

1  **Feline Body Language  
&**

**Evidence Based Training**

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She/her

2  **Why this matters matters**

- Animals are always learning
  - Veterinary examinations are always socially invasive
  - Often painful
    - Vaccines, venipuncture, injury evaluation

3  **Aggression at vet hospital**

Defensive, variable degrees of aggression

Fear or pain related aggression

Confident aggression not seen in this setting

4  **Aggression at vet hospital**

5  **AVMA policy on animal restraint**

"...should provide the least restraint required to allow the specific procedure(s) to be performed properly, *should minimize fear, pain, stress and suffering for the animal, and should protect both the animal and personnel from harm.*

Every effort should be made to ensure adequate and ongoing training in animal handling and behavior by all parties involved, so that distress and physical restraint are minimized."

[AVMA, August 2012](#)

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7  **Facial Expressions**

- 1: Relaxed
- 2: Alert
- 3: Tense
- 4: Anxious
- 5: Fearful
- 6: Terrified

8  **Head & Body Postures**

- 1: Relaxed
- 2: Alert
- 3: Tense
- 4: Anxious

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6: Terrified

9  **Relaxed (Green)**

- Head: resting on surface or over body
- Eyes: closed to heavy, pupils slit to normal size
- Ears: turned slightly forward
- Sounds: none/purr
- Tail: extended or loosely wrapped; up or loosely down if standing
- +/- bunting
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10  **Alert (Green)**

Head: over the body, some movement

Eyes: open normally, pupils normal

Ears: neutral or erected to front or back

Whiskers: neutral to forward

Tail: relaxed, some motion

Sounds: none or meow

11  **Tense (Yellow)**

- Head: over the body or pressed to body, little or no movement
- Eyes: wide open, pupils normal to partially dilated
- Ears: erected to front or back
- Tail: close to body; tense downwards or curled forward, may be twitching
- Sounds: none/ meow/ plaintive meow
- Other: ventral recumbency or "slinking"

12  **Anxious (Yellow)**

- Head: on plane with body, little or no movement
- Eyes: wide open, pupils dilated
- Ears: partially flattened
- Tail: close to body; +/- curled forward
- Sounds: none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling
- Other: increased RR

13  **Fearful (Red)**

Head: tucked, still

Eyes: wide, pupils fully dilated

Ears: fully flattened

Tail: close to body; curled under body when standing

Sounds: none/plaintive meow/ growl/ yowl

Other: freezing, fidgeting, escaping, swatting, may bite

14  **Terrified (Red)**

Head: lowered

Eyes: pupils fully dilated

Ears: fully flattened, pinned back

Tail: close to body

Sounds: spitting, growling, yowling, hissing, shrieking

Other: "Halloween Cat" – full piloerection

Freezing, fidgeting, escaping, swatting, biting (aggression)

15  **Aggression**

16  **Imminent cat bite signs**

- Sudden dilation of pupils
- Piloerection
- Fast, jerky swishing of tail
- Swatting with forearms
- Vocalization – yowling, shrieking, spitting
- Direct stare with open mouth vocalizations

17  **Describe this cat's state of mind:**

- 1: Relaxed
- 2: Alert
- 3: Tense
- 4: Anxious
- 5: Fearful
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18  **Describe this cat's state of mind:**

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19  **Describe this cat's state of mind:**

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- 3: Tense
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21  **Increasingly threatening/ed cat**

22  **Starts before your patients meet you**

23  **The Carrier**

- Easy: leave the carrier out
- Medium: Make it enticing
  - Food, catnip?, heating pad
  - Preferred location
  - Adaptil

24  **The Carrier**

- Harder, but more fun: Teach cat to get in with marker
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25  **Catalyst Council Carrier Channel**

26  **Towel Training**

27  **Clicker Training- what?**

- "Secondary marker" system for positive reinforcement- not a remote
  - The click tells the learner 'reward is coming'
    - Not what 'to do'
  - Behavior at click becomes reinforced & repeated
  - The sound, volume, pitch same for every teacher, every session, every time

28  **Clicker Training- Why?**

- Allows for more human seconds between target behavior & reward
- Cats less domesticated (4,000ya) than dogs (12-16,000ya)
  - Spend more time ignoring us than dogs?
- More precise learning
- Cats tend to eat more slowly than dogs
  - Fewer repetitions/ session
- Can catch them 'out of session'

29  **How- Getting started**

- Picking a Clicker

30  **Applications**

- Rewarding appropriate behaviors
  - Scratching in the right place
  - Bunting or meowing instead of pawing or play biting for attention
- Teaching Functional Behaviors
  - Go to (crate/carrier/mat/specific spot.. Getting OUT of carrier)

- Sit/ Sit still (helpful for vet care)

### 31 **How-Preparing the human**

- Practicing timing *without the cat!*
- TV with tickers at bottom- pick a word you are likely to see (on the News "Premier" "Hogan", "pandemic" "energy" "Queen" "Austin" etc.)
  - See word, click & get treat out of bag within 1-2 seconds

### 32 **How- Loading the Clicker**

- Teaching your cat click= treat
- Click right before he eats food/treat
  - With lickable food use tiny amount
  - With crunchy treats, one click= one treat
  - No matter what, 1 click= 1 treat

### 33 **How- Incremental increase in difficulty**

- No food on target
  - I'm a little slow handling stick clicker treats and camera
- Start small
- Be patient
  - A few minutes a few times a week MAX

### 34 **Eat This... (ignore that)**

### 35 **Why not "just" Scruff?**

- Cats are only naturally scruffed for 3 reasons –
  - 1.being carried by their mom when kittens
  - 2.during mating
  - 3.during fights by the aggressor

### 36 **Other resources**

### 37 **Questions?**