leave the back door open initially and, after 30 minutes, call your cat indoors for its meal and then repeat the following day. Most cats adapt extremely quickly to exploring their new territory outside and they probably will not need a gradual introduction of this kind but the more timid individuals may benefit from gradually increasing periods outside in the first few weeks.

Some people take on adult cats that have never been outside before and wonder if they'll be able to adapt to going out into the big wide world. But it's amazing how adaptable cats are, but a gentle and slow introduction is the key! They may be a little nervous at first, but most take to it like a duck to water. Some even do some hunting and it's fascinating to think that all of this instinctive behaviour has lay dormant yet can still spring to life when the cat gets the opportunity to do what comes naturally!

Whilst indoor cats can be introduced to outdoors gradually, cats that love outdoors shouldn't really be kept indoors unless an illness/disease dictates. Cats can become distressed and may start crying and scratching at the door to get out, they can even start toileting in unusual places around your home.



# 6



## Guidance Sheet for Cats

### Inappropriate Toileting

Cats are usually quite fussy about their toileting habits and will consistently use a litter tray indoors if it is provided, or loose earth or sand outside in the garden.

Therefore, if urine or faeces are discovered in the corner of the room it can be very worrying. Occasionally a one-off accident can occur if a cat is ill, trapped in a room or suddenly frightened. If inappropriate urination or defecation in the home persists it should be investigated for the health and welfare of the cat.

Whatever the cause, punishment is not the answer. This will only make the cat fearful and the problem worse.

Deterrents, such as tin foil, pepper, citrus peel or a water pistol will merely redirect the behaviour to another area, cause further anxiety and delay investigating the root cause for the behaviour.

Despite the unpleasant nature of this problem it is important to remember – this is not a dirty protest! The cat is not seeking revenge or making a point; something has gone wrong in its world and a certain amount of detective work is required to find out what.

### What is the difference between urine spraying and inappropriate urination?

Cats use urine as a scent signal or 'mark' for themselves and other cats.

Depositing urine for scent marking is very different to urinating to relieve a full bladder. It is therefore important to establish whether the cat is spraying or urinating since the potential solutions will vary. To urinate, the cat squats and deposits a volume of urine on a horizontal surface. The cat may then scratch at the area around the urine, although this is not always the case. Common sites

for inappropriate urination include carpet, settees, duvets, baths or sinks although it may occur in any location.

To spray urine the cat stands up, usually making a treading motion with its back feet, quivers its tail and a small amount of urine is sprayed backwards onto a vertical surface such as a wall, leaving an obvious scent mark. Common sites for spraying include doors, windows, around cat flaps, curtains, electrical equipment and shopping or rubbish bags. Once it has been ascertained which of the two the cat is doing it is necessary to take action to resolve the behaviour.

### **Why does my cat soil indoors?**

There are numerous reasons why an individual cat would start to soil indoors. In some cases the problem can be persistent and it is advisable to discuss it with your veterinarian rather than leave it to resolve on its own. If this is the case your vet will refer you to a specialist in cat behaviour.

Some of the more common reasons for house soiling are:

**Dirty litter trays;** Cats don't like using a tray if it is heavily soiled. Litter trays should be cleaned out completely at least weekly and topped up with fresh litter daily once the solids and clumps are removed. If the litter is a non-clumping variety it should be changed everyday or every other day (solids removed daily) since the build-up of odour from the urine passed can become extremely unpleasant for the cat. You could also have two litter trays so they have a choice of toilets.

**Put off by the smell of the litter;** Using scented litter, deodorants or disinfectants with strong smells may put the scent-sensitive cat off using the tray. To avoid this problem use a mild detergent and hot water or disinfectant specifically recommended for tray cleaning and rinse the tray thoroughly before use. Avoid disinfectants that turn cloudy in water as these usually contain phenols which are toxic to cats. Cats learning to use the tray initially may need to establish it as an appropriate toilet site and too frequent cleaning may weaken the association. Any litter used should be non-scented if this is established to be the problem.

**Using polythene litter liners;** These can occasionally catch in a cat's claws as it scratches and cause litter to spray upwards; if they are used, it may be worth experimenting with no liner to see if the problem resolves.

**Wrong type of litter;** Changing the consistency or type of litter may put the cat off using it. Hardwood-based pellets may have been acceptable as a kitten but as cats get heavier there are some that object to walking on the uncomfortable surface. Cats tend to prefer fine grain litter with the consistency of sand with no scented deodoriser. If you want to change the type you use, mix the new one in gradually over a week to gauge the cat's reaction or place a new tray with the new substrate alongside and allow the cat to choose.

**Position of the litter tray;** If the tray is positioned in the open where the dog, children or other cats disturb it, the cat may feel too vulnerable to use it. Instead it may seek a more secure spot behind the television, for example. Cats may not like to use a tray if it is next to a noisy washing machine or tumble dryer. Place the tray in a quiet corner where the cat only has to watch in one or two directions at once rather than in the open or in a thoroughfare. Placing food near the tray will put the cat off using it, so place feeding bowls elsewhere.

**Type of litter tray;** Some cats prefer the security of a covered tray while others prefer an open tray as it offers more options for escape. If you normally use an open tray it may be worth purchasing one with a lid or vice versa. An inverted box with one side cut out or careful positioning of house plants may provide the necessary privacy. Some covered trays have flaps over the entrance and these can be one obstacle too many for the more insecure cat.

**Bad associations;** Occasionally a cat decides not to use a tray because it has had a bad experience there. Giving medication or touching a cat while it is using the tray may be sufficient to create a bad association. Repositioning the tray to a quiet spot may help.

**Early training;** Kittens will often soil in the house when they are young if they are given immediate access to large areas. When kittens first arrive in their new home they are only weeks away from their original litter training by their mother. Their bladder and bowel control are not as developed as an adult's so

it is important that the young kitten has easy access to the litter tray at all times. It is advisable to confine the kitten to one room initially, with increasing periods of time to explore other areas after a few weeks. Every time the kitten uses the tray it is establishing an entrenched behaviour that will be maintained throughout its life.

**Illness ;** Urinary tract disease or diarrhoea can cause soiling as the cat is either in discomfort or just can't make it in time to the litter tray or outside. A cat that has started to urinate inappropriately in the house should be taken to the vet for a check-up, particularly if you notice your cat straining unproductively and/or passing small amounts of urine frequently. A form of urinary tract disease that is stress-related (often referred to as Cystitis) is less obvious in its presentation but one common symptom is urinating outside the litter tray. Any urinary tract discomfort can make the cat urinate when standing rather than attempting to go outside or to the litter tray. Urination in this way can sometimes be confused with spraying. Any illness or pain can be associated with soiling so an early examination by your veterinarian will be necessary. If successfully treated your cat will return to its normal acceptable pattern of toileting. Occasionally cats will continue to soil if they have experienced discomfort on the original tray so it may be necessary to provide an additional tray elsewhere to encourage use.

**Old age;** An older cat may not want to venture out in bad weather or it may be having problems using the cat flap because of stiff joints. As a cat gets older it becomes more insecure and it may feel threatened by the presence of other cats in the territory. It is almost inevitable that, at some stage, elderly cats will require safe and accessible toilet facilities indoors. The provision of an indoor litter tray often resolves this problem. It is always important to rule out medical causes for soiling in the elderly cat so a trip to your veterinarian may be necessary.

**Fear or anxiety;** Cats are at their most vulnerable to attack when they are urinating or defecating outside and, if they feel threatened, it may deter them from doing so. Other cats are usually the biggest problem but it could be a neighbour's dog or even a sudden loud noise. The provision of a discreet litter tray indoors will take away the feelings of anxiety and the need for the cat to

make a conscious decision to find a suitable toilet site. Accompanying the cat on visits to the garden may encourage it to eliminate outside again. Your cat may normally have chosen to toilet well away from its home so it may be beneficial to make its own garden more appealing. Create an area in a quiet corner relatively close to the house (for ease of escape back indoors) and mix in with the earth a high proportion of peat-free soil or sand.

**Removal of a previously used outdoor toileting areas;** Some cats are creatures of habit in their choice of toileting sites and redesigning a garden can have a serious impact on their behaviour. Always ensure that changes to the garden incorporate an area that can be comfortably used by your cat as a toilet (well dug over earth). If you are aware of your cat's favoured site then preserving it in some way would be ideal.

**Presence of strangers;** Occasionally a cat will urinate or defecate indoors if strangers are in the home and access to the litter tray or outdoors would require the cat to pass through the same room as the visitor. Some cats suffer from 'home alone' anxieties when their owners go away and leave them to defend the house by themselves. The presence of a stranger caring for them can cause some cats to feel intensely threatened and subsequently 'mark' an area, particularly the owner's bed, which has a strong, familiar and reassuring scent. If your cat is particularly nervous of strangers, especially young children, it may be beneficial to provide an indoor litter facility in the room where the cat seeks refuge just in case it gets 'caught short'! The best way to avoid 'home alone' soiling is to try to get familiar people to care for your cat in your absence. Some cats are particularly prone to the stress of being left behind and they actually benefit from a visit to a reputable and caring boarding cattery.

**A recent house move ;** Moving into a new home can be a difficult time for your cat as there will be lots of unfamiliar noises and smells, so we would recommend keeping them in one room whilst the unpacking is in progress and slowly introduce them to the house.

**Change of furniture/ redecorating ;** Cats are creatures of habit and are not that keen on change in their lives. So they may show signs of dislike when something upsets their usual routines.

**Other cats in the home/neighbourhood ;** If you live in a multi cat household you may have stressed cats as cats can intimidate and bully each other ever so subtly to the extent that their owners may not even notice. Inappropriate toileting could be a sign that this is happening. A new cat in the neighbourhood that may have started to pass through your garden or become hostile towards your cat wanting to take over the territory.

**New baby ;** The arrival of a baby in the house can be a daunting experience for a cat as they may not be familiar with babies/children and their noises/smells.

**After a trip to the vet to rule out any medical issues, it is important to investigate what the problem may be. Once you know the cause of the problem then the knowledge will help you in starting to correct your cat's toileting issues. Each case is individual so please contact the Sanctuary or your local vet for advice.**

### **Why is my cat spraying?**

Urine spraying is a normal, innate territory-marking behaviour that has nothing to do with your cat's sanitation. Though both male and female cats will spray, the behaviour is most common in non-neutered males, and in multi-cat households. The spraying of urine on curtains, furniture, and other surfaces is your cat's way of identifying territory or covering the scent of other cats. While this behaviour is normal, it can and should be prevented to keep your home odour free.

The addition of a new cat to the household can threaten resident cats, or upset the balance in a multi-cat household, and therefore induce spraying. To overcome this difficult problem you need to be able to prevent conflict, give the threatened cat(s) more security and link the presence of the cats together to something rewarding.

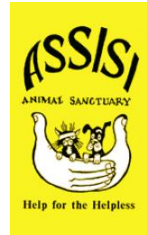
The problem with cats is that you need to find something that provides more reward than the feeling they get simply by hiding from the threat. Try feeding

them together. If they like attention, provide it when they are sharing space in the same room and generally make it pleasant when they remain calm together.

This can be helped by supplying high perches for the cats. Shelves, wardrobes or cat activity centres provide perches that allow cats to share a room but still feel safe. Consider putting the spraying cat in the safety of a large pen or carrier and allowing all your cats to share the room while they become acquainted. Pheromone sprays like Feliway may help to make the home more cat friendly.

When a cat is simply too stressed for the situation ever to be resolved, it is worth considering rehoming the threatened cat to a place with no other cats. Without the pressure of trying to cope with other cats, the likelihood of spraying is reduced.

# 7



## Guidance Sheet for Cats

### Furniture Scratching

#### **I've bought a scratching post, why won't my cat use it?**

Some scratching products are too lightweight to resist scratching or cannot be fixed to rigid surfaces. These tend not to be favoured by cats due to the lack of resistance when used. It is also important initially that the post, scratching panel or modular 'cat-aerobic' centre is located in an area your cat frequents on a regular basis. Placing it in an area that is convenient to you but not visited by your cat will guarantee that it is ignored!

As cats often scratch after a period of sleep it may be useful to place a post near a favourite bed. The type of scratching product chosen should include upright posts that are tall enough to allow the cat to scratch at full stretch.

Some commercially available posts are impregnated with catnip. This is a dried herb that is extremely attractive to many cats and its presence will often draw attention without much effort. Once the cat has approached the scratching post a simple predatory-type game (involving a piece of string attached to a feather, for example) around the base will encourage the claws to make contact with the surfaces. Often this will be sufficient to encourage further visits. If the scratching post has several levels then placing tasty dry food on the modular surfaces may encourage the less playful cat to investigate.

#### **Scratching posts are covered in carpet, won't that encourage my cat even more to damage my stairs?**

Although many commercially available scratching posts are covered with carpet there is no evidence that the cat's scratching habits will generalise to other areas of carpet within the home once the post is used regularly.



## **I've bought a scratching post, my cat uses it but still uses the sofa - what should I do?**

If scratching has damaged furniture, it is possible to deter your cat from future visits to the same location. Low tack double-sided adhesive tape (the adhesive on the tape will attract atmospheric dust and fibres so it may be necessary to place a fresh strip over the original on a daily basis if the cat is persistent.) can be stuck over the area and this will provide an unpleasant (but not dangerous) experience when your cat next scratches there. It is essential to ensure that the tape is not too sticky since it could damage paws and fabric. This method can be employed once there are acceptable scratching posts nearby to use as an alternative. Commercially available double-sided adhesive sheets can be purchased from some household cleaning suppliers specifically for this purpose.

There are various commercial scratching deterrents on the market that can be sprayed on the damaged area to prevent further approaches but they do emit a strong odour that is offensive to humans too and they need to be regularly reapplied to be effective.

## **What if my cat is damaging wooden surfaces?**

If wooden furniture, doorframes or banisters have been damaged by scratching it is important to remove all traces of the scratch marks by rubbing down with a fine sand paper and treating the area with a thick layer of furniture polish once the surface is smooth again. Suitable posts or scratching panels should be located nearby. If the area is not ideal for a free-standing scratching post on a permanent basis then it can be relocated slowly (an inch at a time!) to a more convenient position once it is being used regularly.

## **What if carpet is damaged?**

Many cats target the lower step on staircases and scratch horizontally whilst lying down. Place low tack double-sided adhesive tape over the damaged areas (warn the family not to tread on it!) and provide a scratching area nearby. If the cat grips the stair on opposite sides of the right angle, providing both vertical and horizontal scratching surfaces, it is important that the alternative offers the same opportunity. For example a breeze block covered in carpet will

be heavy enough to resist the pull of the scratching action, can be used for both vertical and horizontal scratching and is easily located nearby.

### **What if wallpaper is damaged?**

Thin sheets of Perspex can be cut to size and fitted over the damaged area of wallpaper using screws and rawl plugs if appropriate. This surface will be unattractive to scratch since it is smooth and it is also easily cleaned to remove any scent deposits. Double-sided adhesive tape can also be used over the affected area if the wallpaper is sufficiently damaged to require replacing. Whichever deterrent is used it is essential to provide a vertical scratching panel of a similar height nearby.

### **Should I punish my cat for scratching the carpet?**

It's important to remember that your cat is not doing this just to be naughty. If the motivation is claw maintenance then you are punishing a natural behaviour (very confusing for the cat) or if your cat is scratching excessively due to anxiety and insecurity then punishment will add to its distress and probably make the situation worse.

### **How do I know if my cat's scratching is anxiety-related?**

If the scratching is widespread, you have a multi-cat household and/or you live in a densely cat-populated territory the scratching may be anxiety-related. Even major building work within your home may trigger intensive scratching as your cat adjusts to its altered territory.

There are often tensions within multi-cat households or territories that are not easily identified by owners. The solution to territorial marking lies in identifying the cause of the individual cat's stress. Once this has been established it may be possible to decrease the cat's anxiety by providing additional resources within the home to prevent competition between members of the group, for example. Making environmental changes within the home will also increase the cat's feelings of security and safety. One way of potentially increasing security is to use synthetic feline pheromones that mimic naturally occurring secretions that all cats produce from glands in their cheeks. Cats use this scent to mark their territory and the smell gives them a sense of security and

reassurance. Research has shown that cats will not scratch or spray urine in areas where this pheromone is deposited. A part of this scent is common to all cats and a synthetic version called Feliway® is available in spray and diffuser form (this plugs into an electrical socket).

If you are suspicious that the scratching is anxiety-related then you should contact your veterinarian for general advice or a referral to a behaviour specialist

# 8



## Guidance Sheet for Cats

### Body Language

Most of us can recognise our cat's more obvious moods from her body language, facial expressions, vocalisations and movements. We instinctively know how she is feeling by watching her, even though, scientifically, it's hard to measure her emotions. Cats, like most mammals, have the same basic range of emotions as we do, including happiness, sadness, relief, frustration and fear (although not our more complex, higher-functioning emotions, like shame, guilt, or contempt). These basic emotions are essential to adopting successful behaviours; we repeat the behaviours that make us feel better and avoid those that make us feel worse. For example, the negative emotion of fear motivates us to stay safe in future, while the more positive pleasure generated by social contact and touch helps us maintain relationships. The key to a good relationship with your cat is learning how to recognise her emotions and act accordingly. The following descriptions should help you develop your ability to recognise your cat's emotions and deepen the bond between you.

### Happy

A happy cat is easy to recognise. When sitting, she will be relaxed and upright, her ears pointed upwards and forward, but relaxed, sometimes swivelling



gently towards familiar sounds. If lying down, she may have her paws tucked neatly under her, or may be lying stretched out on her side, or on her back, with her legs spread outwards - all signs she is happy and at one with the world. She may snooze with her eyes closed or half open

and heavy-lidded, looking as though she is daydreaming, but actually just calmly regarding what is going on around her. Her whiskers will be relaxed and her tail still - or held high with a slight curl at the top if she is standing to greet you. If you start stroking her, her eyes may close in contentment and she will gently purr.

## Anxious

The sooner you can recognise signs of anxiety in your cat, the sooner you can help her relax with a reassuring stroke and some attention. When anxious,



your cat's eyes will be open and not blinking - her pupils dilated into an oval or circle. As she begins to feel more anxious, her ears may move from their relaxed forward position, scanning for more information, often independently from each other. If she becomes yet more anxious, the more flattened

back her ears may become. Her head will begin to lower and she may sweep whiskers forward on alert, or else down or pulled back to the side, making her face seem as small and non-threatening as possible. As her anxiety increases, she may cower, or alternatively her back may start to arch as she gets ready to run. Her tail may be still or moving slowly from side to side at the tip. Many anxious body movements may be quite slow and subtle, so sensing her anxiety may require careful observation.

## Fearful

When a cat is fearful, her body language becomes far more obvious than when simply anxious. Her ears are flattened back against her head, which may be lowered with her gaze angled upwards. She may run away from the threat but,



if this isn't possible, she may stand or crouch very still, preparing to defend herself if necessary. Her eyes will be wide open with pupils fully dilated and her whiskers flattened back or half-flattened and bristling. She may hiss and spit at close-quarter threats or utter a counter-threatening growl with rising pitch, followed by a spit and a strike with claws out.

She may straighten her front legs to make herself look taller, arch her back and fluff up her fur to appear larger. Her back legs may remain bent and crouched underneath her ready to spring while her tail may be held under her body or slashing vigorously from side to side. You won't be able to reassure her with a stroke and she is likely to refuse even her favourite treat. Her aim is simply to survive the threat and only when she is safe will her body and facial expressions return to normal. If your cat is displaying frequent recurring signs that she is fearful you may wish to seek the help of your vet or an animal behaviourist.

### **Focused**

Cats are supremely good hunters - they are able to stalk and catch prey with breath-taking ease - and they have an incredible capacity for focusing 100% on



their target. Your cat can concentrate instantly on any small, moving object, or on something new, as she tries to discover more about it and figure out how to respond to it. If she is focused on a toy or other 'target', her eyes are open with pupils narrowed, and her

ears and whiskers are pricked forward as she angles her senses and body towards the object of her attention. Her body may be low to the ground as she stalks, her hind legs coiled under her body. Her tail will be held out low behind her, the end sometimes twitching along with her hindquarters as she measures her pounce. If she is focused on you, perhaps trying to persuade you to pat her or feed her, she may solicit your attention by rubbing against you, her tail high in the air, but her primary focus will still be on her goal. This is simply part of the plot to make you provide what she wants and she will remain focussed on these goals until she achieves them.

### **Relieved**

Relief is an obvious change from a previously negative emotional state. While it is very important to recognise when your cat is frustrated, anxious or fearful, you also need to know when she is feeling relieved and can relax again. Cats, like us, experience relief when they resolve worries or difficulties, and this



feeling is at its highest when they survive real danger and the fear that comes with it. A cat's whole body can reflect relief, with an obvious release of tension in her eyes, ears, head, body and tail. Her whiskers relax, her head lowers and her whole body calms and visibly unwinds as her emotional state then returns to normal. Some cats also make a full-body stretch to further release that tension, while others may yawn, turn away and half-close their eyes, or even have a good wash to relax themselves fully.



If you are faced with a cat who looks like this, you need to tread very carefully, and take great care

to avoid injury. An angry cat's whole body is rigid, her tail held out stiff and

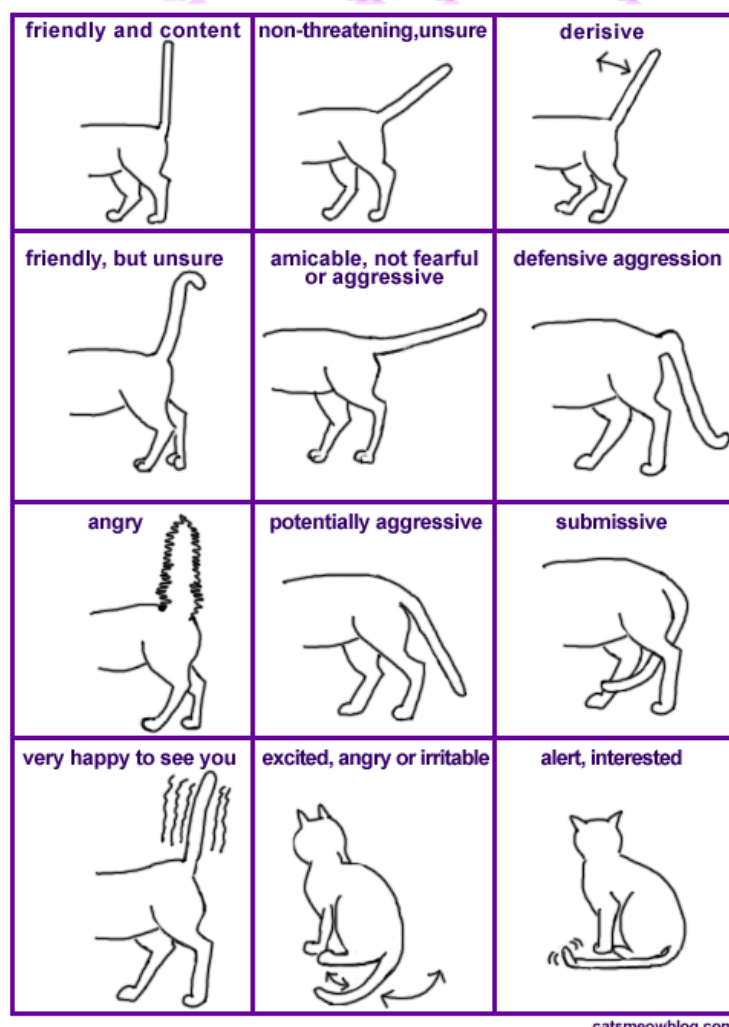


straight or sometimes curled around or under her body. She will either be silent, hissing and spitting, or making a low, threatening growling noise. She may try to look as large and intimidating as possible with her fur erect, especially down her back, either standing on stiff front legs or crouching low and menacingly. Her ears will be tense and often held flat back on her head, her eyes hard and focussed with

pupils often narrowed to slits, though sometimes rounder and unblinking, and her whiskers will be stiff and held bristling away from her face. Always avoid provoking an angry cat. Don't stare or shout at her or make sudden movements, and do not try to touch or comfort her as she may perceive this as an added threat and lash out. Instead, try to retreat slowly, remove the threat if it's safe to do so and give her time and space to calm down. If your cat is displaying frequent recurring signs that she is angry you may wish to seek the help of your vet or an animal behaviourist.

And last, but of course, not least in Understanding Your Cat's Body Language, we get to the tail. Personally, I think a cat's tail signals some of the coolest

## The Telltale Tail



body language signs, you just have to understand them. A cat's tail is tremendously communicative, thanks to how mobile it is. Just think about all of the different types of tail movements you've seen: It can be raised up and down, sweep from side to side, move slowly or quickly, curl around us or them, thrash and twitch, among other things. And that's just the movements. How the hair stands or lays on the tail can also be an indicator of mood: the hair can lay flat or bristle up like a brush. So what does all of this mean? There are a number of

great explanations and visuals, which I think will help.

Let's go through the examples above, so we can all understand them a bit better:

**Tail straight up: This signals that your cat is feeling friendly or content :** Usually your cat's tail will stand straight up when he's around you. Mother cats hold their tails upright when she wants her kittens to follow her (it may also help her kittens see her, depending on where they are). Similarly, when kittens run to greet their mother (or pet parents), their tails will rise straight up, too.



**Tail raised back at an angle:** This is a non-threatening gesture that means the cat is simply unsure about something. Your cat may do this while sniffing new friends that have come to visit. Usually, if they pass your cat's test, your cat will soon raise his tail in friendliness.

**Tail raised up, swishing:** Large, dramatic tail swishes generally convey a powerful emotion. This can signal a derisive attitude – that your cat is upset or wants to be left alone. Your cat will likely do this as he walks past you in acknowledgement, but to show you that his mind is on other things. Some people call it the “So what!” or “Forget you!” move.

**Tail straight up, quivering:** A quivering tail is a very good sign – it means that your cat is very excited to see you. It's a very friendly greeting that you'll likely get when you walk in the door at the end of the day or if he greets you when you get out of bed in the morning.

Similarly, a cat who is very excited to see you may also pull his tail forward over his back. While this may seem like a bizarre thing to do, the behaviour really makes sense to our cats – it's their way of inviting us to sniff their anal glands, their way of being friendly.

**Tail raised up, hooked at the tip:** When a cat hooks the tip of his tail, it looks like a question mark – which is exactly how your cat feels. He's friendly (hence the tail being raised), but he's unsure of something.

**Tail held horizontally behind the cat:** This neutral position that can convey a few feelings. Your cat may be alert, confident, relaxed or amicable. It can definitely depend on the situation and the rest of your cat's body language.

**Hook in base of tail:** Also called the “inverted U” or “horseshoe” tail, this behaviour signals defensive aggression. Usually, your cat's tail will be bristled too. You'll often see this in your cat when he has the “kitty crazies” at the end of the day. He may also arch his back and crab walk a bit, especially if another cat has angered him, or if he's feeling feisty about something.

**Thrashing tail:** This could mean a number of things – look at your cat's other body language to find out exactly how he may be feeling. A thrashing tail,

sweeping from side to side erratically, could convey one of several things, including:

- Intense interest if your cat is focusing on something, like a bird outside, or if he's about to pounce on a toy (prey).
- Ecstasy if your cat is really enjoying a grooming session.
- Anger if the tail is thumping loudly on the floor.
- An invitation to another cat to play.
- High excitement or aggression if the tail trashes violently.

**Bristled tail:** When your cat's tail puffs up like a toilet brush, you can be pretty sure that your cat feels threatened and has become defensively aggressive. Your cat may bristle his tail if you startle him, if he's scared, or if another cat (or person) angers him. He'll likely try to escape the situation if possible, but he may also stay to defend himself if necessary. Like when a cat bristles the hair on his back, this action is meant to make himself look bigger, in an attempt to make the aggressor leave him alone.

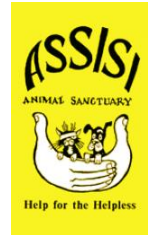
**Tail held low and straight:** When your cat is holding his tail diagonally down, he's likely feeling aggressive – or that he soon could be ticked off. Again, read your cat's other body language and watch the tail to see what it develops into.

**Tail held between the legs:** This is a submissive move that's likely trying to convey that your cat is upset or wants to be left alone. Unlike the bristled tail, a submissive tail can make a cat look smaller and less threatening to another aggressive cat.

**Twitching tail tip:** Sometimes just the tip of your cat's tail will twitch. This usually signals that he's alert and concentrating on watching something that interests him – like a bug or bird outside. Your cat may also twitch his tail if he's playing and approaching "prey."

**Tail-twine:** Cats will entwine their tails around other cats' tails, other objects, and of course, us! It's their friendly way of marking us as theirs, and potentially trying to influence us to give them what they want, like attention or food!

# 9



## Guidance Sheet for Cats

### Helping you and your new cat/kitten settle in together

#### What you will need:

- A spare room where the cat/kitten can be kept for the settling in period. Different cats/kittens will need different amounts of times to settle in this room but staff will advise you when rehoming.
- Make sure your kitten has a warm and comfortable bed and perhaps a small cuddly toy
- An adult cat also needs a warm, secure bed to retreat to when tired.
- Have a litter tray in the same room as the bed.

#### Bringing the cat/kitten home

- When you bring a new cat/kitten into your home remember that it will be scared and may run under the furniture or behind a seat. Do not force it out as this will terrify it even more. Just talk softly to it and be patient. It will come out of its own accord.
- After a period of a few hours leave some food out.
- Have a litter tray nearby
- Some cats/kittens may never have been in a house before and the noises associated with your home eg television, washing machine, vacuum cleaner etc, will be alien to their sensitive hearing.
- Showing patience and understanding at the beginning will be rewarded by a pet that is confident in the love and protection of a new family.

#### Feeding/Litter trays

- Feed kittens little and often. Adult cats should be fed twice daily.
- Give a clean dish at each meal and have fresh water always available.

- Cats and kittens at the Sanctuary are not given milk and are used to water. **All cats/kittens cannot digest milk and it is not essential for their diet. Fresh water is.**
- Have a litter tray easily accessible to the cat/kitten, but not close to its food. The cat/kitten will do its best to use the litter tray, but needs to know where to find it.
- Do not hit the cat/kitten if an accident happens as it will not understand why it is being punished and love and confidence will be replaced by fear and uncertainty. Remember the cat/kitten is still learning.
- Check for reasons that prevented the cat/kitten using the litter tray. An example might be accessibility i.e. the door to the room where the litter tray was positioned was closed. Another could be that the tray was already soiled.

### **Safety in the home**

- A cat/kitten in a new home will want to explore. You must protect it from danger e.g. open fires, electric cables, chimneys, hot plates on cooker, washing machines, tumble dryers, plastic bags, sewing threads (which can be swallowed and cause twisting in the intestine) etc. All these hazards could result in a fatality, so it is your responsibility to make sure that your pet is kept free from harm.
- Watch where you walk when you have a kitten. If you accidentally stood on it you could crush its fragile body.
- Make sure the toilet seat is down and never let a cat/kitten into the bathroom when you are running a bath as it could jump in the water and get badly scalded.

### **Settling in period.**

- Remember to give an adult cat time to settle in (weeks, not hours or days). The cat may have been previously abandoned or lost from a loving home. It is a strange new world and the cat needs time to adjust.
- The cat may not be used to children who are continually trying to play with it or grab at it so may get frightened and strike out. If you have children make sure they respect the cat's space.

- If you are introducing a cat/kitten into a household which already has a resident pet, always take time to introduce them gradually. Ideally let your new cat have one room and the resident pet the rest of the house for a few days.
- Let your resident pet come into limited contact with the new arrival and gradually build up the access period each day. If your resident pet does not feel threatened by the new arrival, it increases the chances of friendship between them. The last thing you want is for your original pet to feel threatened. This will result in fighting and marking of territory or, worse still, bullying which could cause either of the animals to leave home.

### **Letting the cat out**

- After a minimum of four weeks you may let the cat out for a short supervised time. This is best done prior to a meal. A hungry cat is less likely to stray.
- Always have the cat in before nightfall, a more dangerous time for cats.
- When fitting a collar make sure it is not too tight, you should be able to put your finger between the collar and the cat's neck. Check a growing kitten's collar weekly.
- Patience has its rewards and with time to adjust, the rewards will be great – a contented loving cat and a happy family.
- **If you have a problem contact the Sanctuary (028 91812622) we will be pleased to help in any way.**
- **If you are worried about your cat's health, contact your vet for advice.**

The following food is normal diet for Assisi Adult Cats:

- Royal Canin Kitten/Adult Dry
- Whiskas/ Kitekat various flavours in jelly or gravy
- Whiskas/ Kitekat pouches

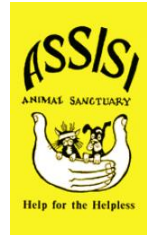
- Tuna/ Chicken as a treat or giving medication.
- Water available at all times.
- Feed one pouch am and one pouch pm
- Leave a small bowl of dry food (two teacupful's) available during the day

Other necessary items are -

- Litter tray
- Litter scoop
- Litter (good quality wood based )
- Scratch post. If a house cat then invest in good quality one, essentially tall, different levels and hiding places.
- Three bowls one each for wet food, dry food and water.
- Distance toys (dangly things on a stick). Not toys that will encourage hands getting scratched or bitten in play.
- Comb/brush – advice given on correct grooming

For any follow up advice or if there are any problems contact the Main Cattery on: **028 9181 2622**

# 10



## Guidance Sheet for Cats

### Housecats

Keeping housecats cats can be very rewarding, they are great company and you have the peace of mind knowing that they are safe. But before you rush into rehoming a housecat, consider whether you are suitable for keeping a housecat, whether it is practical for your family and whether your home would be housecat friendly. Remembering things like;

- You cannot open windows to air the house (There is special cat proofing products on the market which you can buy to allow windows to be opened but not let the cats out)
- You cannot leave the front or back doors to the house open at any time (I.E When kids are playing in the garden)
- Will the whole family adjust to the new rules of keeping doors closed?
- Whilst housecats don't really express interest in going outside, if they escape they will be terrified and unsure of their new surrounding as they will have had no exposure to traffic etc. So it is very important that the cat cannot escape

There is no convinced opinion as to whether being an indoor-only cat is better/worse than one who goes outdoors. You must meet all your cats needs whether they are an indoor-only cat or not. However, indoor-only cats have additional needs to ensure they are happy and healthy. Cats can adapt well to indoor life if they are kept inside from a young age. We wouldn't recommend keeping cats that are used to going outside as 'indoor-only' cats except for health reasons as this would cause the cat to become very stressed. If you are rehoming a kitten and intend on keeping it indoors, consider a sibling pair so they can keep each other company, as single housecats can have separation issues. It is also easier than to try and introduce another cat at a later stage.

Reasons for keeping kittens as indoor-only could be:

### **High traffic area**

Please do not risk letting your cat out if you live close to a busy/main road

### **Heath Issues**

Some vets recommend keeping your cat as a housecat due to health reasons i.e if the cat has Fiv or another contagious illness

### **High-Rise flat/1<sup>st</sup> floor apartment**

Cats would need safe access to get in and out of the property and this may not be an option

### **Areas of Concern**

We do sometimes hear that there may be cruelty to animals in different areas so if it is in an area that is known for cruelty we would suggest for the cats own safety to keep it as an indoor-only cat.

### **Peace of Mind**

Cats are safer indoors, Housecats tend to live longer due to there being less dangers to them. It's also nice to know your cat is curled up in its bed safely at home and not roaming the streets.

Indoor environments can become predictable and boring, leading to stress (i.e toileting issues and over-grooming) inactivity and obesity. It's important you provide your cat with everything it may need. When keeping indoor-only cats you will need to;

- Provide a litter tray in a quiet place and clean it daily. Cats are often reluctant to use a dirty tray or a tray located in a busy area
- Ensure your cat has enough space. Indoor-only cats should have access throughout the house
- Allow your cat access to two types of resting places, one at floor level and another one higher with a good view. It's important the higher



position is safe and won't allow your cat to fall, as this could cause injury.

- Provide adequately sized scratching posts in several different locations around your home so they can mark territory/strengthen muscles/sharpen claws. This will also discourage the cat from using the furniture to scratch.
- Provide opportunities for daily exercise to stay fit and healthy. Also measure out daily feeds in accordance with manufactures guide (this will be on the side of the packet) so that your cat will not be overfed. Indoor cats tend to be more plump due to getting less exercise than an outdoor cat. There is a special diets available for housecats that have a lower calorie and also some of the nutrients that they would get from outdoor plants/grass which may benefit most housecats.
- As your cat won't have the freedom to interact with other people/other animals outside, you may become their main companion; so make plenty of time to interact and play.
- Provide/create new ways for your cat to stay stimulated and active, both physically and mentally. Cats can become frustrated and bored with indoor-only lifestyle if you don't provide the stimulation and activities for them

Some examples of mental and physical stimulation;

### **A treat ball**

Treat balls are great fun 'bopping' around the house and also fun trying to figure out how to get the treats out of the ball.

### **Laser pens**

They will chase after the light and try to identify a pattern as to which way the light is moving. There is some fantastic battery operated laser toys you can get at local pet shops which can be set on timers or motion sensored to keep your cat active throughout the day.

### **Cardboard boxes**

Inexpensive, fantastic toys for cats. They will jump inside them and will have lots of fun. They will also use them to hide in to mimic their natural 'stalking' behaviour.

### **Cat Wands**

Cat wands are great toys for interaction with cats and children as they keep their little hands away from the cats claws. There are wands with feathers and that make noises so it's like a real bird that cats seem to love.

### **Outdoor bird feeder**

Having a bird feeder in your garden will naturally bring birds into the garden, which is great for indoor cats as they love to watch them and this will stimulate their minds.

An indoor-only lifestyle may appear safer for cats as they are protected from dangers outside. Indoor environments can be dangerous too, cats can still be injured by household accidents. Please ensure your home is a safe and suitable environment for cats.

**For more information on Housecats please contact our Main Cattery on 02891 812622**