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VETERINARY
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Introducing a New Kitten to Your Household*

Understanding normal behavior helps us:

- Interact with our cats
- Create an enriching life for them.
- Prevent behavior problems

Cats are social animals

- Learn how to teach your kitten to interact positively with other cats and people.

How cats communicate

- The importance of smell
- Reading cat's body language
- Attention to the tail, ears, pupils, raised hackles.

Rules for playing with people

- The queen and siblings teach the kitten to temper their play. Cats that do not experience this will be aggressive with people.
- People should play with kitten gently. Do not allow kitten to bite or scratch hands or feet. Use interactive toys instead.
- Adult supervision is advised when kids are playing with kitten.
- Safe, interactive toys
- Creative use of boxes, paper bags, tunnels
- Food treasure hunts and food puzzles

Scratching posts and proper use of claws

- Scratching is normal

- Choose scratching posts that are sturdy and made of materials cats prefer (wood, sisal, rough fabric)
- Teaching kittens to use scratching post
- Locate the post next to window, sleeping area, or areas favored by cat
- Many cats prefer vertical scratching posts, whereas some will prefer horizontal surfaces
- Keep nails trimmed. Consider Soft Paws to prevent damage from scratching.

Home maintenance helps keep cats healthy and less fearful at the veterinarian

- Tooth brushing
- Nail clipping and handling of feet
- Use of a thermometer
- How to administer medication—this will make it easier when the cat is ill

Normal elimination behavior and promoting good litter box use

- Litter box should be in low-traffic area
- Does cat prefer box covered or uncovered?
- Litter must be kept clean for cat to use
- Elimination outside the box is not normal; call your veterinarian

Normal feeding behavior and how to feed cats

- Cats are obligate carnivores; carbs should be less than 5% of cat's diet
- Canned food should be emphasized.
- Kittens can be free-fed until 6 months of age; then switch to portion feeding. Each cat has their own feeding station.
- Hide food around house to allow cat to hunt.
- Predatory behavior is well-developed. Owners may confuse predatory behavior with hunger.

Enriched environments, including play and mental stimulation, are key to a low-stress life

- There is value to routine, including specific allotted quality time.
- Climbing, perching, and bedding areas
- Vertical spaces
- Hiding spaces, retreats
- Interactive toys; rotation of toys
- Give cats the feeling of outdoors without the risks (bird feeders on outside of window, window perch, outdoor enclosure)

Pleasant veterinary visits

- Carrier training
- Adjusting to car rides
- Veterinary care to protect physical health: annual physical exams, dental care, vaccinations

Cats can be trained

- Reward w/treats or positive attention to encourage desired behavior
- Redirect undesired behavior
- Much of what people consider “bad behavior” is actually perfectly normal cat behavior.
- Never punish, swat, slap, or yell
- Cats can be trained to scratch in appropriate areas

Special situations, if appropriate

- Getting along with other dogs and cats.
- Getting along with children.
- Getting along with visitors
- Exposure to novel social and physical environments

How to prevent common adult cat problems

- Obesity
- Inappropriate elimination
- Aggression
- Various expressions of anxiety and fear are among the most common behavior problems

When to call your veterinary clinic:

- Get help early. Don't believe that symptoms “will just go away”. Don't believe that aggressive behavior will go away or that the cat will grow out of it.

*Excerpted from “Feline Behavior Guidelines from the American Association of Feline Practitioners”. AAFP, 2004