



MISCELLANEOUS (BUT IMPORTANT !) KITTY TIPS

First and foremost, Cats are NOT Small Dogs ! To most of you, that should seem pretty obvious. But we tend to generalize sometimes that what is good (or bad) for one is good (or bad) for the other. Sure, there are loads of similarities between dogs and cats, but there are a few items worth knowing that can enhance your care and your knowledge of cats.

DIET

Cats Are Carnivores. Period. They MUST CONSUME MEAT or FISH ... a high protein diet ... for optimum health! (Dogs are carnivores, too, but when necessary, they can adapt their diet to eat more carbohydrates.) And we now recognize ~ for a fact ~ that ALL dry cat foods are too high in carbohydrates. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM ... no exceptions ! And these high carbohydrate diets are directly responsible for obesity in cats. And for that reason, **we MUST start feeding cats CANNED CAT FOOD in order for them to get adequate amounts of needed protein** ... and to hopefully get them to lose weight.

Well over 50% of household cats are overweight. And far too many of those overweight cats are downright OBESE. And as a result, these fat cats are teetering on the edge of becoming diabetic (if not already diabetic), which can have severe health consequences, just as in people.

I realize the idea of feeding canned cat food may not be appealing for several reasons: it can be more expensive ... it can be messier ... it can be more time-consuming to feed (after all, what can be easier than opening a bag or box and pouring dry kibble into a food bowl ?)... it can be stinky ... and some cats prefer dry cat food. I get all that. BUT, for the long-term health of your precious cat: feed canned cat food !

Many cats are fussy, and you may have to experiment to see what canned foods they will eat, but to help prevent the risk of obesity and diabetes and joint problems (from bearing too much weight for too long), it will be worth the effort to make the switch.

If your cat is reluctant to switch from a dry food to a canned food, I recommend to gradually introduce the canned food, or keep trying different flavors or different brands.

One common myth regarding dry cat food is that it will keep a cat's teeth clean. Absolutely NOT TRUE ! Every day, we see cats with horrible infections of the teeth and gums that only eat dry food. Many of those cats will enjoy the moist texture of canned food far more than the pain of trying to break up dry kibble with infected teeth.

SPAYING & NEUTERING

For cats, our long-time recommendations to spay (females) and neuter (males) **around 5 to 6 months of age** still holds true. We've changed our recommendations for **dogs** to spay / neuter at 1 year of age or later based on a vast amount of research. However, no research has been done to make a similar recommendation for cats. So, for now, **we'll still advise spaying and neutering around 5 to 6 months old.**

STRESS

Just as some dogs (and some people) may have a 'nervous' personality, some cats will also experience extreme stress. Of course, what causes stress in a cat will often be the same things that trigger stress in dogs: loud noises, visitors (especially the presence of children ... or construction or repair crews coming or going in the home), loss of another pet, a new baby, and quite often other cats in the house.

A newly recognized source of stress for cats is the **over-use of laser pointers**. We encourage indoor cats to get exercise, and having a laser pointer in hand while we sit on the couch can seem like a great and cheap form of entertainment. However, there are more and more cats that are suffering from anxiety since they can never "catch their prey" as we keep moving the laser light around, even after they pounce on the light. Use your good judgment, but limit the use of laser pointers with your kitties.

While the stereo-typical "scaredy cat" may be obvious to some pet parents, sometimes cats will show their stress in more subtle ways that may not be easily recognized as stress: not eating, urine marking (spraying), hiding (especially common when children or a new dog enter the home), aggression towards other pets or people and excessive grooming / licking which leads to hair loss.

A number of different strategies can be used to help reduce the stress and trauma, but it can be especially helpful to observe your kitty to see if you can identify what causes the stress in the first place. If you're able to find out the source of the stress in the first place, then it's much easier to reduce or eliminate the problem.

First and foremost, all cats should have a safe place to retreat from loud noises, commotion, and other pets. Having an elevated perch can be helpful as well.

Feliway, a pheromone spray or diffuser that can have a calming effect on cats, especially when there are multiple cats in the house, has proven to be extremely beneficial when used on a regular basis.

As a last resort, prescription medications are available through full-service veterinarians, but I would encourage that you exhaust other methods before going this route. And to take matters further, in situations where one cat wants to exert its dominance over another cat, you may even need to remove the aggressive cat OR the victim cat from the household entirely. Why should one cat have to suffer unnecessarily ?

POISONS

Perhaps the most common poison we see in veterinary practices is the use of **DOG flea ... or especially DOG flea & tick medications**. As mentioned earlier, cats are not small dogs ! Many insecticides that are safe for dogs can be quite dangerous in cats, and may cause serious, even life-threatening side-effects.

Aspirin and other pain relievers can be life-threatening when given to cats aswell. We do have pain medications that can safely be used in cats, but don't try medicating with something you have at home.