



# CatWatch

Expert information on medicine, behavior, and health from a world leader in veterinary medicine



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## IN THE NEWS ...

### Weaning Time

A study released in September from the University of Helsinki shows that delayed weaning improves the life of our cats. They recommend weaning at 14 weeks of age or more. Physically, kittens can be weaned from their mother as early as four weeks of age, although if the mother makes the decision, it's usually between six and 10 weeks.

"We found that positive changes in the cat's behavior can occur after the currently recommended age of weaning, 12 weeks (in Helsinki)," says doctoral student Milla Ahola. "Cats weaned under the age of eight weeks displayed more aggression and stereotypic behavior. . . . Cats weaned at 14 weeks of age had fewer behavioral problems than cats weaned earlier."

The study used a 6,000-cat database. Eighty percent had mild problems; 25 percent had serious problems, including shyness, wool sucking, excessive grooming, and aggression.

## Fat Cats: Obesity Isn't Fun or Healthy

*Moving inside our homes has been great for most cats health-wise, with one big exception*

Cats, just like humans, get overweight via two paths. They either eat more calories than they should or they don't exercise very much. Many cats have both factors as contributors to their weight problem. Also, just as in humans, feline obesity is associated with health problems, including diabetes, arthritis, and cardiovascular disease. Some diabetic cats can actually go into remission and lose their need for insulin



Photo courtesy Fairmount Animal Hospital

**A prescription diet food might help your cat feel more full, says Eileen Fatcher, DVM.**

administration with diet control and careful weight loss. Arthritis pain may decrease with appropriate weight loss, as there is less of a burden on the cat's joints. Cardiovascular status may also improve as a cat's heart does not have to pump so hard to provide oxygen and nutrients to an increased body mass.

You can easily start your cat's weight control regimen. Do the Body Condition Scores (BCS)

(continued on page 4)

## Teach Your Cat to Like Her Carrier

*We can help you take the stress out of getting your cat into a carrier*

Cat carriers are the safest way to transport your cat, be it to a veterinary appointment or to visit family for the holidays. They keep your cat secure, so that she can't get into trouble in an unfamiliar environment or be harmed in any way. In the case of a car crash, being in a carrier could save your cat's life. But there is one challenge to this wonderful tool: getting your cat inside it.

**Plan Ahead.** Teaching your cat to like his carrier should start as soon as you bring him home, so that you can proceed gradually. "What you should do is feed the cat in the cat carrier," says Katherine Houpt, VMD, PhD, DACVB, Cornell professor emeritus. This

makes carrier entry part of your daily routine and associates the carrier with something positive (food!). Leave the carrier open so your cat can go in and out as he pleases.

If your cat is afraid of the carrier at first, you can start by putting his food next to the carrier, then moving it just inside the door after a few days, working up to putting the bowl all the way in the back of the carrier.

Once your cat is comfortable going into the carrier at mealtimes, start closing the door while he eats and then releasing him after a minute or two or after he is finished. This can be helpful if you have multiple cats on different diets or if one cat steals another's food.

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## SHORT TAKES

### Has Persian Cat Breeding Gone Too Far?

The September 2017 issue of the *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine* included the article "The Relationship between Brachycephalic Head Features in Modern Persian Cats and Dysmorphologies of the Skull and Internal Hydrocephalus," by Schmidt et al. This study evaluated the two types of Persian cats, the traditional doll-face and the newer Peke-face, for a correlation between brachycephalic (short-faced) traits and internal hydrocephaly, or abnormal accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid (the fluid that bathes the brain and spinal cord) in the brain. Each cat in the study received a CT scan and an MRI.

The study did indeed find that the Peke-faced cats with more extreme brachycephalic traits were more likely to have hydrocephalus and malformations in their skulls. Five Peke-faced kittens in the study had such severely shortened and rounded skulls that the cerebellum was herniated through the back of the skull, causing the kittens to display severe neurologic symptoms. These kittens were euthanized. Cats with lesser herniations had milder symptoms, and some cats with ventricular enlargement (dilation of the cavity within the brain) showed no clinical signs.



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**A Persian cat, showing a traditional face.**

The take-away from this study is that while many people find Peke-faced Persians attractive, it is possible to go too far in breeding for that look. Cats with extremely shortened and rounded faces tend to have malformations of their skulls that can be dramatic enough to harm brain function, in addition to causing the traditional brachycephalic ailments of dental misalignment and blocked airways. Doll-faced Persian cats, with the more traditional cat-head shape, were less likely to have these problems.

### Dog Blood to Cats – Yes or No?

Most veterinary hospitals have a resident canine blood donor or a couple of donors "on call." These are usually medium- to large-size dogs who often sit patiently while blood is drawn to transfuse a dog in need. Unfortunately, most clinics do not have a feline donors handy.

With that in mind, a study was done in Italy looking at the normal rate of antibodies against dog blood in cats and vice versa. It would be handy if you could give even one transfusion of dog blood to an anemic cat.

The report in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* evaluated cross matches between dogs and cats. While some matches had minimal

reactions in the lab setting, there were major incompatibilities for most of the cross matches. That means that canine blood should not be used to transfuse a cat except in extreme emergencies.

Type B cats with DEA 1.1 negative dogs had the lowest rate of reactions. So, if an emergency situation cropped up, that combo was the best option for the cat in need. Anecdotally, there are a fair number of reports of canine transfusions into cats without problems. It is important to note that this only works once. After the initial exposure to the "foreign" blood, a cat's system will mount a major immune response.

So, the answer to the question is basically no, unless there is an immediate life-and-death emergency.



© Erik Lam/AdobeStock

# Traveling With Your Cat

*Keep your cat safe and happy while you're on the road, in the air, or visiting friends*

Some of us leave our pets at home when we travel, but if your cat is coming along on a trip, you need to prepare for her as well. You must have:

- ◆ Enough food for the duration of the trip, plus extra in case of delays
- ◆ Vaccination records and a health certificate if flying or crossing state lines
- ◆ Cat carrier
- ◆ Harness with ID tag and leash; microchip, if possible

**Before Leaving.** If your cat is not already used to her carrier, get it out as far in advance as possible to allow her time to check it out (see the cover article for crate-training suggestions). Set the carrier up with bedding that smells like home and maybe a favorite toy or two. Pack your cat's regular food and any medications, as well as veterinary records, such as vaccination history.

Harnesses are better than collars because they are harder to wiggle out of. Put an identification tag on the harness in case your cat manages to get loose. If your cat has never worn a harness before, get her used to it before the trip so it is not an extra source of stress.

If your cat has a history of being extremely stressed out or nauseous when traveling, talk to your veterinarian about sedatives or anti-nausea medication.

And don't forget to look up pet-friendly hotels before you leave.

**Road Trips.** For shorter drives up to half a day long, your cat should be OK without a litter box, although disposable litter boxes are a great option for bathroom stops on the go. If you are concerned about your cat being nauseous and vomiting in the car, withhold food the night before. For water, either get a spill-proof bowl to go in your cat's carrier

or plan to give your cat a chance to drink during stops.

Your cat should spend the drive in his carrier with his harness on. The carrier prevents him from interfering with the driver and will help protect him in case of a crash. Secure the carrier on the floor, with a seatbelt, or with a strong cable that keeps the crate still against the seat.

The harness will allow you to easily clip a leash on when getting him out of the carrier on stops or at your final destination. It also ensures that your cat has identification in case he darts out the door. Even the quietest, friendliest cats can get scared in a new environment, so never rely on just holding your cat in your arms.

**Flying.** Check with your airline ahead of time to be sure that your cat is welcome on the flight, and make sure your carrier is airline-approved. Most airlines have specific crate ventilation, door, and material requirements.

Withhold food the night before to decrease the risk of your cat vomiting, and pack her carrier with absorbent bedding in case she urinates during the flight. Find out if you can take the cat as carry-on luggage or if she has to ride in cargo.

**At Your Destination.** If staying in a hotel, inspect the room to make sure it is cat-proof before letting your cat loose. Check under the bed for trash, and look behind all furniture and along walls for any holes that your cat might be able to squeeze into. And don't forget the bathroom! Keep the deadbolt latched when your cat is loose in the room to prevent him from slipping out the door.

If visiting friends or family, many cats are the most comfortable if confined to one room or area of the house. This allows them to have easy access to food,



A cat carrier is the best way to transport your feline friend, but you need to be sure the crate itself is secure inside the car. Fasten it with a seatbelt or other device.

water, and a litter box, and prevents them from getting lost in the house. Use the same precautions as in a hotel and check for any nooks and crannies where your kitty could hide. For extended stays, you can expand your cat's territory in the house as he settles in.

Another great option to keep your cat confined, but with a little space, is to pick up a large fabric dog crate. These fabric crates are lightweight and fold down for easy transport, allowing plenty of room for your cat to stretch his legs and have a litter box while still safely confined. ■

## AIRLINE REQUIREMENTS

Most airlines have very specific requirements for transporting pets. Some airlines will allow the pet to travel in the cabin with you, but it must be in an approved carrier that can fit under a seat. Be sure you check for exact requirements prior to making your reservations and, if you plan to have your cat in the cabin as a "carry-on," you may have to notify the airline in advance, basically making a reservation for your cat, too.



**OBESITY**...(continued from cover)

assessment (see sidebar, p. 5). In addition, get an accurate weight for your cat. You can use a baby scale, subtract your weight standing alone on a scale from that of you holding the cat while standing on a scale, or take your cat into your veterinary clinic. Weekly weigh-ins are excellent but at least monthly is important while you are working on your cat's weight problem.

**Take It Slow.** Eileen Fatcher DVM (Cornell 1988), owner of Fairmont Animal Hospital in Syracuse, N.Y., offers an easy tip for owners to track their cat's weight loss. "I recommend no more than 2 percent of body weight loss per week. The easiest way for owners to calculate this is to convert the cat's weight from pounds to ounces and calculate 2 percent of that." It is important for cats to lose weight gradually, as a rapid diet, especially if it includes fasting periods, can lead to a serious liver condition called hepatic lipidosis. You may also see this referred to as fatty liver syndrome.

With hepatic lipidosis, cats store more than the usual amount of fat in their hepatocytes (liver cells). Eventually the buildup of fat interferes with normal liver functions. Cats with this condition may appear jaundiced (yellowish tinge to their



Dr. Fatcher weighs one of her patients in a cats-only exam room.

Photo courtesy Fairmont Animal Hospital

skin/mucous membranes) and will commonly stop eating, which may exacerbate the problem. At this point, intensive veterinary care is vital. Cats with this condition need to be hospitalized, stabilized, and provided with proper nutrition. Cats who show an improvement will need

continued intensive care at home for a month or more, with rechecks as needed.

**Get Started.** So how do you go about getting your cat to lose weight? Your veterinarian will work with you to determine a safe daily caloric intake for your cat that allows for gradual weight loss. This may require adjustments depending upon your cat's activity level. The average 10-lb. cat requires between 200 and 225 calories/day, depending on activity level.

Many clinics that have cats on weight-loss programs require that the cat come in for weekly weigh-ins. At this time, the diet may be adjusted, if necessary. Note: Many cat-food labels include calories per cup. If your cat's food label doesn't, contact the manufacturer's customer-service department for this information.

The next step is to look at your feeding plan. You will need to feed meals at specific times rather than leaving food out for your cat to snack on all the time. This is especially true if you have more than one cat. You need to know exactly what your weight-loss cat is eating.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ◆ Read your cat food's label for caloric density. If it's not listed, call the company. Most cats need between 200 and 225 calories per day.
- ◆ Cats need slow, but steady, weight-loss programs. The ideal, safe, weight-loss rate for a cat is 0.5 to 2 percent of body weight per week. Weigh your cat regularly to monitor weight loss.
- ◆ With assistance from your veterinarian, use the Body Condition Score system to determine your cat's weight status (see sidebar, p. 5).
- ◆ Different cat breeds have different ideal weight ranges. Domestic short-hairs tend to be ideal at eight to 10 lbs., while a large Maine Coon could be fit at up to 25 lbs.
- ◆ Calories in treats count. Even tiny tidbits, such as a piece of chicken from your leftover dinner, contribute calories. Your cat does not have to give up all her treats, but you need to calculate them into her daily calorie count as part of her ration.
- ◆ Get your cat moving. Exercise can be fun for both of you.

Make sure you measure food for each meal. If your cat has been “free feeding,” it is best if you can divide her daily ration into three or four meals. Most cats adapt to mealtimes quickly. If you have more than one cat, consider feeding each in a crate (see crate-training article on the cover of this issue).

If your cat is unhappy about the change in food amounts, you may want to consider a prescription diet food. These foods tend to have higher fiber content, so your cat feels more full even if she is getting fewer calories. Dr. Fatcheric comments that one of the “dangers” of putting a cat on a weight-loss regimen is the sleep deprivation experienced by owners with cranky, hungry cats!

**Get Moving.** While you cut down on calories, it’s also helpful to increase exercise. There are cats who enjoy walks on a harness, but most cats resist taking supervised hikes. That means you have to be creative to get your cat up and moving around the house.

If your cat truly lives to eat, consider getting some “food toys.” This could be a food puzzle, where she has to lift flaps, turn knobs, or spin tabs to receive small food rewards. You can also put food into toys with small holes in them that your cat must shove, push, or slap around with her paws to get food out. Be sure to measure out the kibble you use in these toys from her calculated daily ration.

Look for things your cat likes to play with. Many cats will play fetch just like a dog with the “right” toy. Popular items are a wadded-up ball of paper or aluminum foil. Try a feather on a wand. Move



Helping your cat get more exercise doesn’t necessarily mean you need to go out and buy more toys. With a little encouragement, he will find lots of places to have fun.

the wand around as your cat chases it. Many cats will chase a penlight in a dark room. Your goal should be 10 minutes twice a day, if possible. Try to stop before your cat quits. This will keep her enthused about playing the next time.

This might also be a good time to explore clicker training with your cat. Use bits of her regular food as treats and work to teach her tricks. This will exercise her mentally as well as physically. Many cats can learn to sit up, shake, touch things with a paw, and roll over pretty quickly.

The important point to remember is that losing weight is good for your cat’s health. With some dedication and a few changes in your routine, you can accomplish this. ■

## Did You Know?

The American Association of Feline Practitioners, in collaboration with the International Society for Feline Medicine, has designed a certification program for veterinary clinics to become a certified Cat Friendly Practice. This assures a cat owner that the veterinary practice is taking extra steps to ensure a comfortable visit for your cat.

The certification program offers suggestions on ways to make cats more comfortable, such as a warm towel to cozy up in, a cozy “hiding” box inside a cage, and quiet areas if the cat must stay at the clinic. The program shares ideas like cat-only exam rooms (no dogs allowed ever) with cubbyholes for hiding and yoga mats on tables, so they aren’t as slippery.

While the entire clinic can become certified, there will be designated “cat advocates” on staff. Recertification is required every three years. You can learn more at ([www.catvets.com](http://www.catvets.com)).

## GAUGING WEIGHT

How can you tell if your cat is overweight? The scale will help but a hands-on evaluation is important, too. According to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, approximately 59 percent of all pet cats are either overweight or obese, based upon BCS (Body Condition Scores). The World Small Animal Veterinary Association has a chart that you can download to help you evaluate your cat’s weight status (this should be done in consultation with a veterinarian). <http://www.wsava.org/sites/default/files/Body%20Condition%20Scoring%20for%20Cats.pdf>

## CRATES...*(continued from cover)*

Most cats like having places to hide, and will go inside the carrier if it is left open in a favorite spot around the house. The carrier should not be kept in a garage or other storage place, because it will smell unfamiliar to your cat. He will be much more amenable to going inside a carrier that is clean, smells like home, and is associated with his meals than one that smells like mothballs.

You can also use toys and treats to get your cat to go into the carrier outside of mealtimes. When playing with your cat, toss his toy into the carrier so he has to go inside to retrieve it, then continue the game. If you have done any clicker training with your cat, you can use that method to teach him to go in the carrier, too.

**Loading Time.** On the day that you



**Be sure your training includes allowing the cat to go in and out of the carrier as she pleases, so she becomes comfortable in it.**

need to get your cat in her carrier and take her somewhere, go about your routine as usual but keep the carrier shut once she is inside. If she is going to the veterinarian and has to be fasted, use a toy to lure her inside the carrier instead of food (if you feed canned food, you can

crack open a can to make her think it's breakfast time, just don't give her any until after the appointment).

For stressful times, like moving, you can put some Feliway in the carrier to help calm your cat. Dr. Houpt advises spraying the Feliway into the carrier 10 or 15 minutes before you load your cat or else the scent of the alcohol solvent will be too strong in the confined space.

If your cat doesn't go into the carrier on her own, be patient and calm. Hold her close to the carrier and coax her in with treats or toys, or take the top off the carrier, if possible, so that you can place her inside gently.

No matter what, "Don't stuff!" says Dr. Houpt. Stuffing your cat into the narrow carrier door might work in the short term, but your cat will be stressed and will probably fight you the next time you try to get her into the carrier. ■

## DISEASE

# Raw Diets Raise Salmonella Risk

*Cats are fairly resistant to it, but caution is advised*

Salmonellosis is a bacterial infection seen in humans and many animals. While dogs and cats are fairly resistant to the toxins, even they can become ill.

This is a food-borne illness, often associated with raw eggs or raw meat. With an increase in interest in feeding cats raw diets, more cases of Salmonella illness have been noted in cats.

Winn Feline Foundation reported on

two cases of salmonellosis found in two cats from the same household. Both cats had vomiting and diarrhea, with some blood and mucus in the diarrhea. Weight loss had also occurred. The cats were fed a commercial frozen poultry raw diet.

Fecal samples and food samples were all positive for Salmonella. The raw diet was discontinued and both cats recovered nicely with treatment.

If you choose to feed a raw diet to your cat, you must be scrupulous about good food hygiene and handling practices. This bacteria and its toxins can occasionally be found in commercial dry foods but the risk is higher for raw foods. A study done by the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine found Salmonella in 15 samples of raw pet food but only one sample of dry cat food.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) warns that people can pick up Salmonella from handling their cat's raw

food. Signs in people include fever, vomiting, and diarrhea. Most people recover within a week. Infants, elderly people, and those with weak immune systems are more likely to develop serious illness. They may require hospitalization, and there is a risk of death. ■

## RAW DIET PRECAUTIONS

If you feed a raw diet:

- ◆ Keep the food frozen until you plan to use it.
- ◆ Thaw it in the refrigerator, separate from any human foods.
- ◆ Throw away any uneaten food after your cat finishes eating.
- ◆ Thoroughly clean food-preparation areas and bowls, and wash your hands.
- ◆ Discourage your cat from licking your face.
- ◆ Remember that some cats may not show signs of illness but can shed Salmonella and infect you.



**Always wash your cat's bowl after she eats.**



# Halitosis in Cats

*Bad breath isn't just unpleasant—it can signal health problems in your cat and shouldn't be ignored*

Your beloved cat climbs into your lap, rubs on your chin and then yawns by your face. Suddenly, you are overwhelmed by foul air. It is unreasonable to expect your feline friend to have minty fresh breath, but healthy cat breath really isn't offensive. Causes for fetid feline breath can range from minor to serious.

On the minor scale, cats who have short faces—think Persians—often sleep with their mouths partly open. Just like people who sleep with an open mouth, their breath can be pretty bad in the morning or after a catnap. There aren't many solutions to this, but after breakfast, most feline breath problems from this cause will improve.

**Teeth First.** If your cat has bad breath and is drooling, pawing at the mouth, or avoiding eating or drinking, you should be concerned about a problem in the mouth. Infections of the soft parts of the mouth, cancer, and dental problems can all cause these signs. (See our October 2017 issue.)

A very agreeable cat may allow you to do a quick oral exam—which starts with you raising her upper lip with a finger while drawing down on the lower lip with your thumb so you can see the gums—but often some sedation is required to check thoroughly, including under the tongue. Broken teeth, cavities, and inflamed and infected gums can all contribute to your cat's bad breath.

Foreign bodies in the mouth, such as strings, yarn, or tinsel under the tongue or sticks lodged in the hard palate, can cause bad breath. These problems may require sedation or general anesthesia to remove, depending upon severity.

Stomatitis (inflammation of the cheeks, gums, lips, palate, and/or tongue) can be caused by an immune problem in cats. In simplest terms, this is an im-



Brushing your cat's teeth really can make a difference in her breath, but you'll want to rule out disease first.

mune response to a cat's own teeth and/or the bacteria that accumulate on them. Treatment may require either drugs to suppress the immune response and to prevent bacterial infections or removal of most or all of her teeth. Cats with this condition tend to have very bad breath and may drool and be reluctant to eat, often losing weight because of decreased food intake. Home care, including toothbrushing and/or rinsing, can help prevent and treat this condition.

**Diseases.** There are some systemic diseases that can cause bad breath. On the top of the list is kidney disease, which can cause an almost "urine" or "ammonia" smell to the breath. Most cats with kidney disease show other signs of this disease, including increased thirst and urination, weight loss, and lethargy. (See our August 2017 issue for more information on kidney disease.)

Poorly regulated diabetic cats may accumulate compounds called ketones in their bloodstream, leading to ketotic breath that has a "sickly sweet" tinge to it. This odor is difficult to describe, but any sweetish, unpleasant odor should tip you off to a problem.

Affected cats will most commonly be drinking and urinating more than usual and often lose weight, despite having an increased appetite. Any of these signs should prompt an immediate veterinary visit.

**Solutions.** What can you do to help combat bad breath in your feline companion? Rule out serious illness and get any dental problems treated and under control. You will need to follow up with regular preventive dental care. A course of antibiotics may be required to get any bacterial infections treated and eliminated.

Breath mints for pets may provide a temporary relief, but daily brushing or rubbing teeth with a gauze and an approved dentifrice is the best preventive measure available.

There is at least one water additive that is approved for cat dental health. Be sure if you choose to use this product that you also put a second bowl of plain water out for your cat.

You may want to consider a dental health diet, although the usefulness of these products is debatable. With a little luck and help from your veterinarian, your cat's bad breath will be improved and you can go back to enjoying close contact! ■

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ◆ Consult your veterinarian to rule out disease
- ◆ Formulate a plan to get dental problems under control
- ◆ Brush your cat's teeth daily
- ◆ Consult the VOHC, which is the Veterinary Oral Health Council. The Council evaluates dental care products for pets for efficacy after looking at clinical trials. The council also keeps a list of approved products for cats. [http://www.vohc.org/VOHCAcceptedProductsTable\\_Cats.pdf](http://www.vohc.org/VOHCAcceptedProductsTable_Cats.pdf)



Elizabeth

Elizabeth is thankful for the assistance of the Cornell Feline Health Center in providing the answer on this page.

## Working With an Aggressive Cat

**Q** My 7-year-old male domestic shorthaired cat has recently begun to bite me, not on a regular basis, but at times when I least expect it. The last bite became infected and required antibiotics, and I am concerned about this odd new behavior. Why does a cat start biting like this?

**A** I am sorry to hear about your kitty's recent aggression. For the most part, we cats are pretty easy-going. But, sometimes, we can become annoyed and act out.

Aggression by cats toward people can be caused by a number of things, and figuring out its cause can be challenging. With patience, appropriate guidance, and dedication, though, it can usually be successfully managed.

The first step is to make sure that there are no medical causes. Some diseases—hyperthyroidism, osteoarthritis, dental disease, and central nervous system problems—may cause aggression in cats, so consultation with a veterinarian is important.

Once a medical problem has been ruled out, identifying the type of aggression you're seeing is key to understanding its cause and developing a plan to intervene. There are a number of general categories of aggression in cats, including:

**Play Aggression:** Most common in young cats that were not raised with littermates and/or do not have appropriate play outlets.

**Fear Aggression:** Often seen when a cat encounters unfamiliar stimuli—a new person, animal, or noise—or when a cat is exposed to an experience he associates with unpleasant events.

**Petting/Grooming-Induced Aggression:** May be caused by overstimulation because the person doesn't pick up on cues of impending aggression and the cat is trying to end the petting. In many cases, visual cues—dilated pupils, tail lashing, and ears moved backward on the head—are observed prior to the cat becoming aggressive.

**Redirected Aggression:** This type of aggression may be directed toward either a human or another cat when a cat is aroused by some stimulus and cannot address its response to this stimulus directly. For example, the presence of an outdoor

or stray cat seen through a window by an indoor cat, loud noises, or an altercation with another cat in the house.

**Status-Induced Aggression:** Cats may occasionally show signs of aggression toward either people or other pets in situations that suggest that they are attempting to establish social dominance.

**Territorial Aggression:** Cats tend to establish and defend their territories and may show aggression toward newly introduced cats (and rarely, but occasionally, other animals, or people) that encroach upon their established domain.

Once you have determined, to the best of your ability, what the cause of this aggression is, there are specific recommendations for each type of aggression that you can take to address the problem. While space limitations preclude my addressing strategies for each type, there are general recommendations that apply to all forms:

- Intervene early
- Do not use physical punishment
- Startle the cat, without physical contact, as a way to intervene
- Avoid situations known to stress a cat
- Separate cats that are aggressive toward one another
- Use food treats to reward non-aggressive behavior

In cases that cannot be managed in collaboration with your veterinarian, it may be worthwhile to consult with a veterinary behaviorist. (You can find board-certified veterinary behaviorists at the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists website at [www.dacvb.org](http://www.dacvb.org).)

Of course, any cat bites/scratches should be washed immediately with soap and running water, and any signs of swelling, redness, discharge, fever, headache, and/or swelling of lymph nodes in the region of the bite should prompt consultation with a health-care professional.

For more information on feline aggression and how to manage it, please visit the following page on the Cornell Feline Health Center's website: [www.bit.ly/felineagg](http://www.bit.ly/felineagg)

Best of luck, and please let us know how things are going when you can.

Warm regards, Elizabeth

### PLEASE SHARE YOUR QUESTIONS

We welcome questions on health, medicine and behavior, but regret that we cannot comment on prior diagnoses and specific products. Please write CatWatch Editor, 535 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT 06854-1713 or email [catwatcheditor@cornell.edu](mailto:catwatcheditor@cornell.edu).

### COMING UP ...

TRICKS FOR CLEAN URINE CATCHES



MATS AND TANGLES



WATERY EYES



HEART DISEASE

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