

RESPECTFUL CAT HANDLING vs. CAT WRANGLING

FROM THE CAT'S
POINT OF VIEW



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Outline

- Improving a cat's clinic experience
 - Minimizing threats
 - Reading signals
 - Respectful & friendly handling
 - *Think like a cat*
- Compliance
 - Education - *Subtle signs of sickness*
 - Getting to the clinic (or *anywhere*) with less fuss
 - Better home care after visit

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Who and what is a cat?

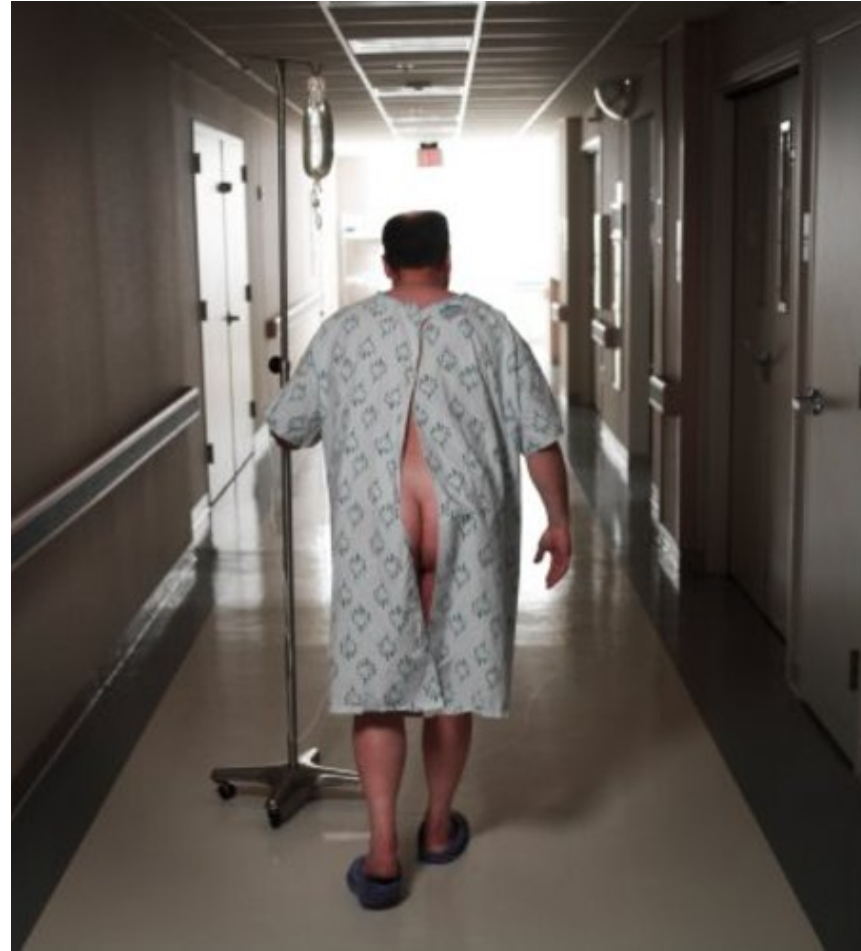
What makes a cat tick?

What is the ideal cat environment?

Need to understand in order to interact with and help cats



The patient experience



Cats in a clinic setting

Which is it?



www.radioayeneh.se



Worth 1000.com

Flee, freeze, or fight!



- Easily threatened
- Scary = scared
- Think like a cat





Try to imagine...

Walking on 4 feet

Jumping 7X your height

Perceiving the world in overlapping clouds
of smell

Having much better night vision

Grooming yourself with your tongue

Locating sound by rotating ears

Having poor close-up vision

Having a tail

Scooping food and sucking water

Having whiskers



Predators & prey



You are what you eat

- Obligate carnivores
 - Shapes anatomy, physiology, behaviour
- Solitary hunter
 - Territoriality
- Safety from predictability
- Communication



Eating behaviour

- Small rodents, rabbits, birds, insects, frogs, reptiles
- Cats need ~ 50 kcal/kg ideal weight/day
- Average mouse = how many kcal?
- How many mice does a 5 kg cat need/day?

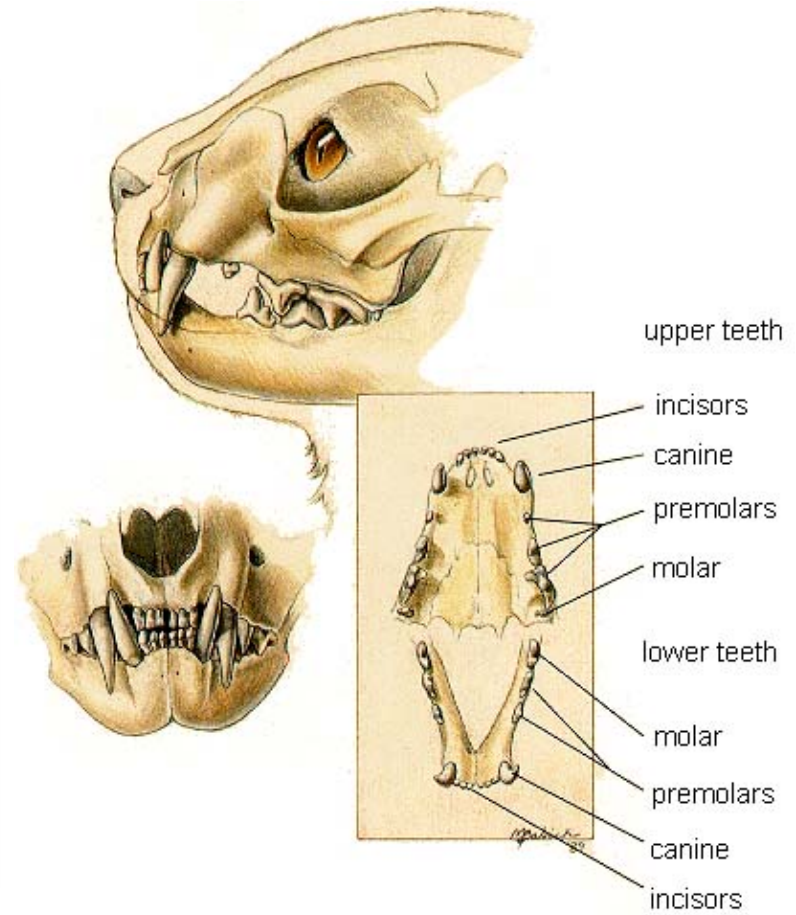
Eating behaviour

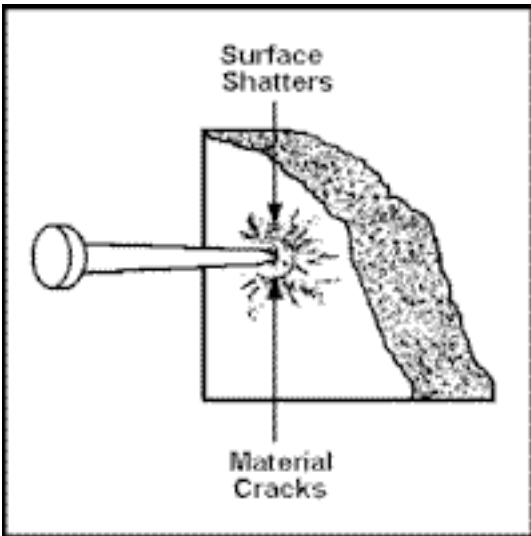
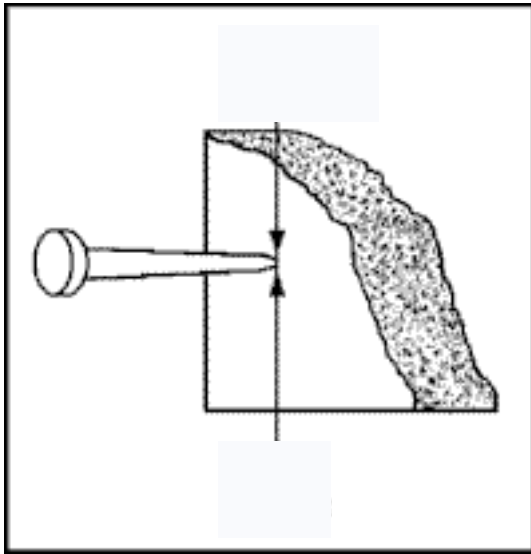
- Small rodents, rabbits, birds, insects, frogs, reptiles
- Cats need ~ 50 kcal/kg ideal weight/day
- Average mouse = how many kcal?
- How many mice does a 5 kg cat need/day?
 - 8-10 small meals/day
 - Hunting (success and failure)
 - 10-15 attempts for success
 - Grazing feeding behaviour is normal for cats



|| ?







Implications of resource dependency

- No hierarchy
- No need for cooperation
- No “taking turns”
- Few appeasement behaviors
- Keeping distance is essential
- Control environment
 - Security = no surprises





**As long as
everything's
exactly the way
I want it,**

I'm totally flexible



Clients don't
understand
the need for
regular
veterinary care

Cats hide
illness

Territorial

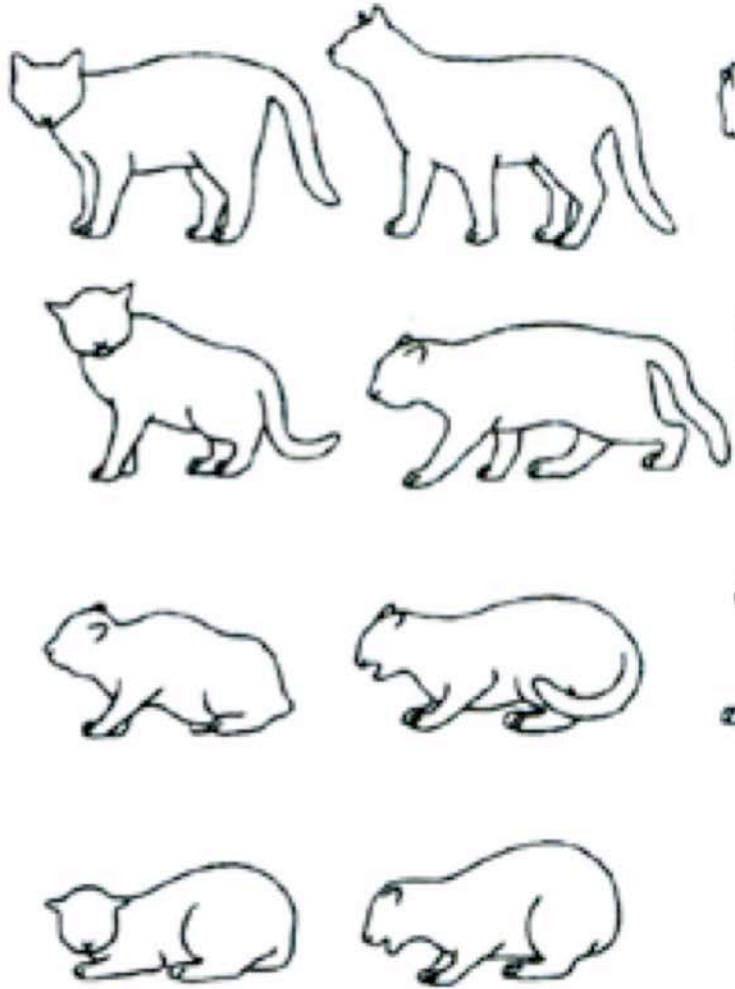
- Rarely leave home
- Social groups are naturally females
- Males on the periphery
- Outside contact kept to a minimum



Less

Aggression

Fear

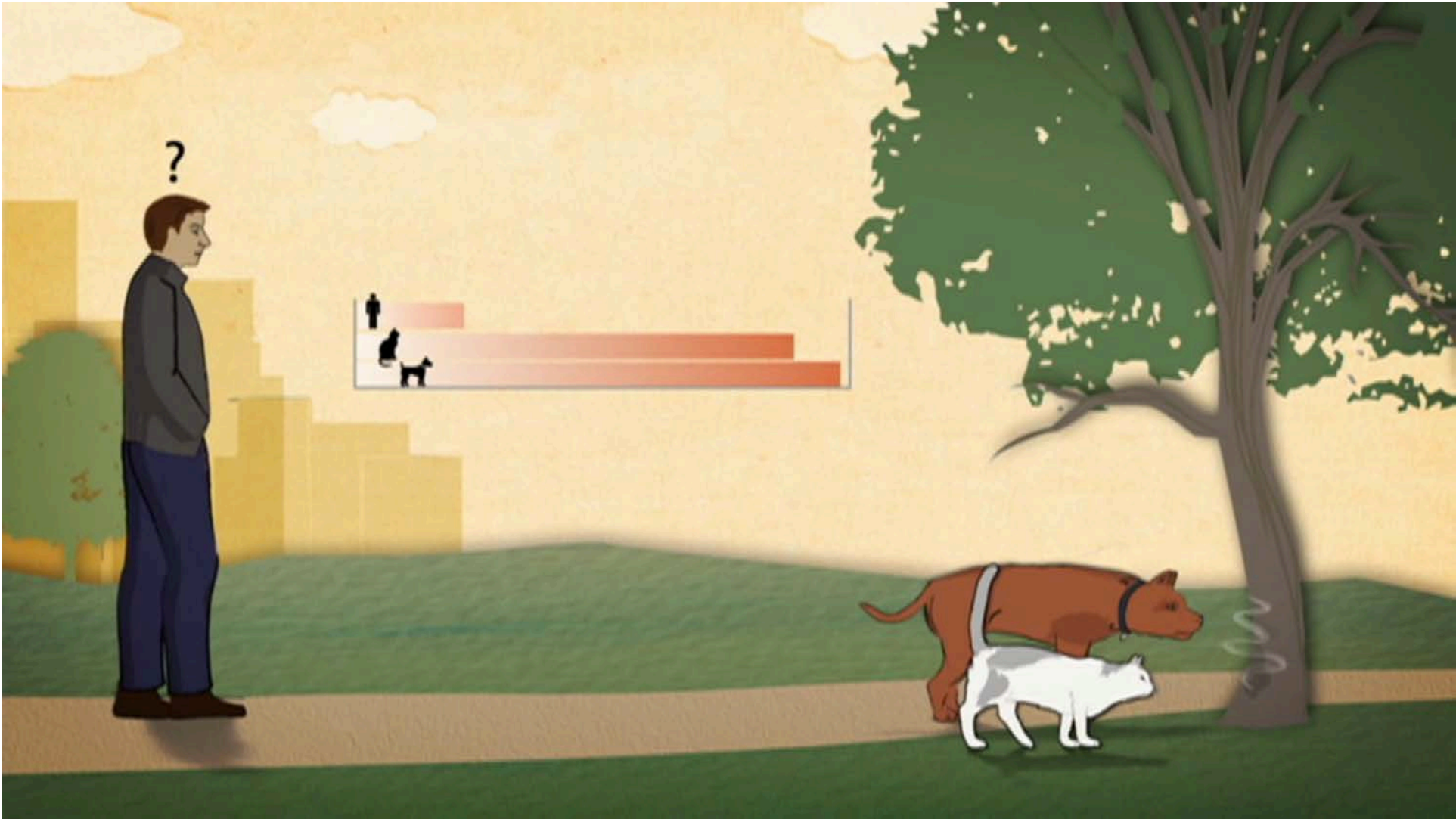


Communication



- Olfactory
- Visual
- Tactile
- Auditory

- Maintain social groups



Odor marking is
critical **long-range**
communication

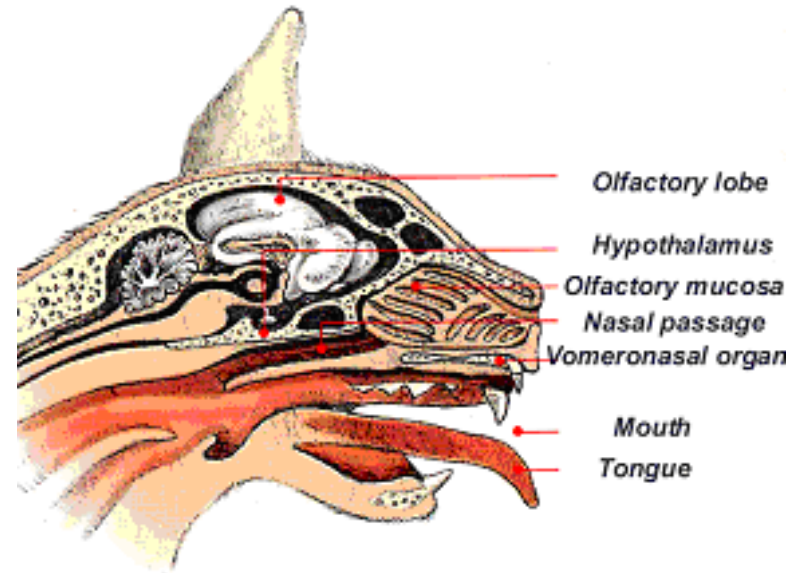
Helps to avoid
confrontation

Cannot be changed

Creates spacing

Olfactory
communication











Visual communication

Medium range

Limited by vegetation
or lack of light

Changes rapidly

Increase distance
between cats



Posture = first
impression

Facial = fine tuning

Emotional state

Scary
or,
scared?



Not always what it
looks like

Visual
communication

Visual Cues/signaling

- Arched back
- Crouch
- Tail
- Facial expression
- Ears
- Whiskers
- Pupils



Tactile communication

- Affiliative:
 - Rubbing
 - Head bunting
 - Nose touching
 - Kneading, treading
 - Allogrooming



Tactile communication

- Agonistic
 - Biting
 - Neck bite
 - Scratching



Auditory cues

- Well-developed repertoire of sounds to
 - Convey a need
 - Increase distance between individuals.

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Auditory cues

- Well-developed repertoire of sounds to
 - Convey a need
 - Increase distance between individuals.
- Sounds for encouraging socialization are a trill/chirrup, purr, puffing, chatter, miaow, and sexual calling
- The cat that is open-mouth screaming is highly aroused but is probably less aggressive than the cat that is close-mouthed growl/wah-wah/mowling.

Reading the signals

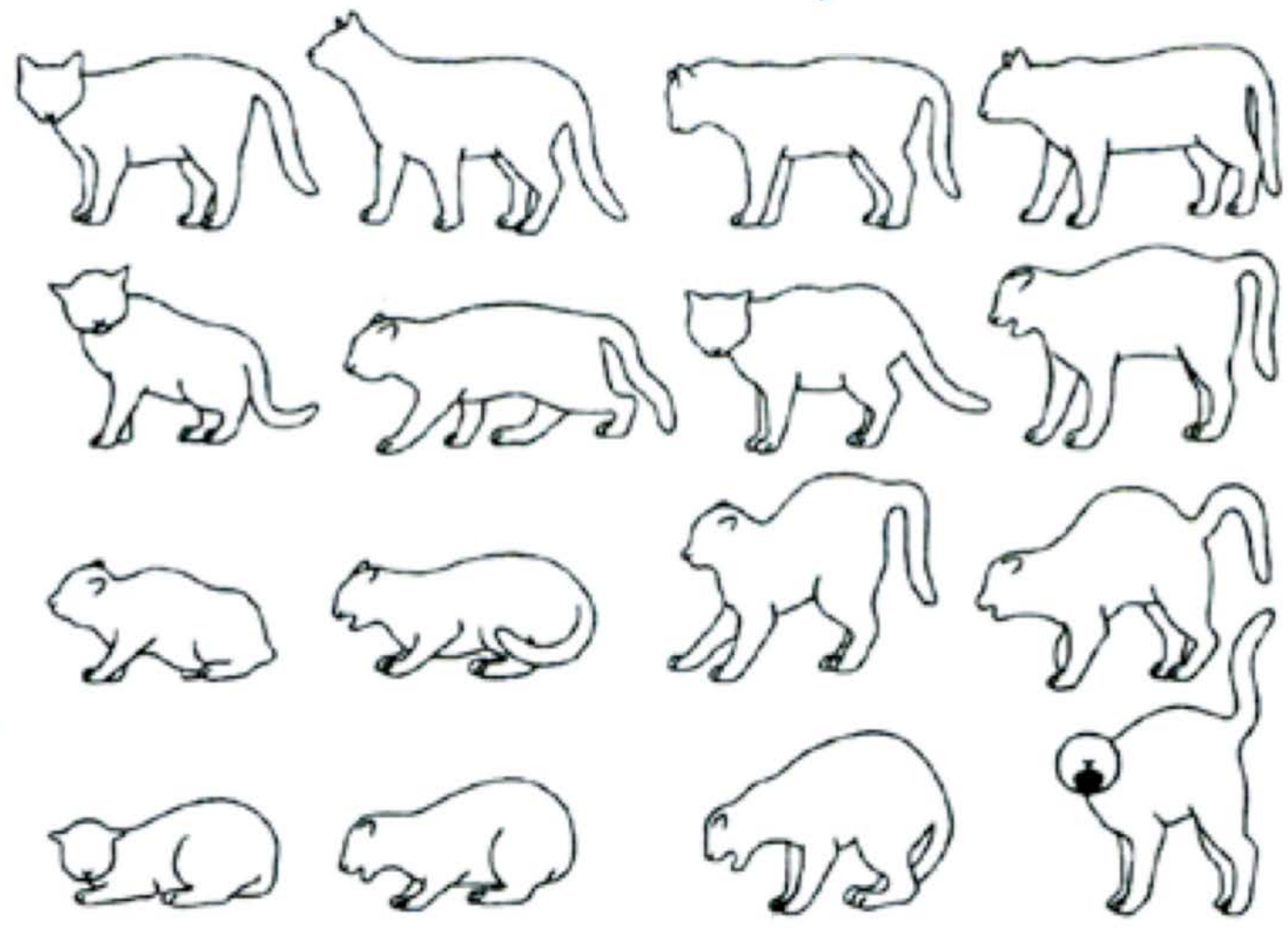
- Ritualized signals
- Establish and maintain structure
- Useful for monitoring group
- Useful for understanding handle individuals



Less

Aggression 

Fear 



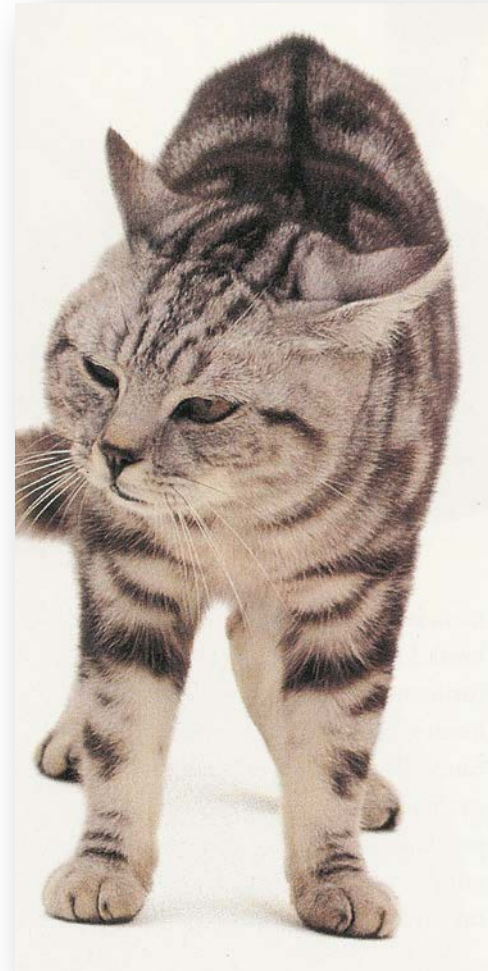
Feeling threatened signals: subtle

Look away

Slightly lower ears

Turn head away

Lean back



Feeling threatened signals: more intense

Flatten ears

Lower and curl tail lateral to thigh

Turn head to side

Crouch





MORE AGGRESSIVE



MORE SUBMISSIVE
OR MORE FEARFUL



PUPILS DILATED, EARS
RIGHT BACK



Feeling VERY threatened signals: extreme

Roll over

Show weapons



Not an aggressor

“Dominance”/threatening signals

Approach

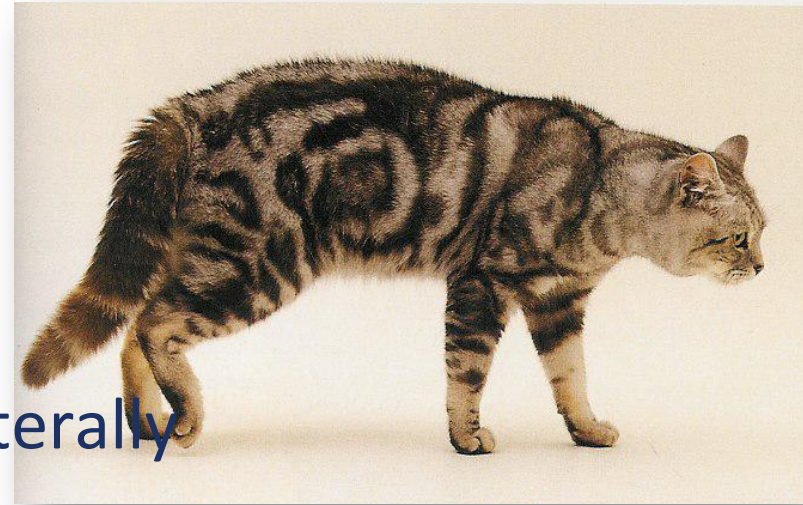
Stare

Stiffen limbs

Stiff upright ears turned laterally

Elevated tail base

+/- mount subordinate



Aggressor

Threatening signals



About scruffing techniques

'Scruffing'* is a general term for a variety of holds on the skin of the cat's neck. Grasping the scruff of the neck varies from a gentle squeeze of skin, to grasping a larger fold of skin with varying amounts of pressure. Consideration of natural feline behavior can help put this technique into perspective. Cats grasp the scruff of the neck of other cats in only limited circumstances.^{43,44} During the first few weeks of life the mother cat may lift kittens by the scruff of the neck using her mouth.⁴⁵ This is a method of transport and immobilization, and not a form of discipline. During mating, the tomcat grasps the scruff of the queen.^{46,47}

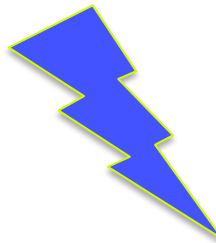
Some veterinarians and veterinary behaviorists do not use scruffing and do

**Footnote:* On review of these guidelines, the ISFM/FAB feline expert panel strongly support the view that scruffing should never be used as a routine method of restraint, and should only be used where there is no alternative.

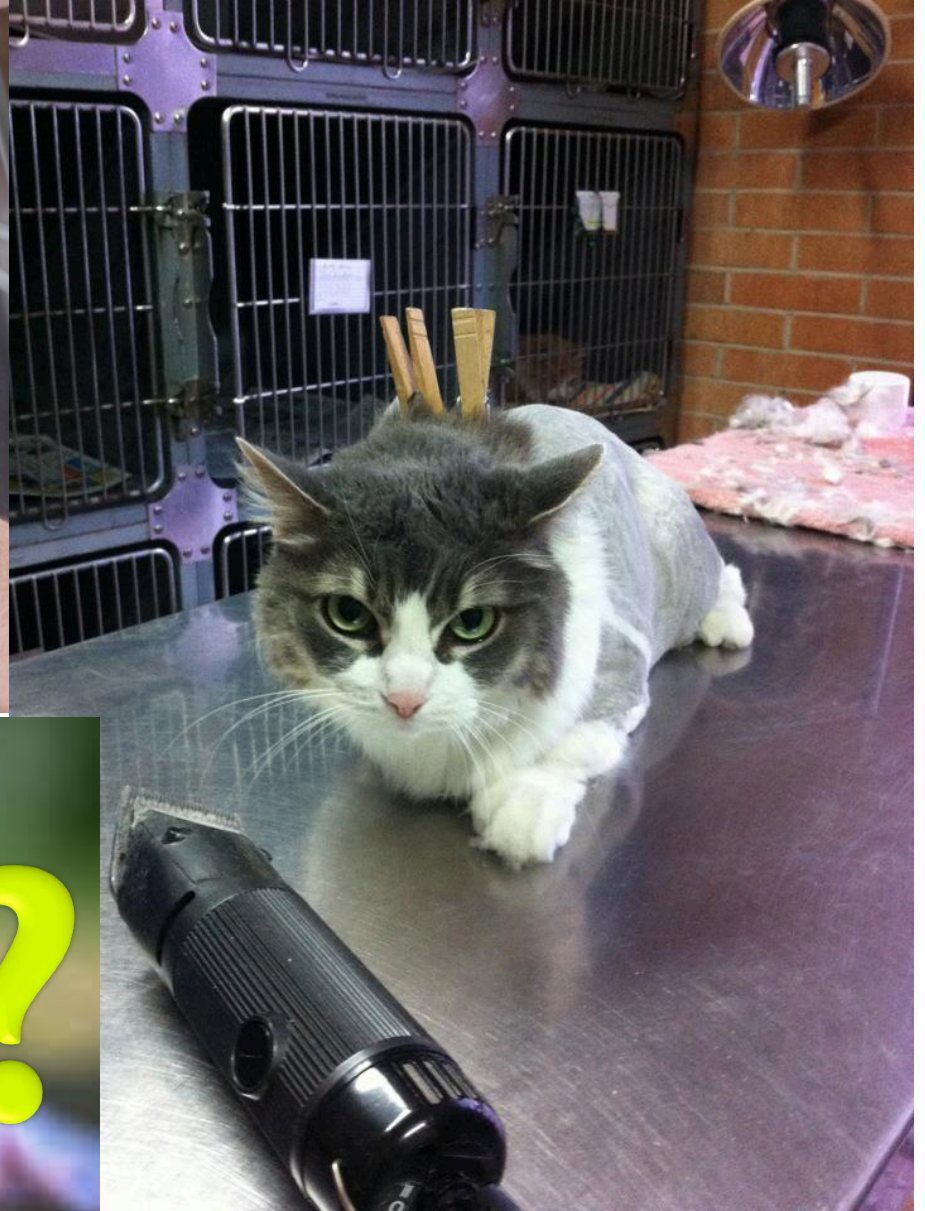
If you think this technique is the *only* alternative, carefully evaluate the cat for any signs of fear or anxiety. The cat may become immobile but may not be comfortable, or may become aggressive. Handle the cat as gently as possible and guard against using aggressive handling techniques out of anger or frustration. The panel does not condone lifting the cat or suspending its body weight with a scruffing technique because it is unnecessary and potentially painful.

'Clipping' or 'pinch-induced behavioral inhibition' is a term that pertains to using clips to apply pressure to the dorsal neck skin or other areas along the dorsal midline.⁴⁴ Some veterinarians and behaviorists do not use clipping and do not condone its use. Some have reservations about the clipping procedure and have concerns about the ethics of controlling behavior through inhibition of behavioral responses. Others think it has a place when done appropriately, in certain cats and under the conditions described above for scruffing.⁴⁸⁻⁵⁰

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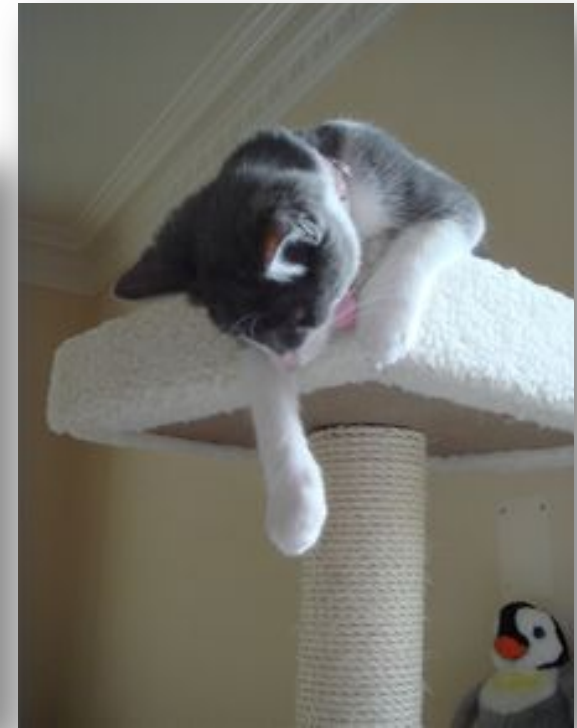
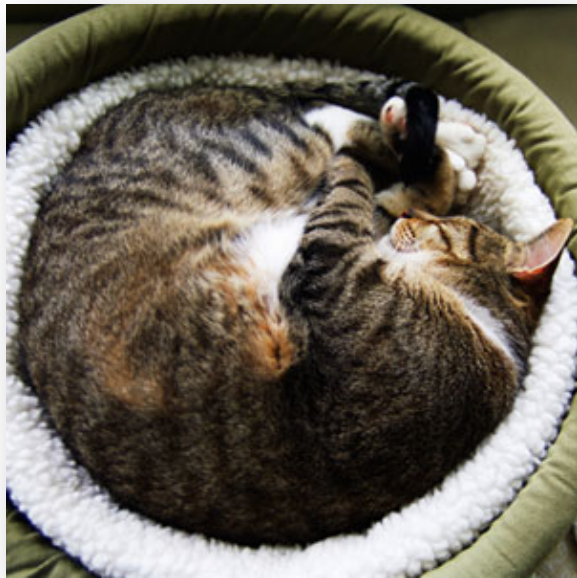
What do cats
need?





AAFP and ISFM Feline Environmental Needs Guidelines

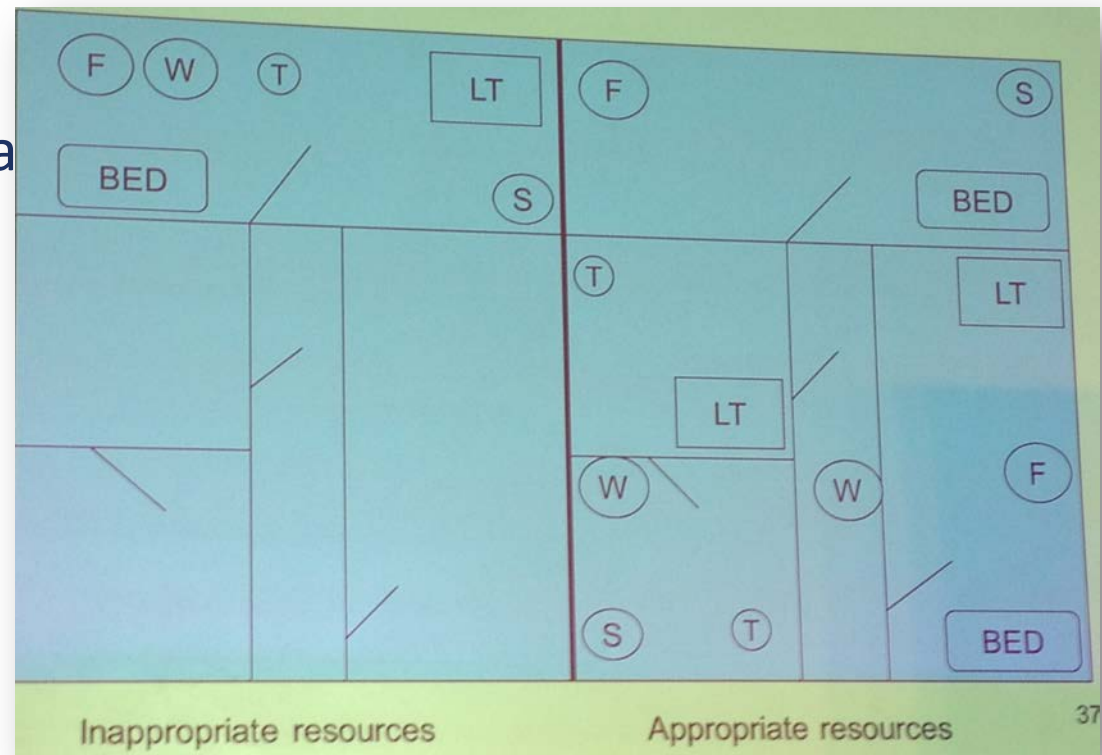
- Five Pillars for a healthy environment - providing
 1. A safe space





AAFP and ISFM Feline Environmental Needs Guidelines

- Five Pillars for a healthy environment - providing
 1. A safe space
 2. Multiple and separate resources



Courtesy Sarah Ellis

Break free from daily scooping!



**Would you step in there
with your bare feet?**

**Let SmartScoop®
keep it clean!**





How many boxes are there?

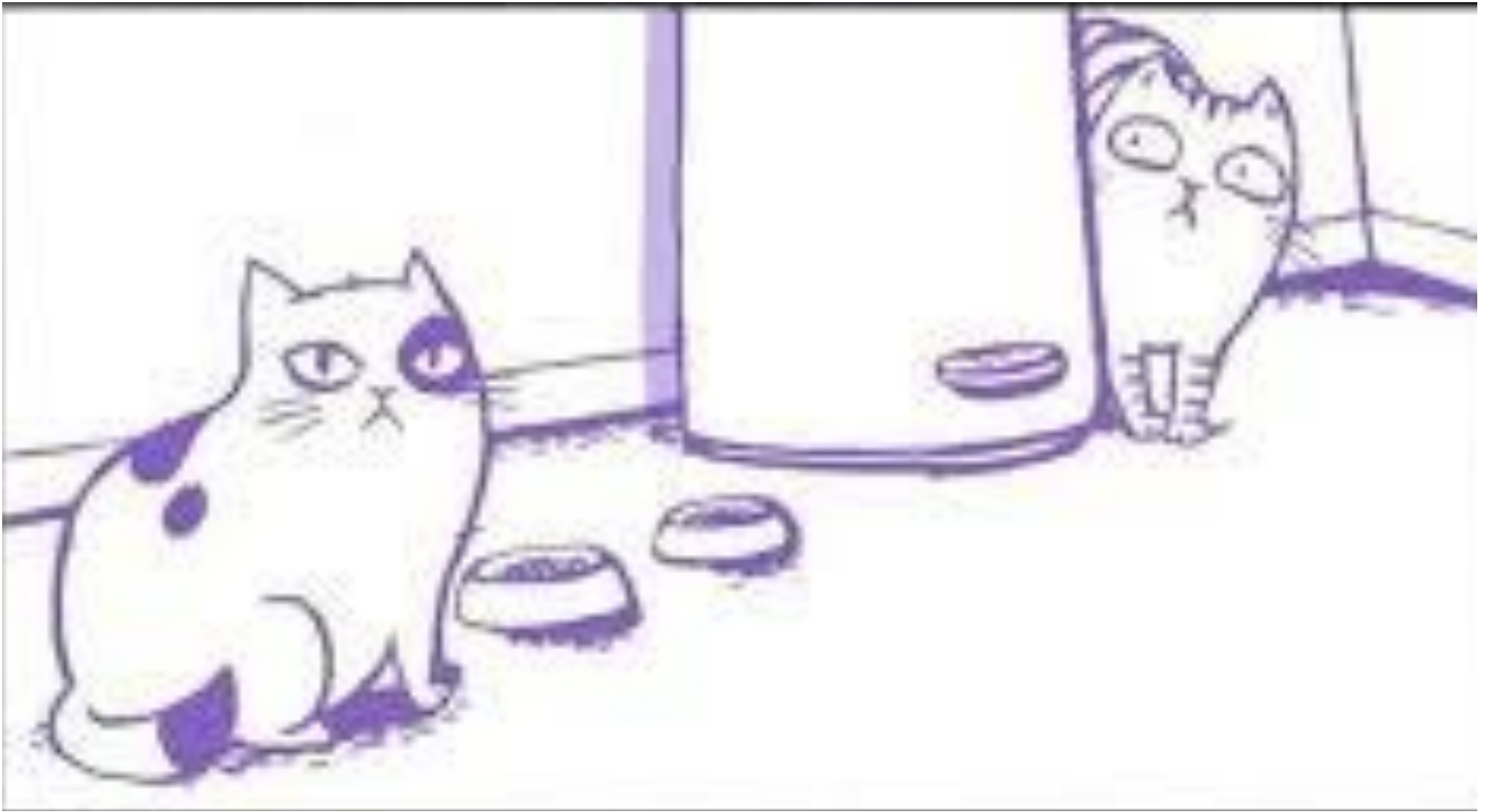


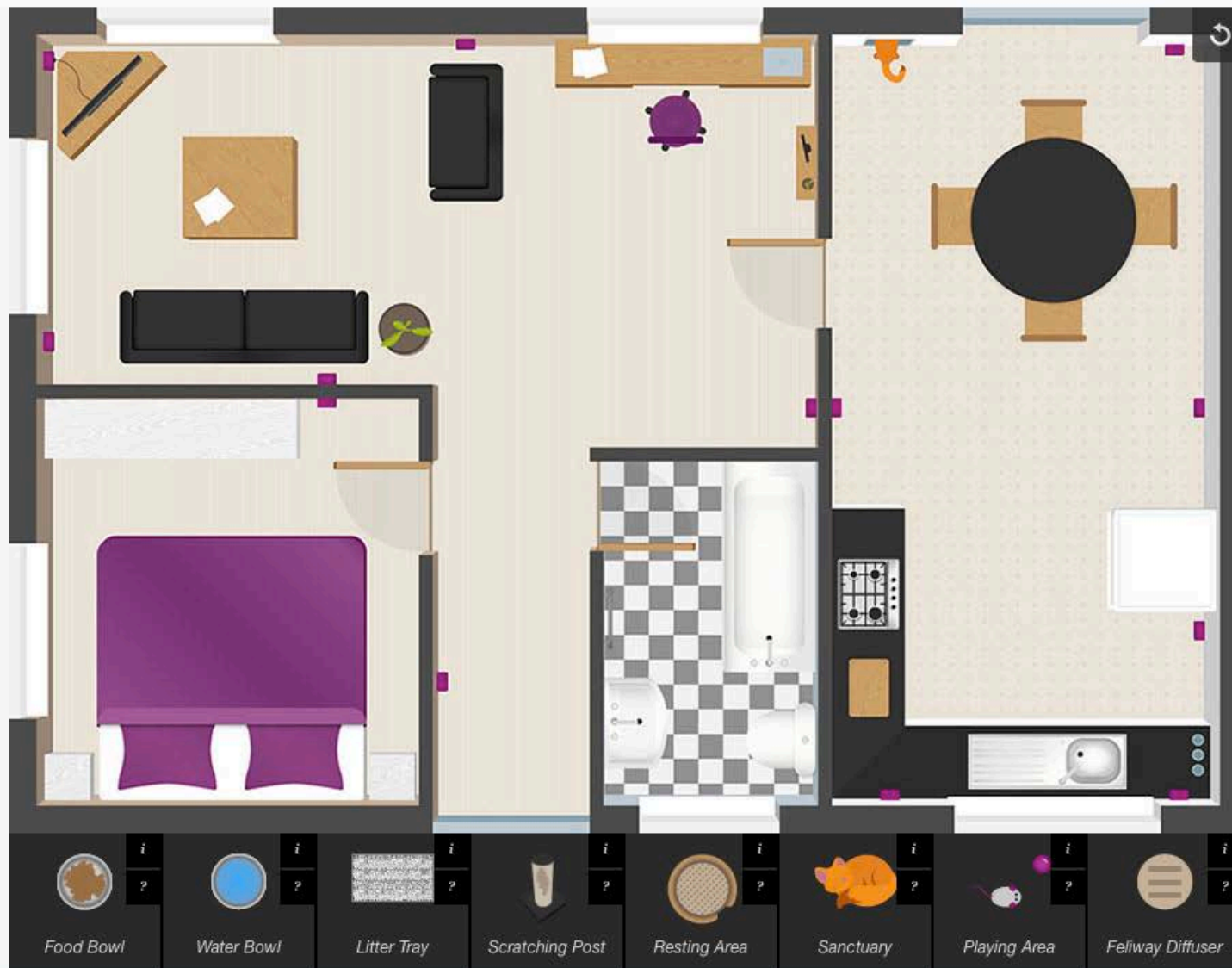


Predators & prey



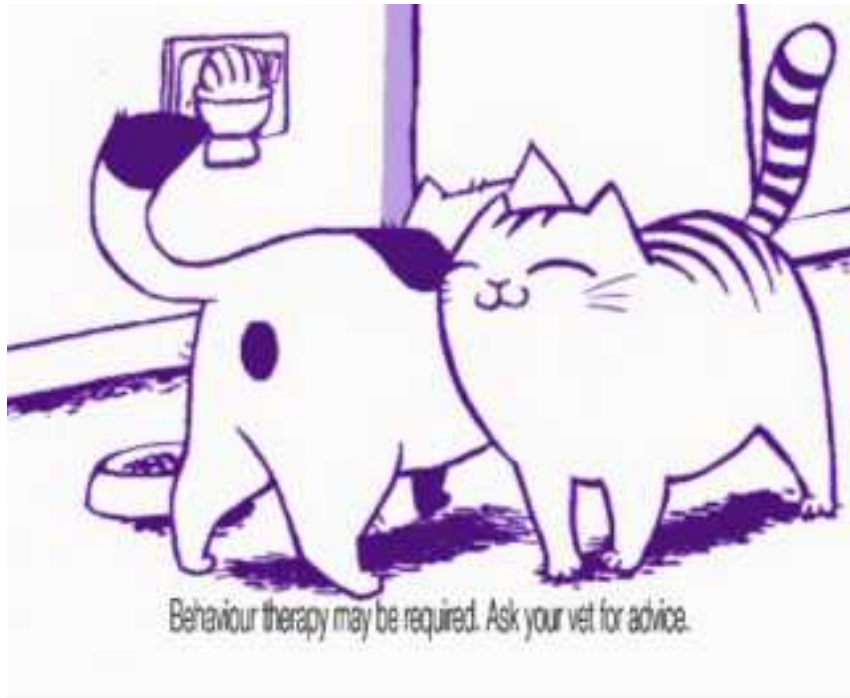






Embed

[Feliway.com/uk/Nuisances-for-cats/Happy-home-for-cats](https://feliway.com/uk/Nuisances-for-cats/Happy-home-for-cats)



Five Pillars for a healthy environment

3. Providing an opportunity for play and expression of predatory behaviours



4. Providing positive, consistent and predictable interactions with humans



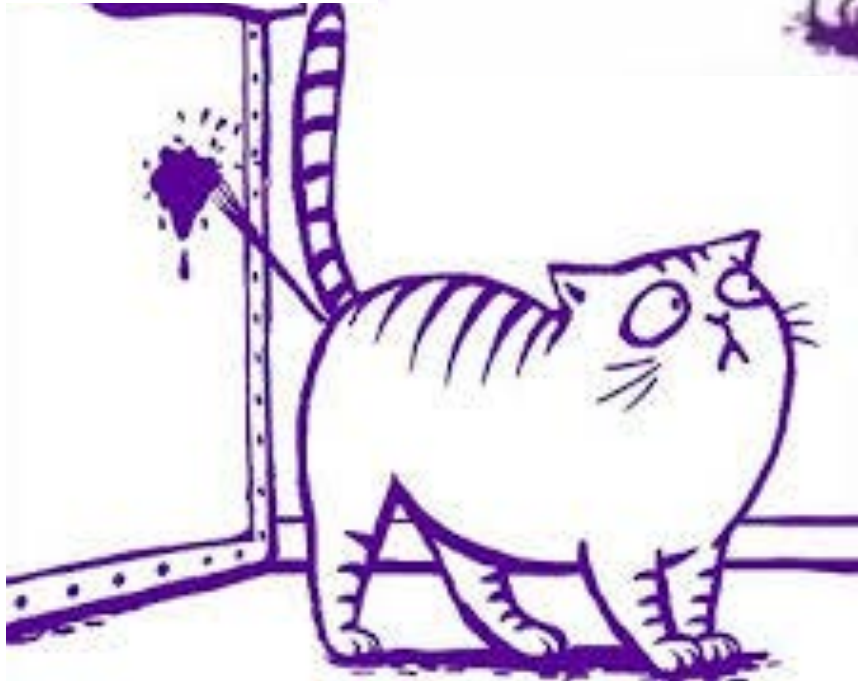
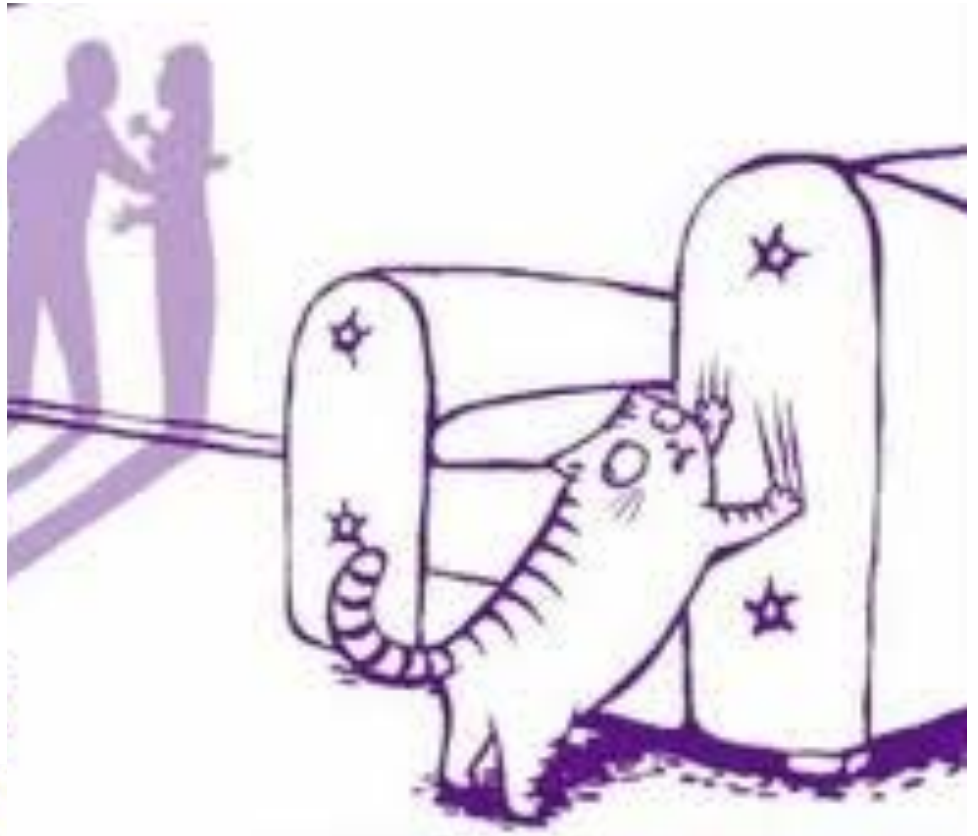


Courtesy Sarah Ellis

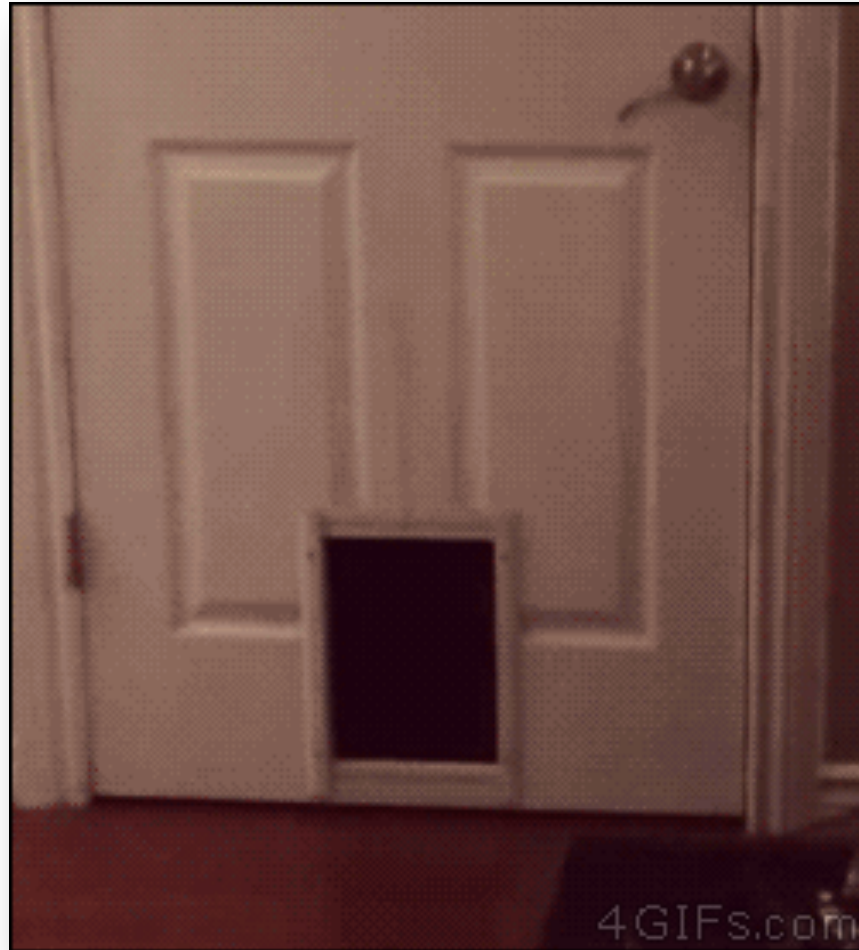


3. An opportunity for behaviours
4. Positive, consistent humans
5. An environment that respects the importance of a cat's sense of smell

BANG!



A sense of control => contentment



“Take the pet stress test”

www.helpforstressedpets.com/StressTest.aspx

Is your pet stressed?

Or, more accurately (since stress is an inevitable part of life)...

How stressed is your pet?

The following questions can help you determine your pet's stress level, so you can better [help your four-legged friend find his zen](#).





Has your pet been acting differently since you adopted a new friend for him or her?



Does your pet act strangely when you visit the veterinarian?



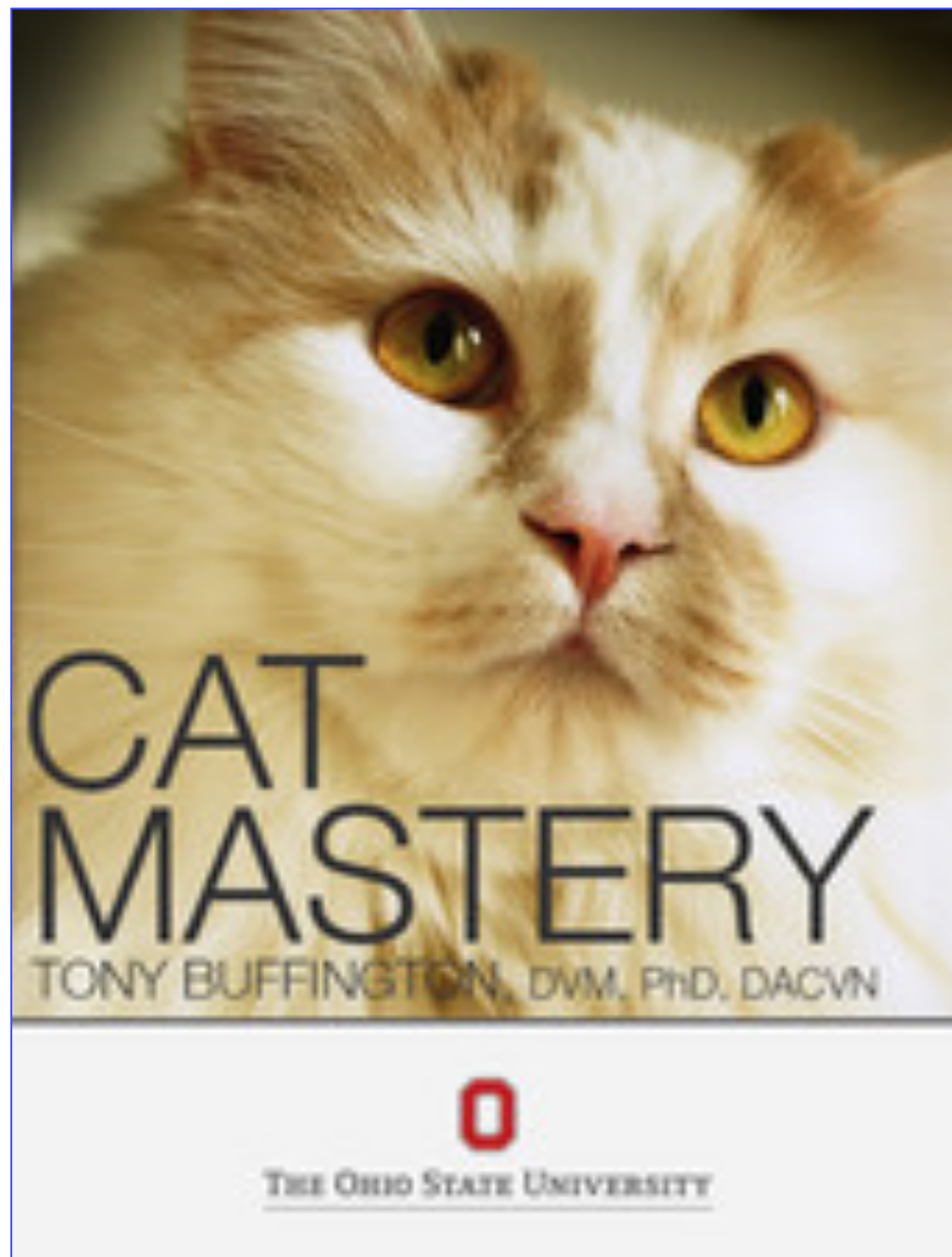
Does your pet urinate where he or she shouldn't?

Watch Video



Does your pet hate travelling?

itunes store



she looks as large as possible. Her fur is puffed up to make her look even larger in hopes of scaring the threat away, and her tail will be as close to her body as possible. Her breathing will be faster and deeper, making it easier to see her chest rise and fall. This posture is sometimes called defensive aggression, which means, "get away from me or I will hurt you!" If you see your cat looking like this, she is telling you, "I feel terrified right now!" Do NOT try to pick any cat up that looks like this because it may attack you. Just remove whatever is threatening her if you can, and leave her alone until she calms down enough to come to you.

Once you understand the basic idea of the "words" cats use to tell us how they are feeling, you can use the interactive body language widget on the next page to learn more about some of the many additional ways cats tell us how they are feeling. Soon you'll be adept at using this new knowledge to understand the language your cat uses, as well as that of the cats you will see in the videos alter in this book.

In addition to knowing what cats are telling us with their body language, knowing where and how they spend their time and how they interact with their surroundings can also tell us a lot about how they are feeling. We will continue to learn to recognize these

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL STATE BY LOOKING AT THE BODY

Activity – sleeping or resting, alert or active, may be playing
Breathing – slow to normal



Touch each number to see a cat's body language for each emotional state, from relaxed to terrified.

Let's start by looking at her head. The position of her head, the size of her mouth, eyes and pupils, and the position of her ears and whiskers all tell us something about how she feels. For example, when your cat is relaxed, she may lie on her side with her head resting on the same surface as her body, as seen in Figure 1 on this page. Her mouth will be closed,

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL STATE BY LOOKING AT THE HEAD

Head – laid on surface or over body, some movement

Eyes – closed to open, pupils slit to normal size

Ears –normal to forward

Whiskers – normal to forward

Sounds –none, purr



Touch each number to see a cat's facial expressions for each emotional state, from relaxed to terrified. Pinch open to view full screen.

FIGURE 1: RELAXED, SAFE, HAPPY



eyes will be relaxed with eyelids somewhere between opened and closed, and her pupils relatively narrow. Her ears will be up, and may be forward, and her whiskers will be away from her cheeks, either flat or forward. She may be purring, or not making any sound. Looking at her body, we see that she is lying on her side (or belly, or sitting) with muscles relaxed, breathing slowly; it may not be easy to see her chest rise and fall. Her legs are laid out from her body, with feet not touching the surface she is lying on, and her tail may be extended or loosely wrapped over her. When you see your cat looking like this, she is telling you, "I feel safe and happy right now."

We can compare this "statement" with how our cat tells us she is feeling tense, like the cat in Figure 2

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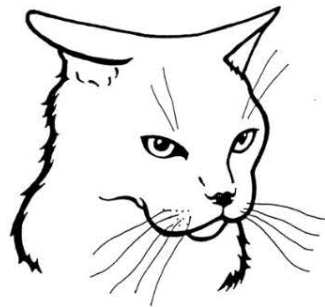
Head – near to surface motionless

Eyes – fully open, pupils fully dilated

Ears – fully flattened

Whiskers – back

Sounds – none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling



Touch each number to see a cat's facial expressions for each emotional state, from relaxed to terrified. Pinch open to view full screen.

FIGURE 1: RELAXED, SAFE, HAPPY



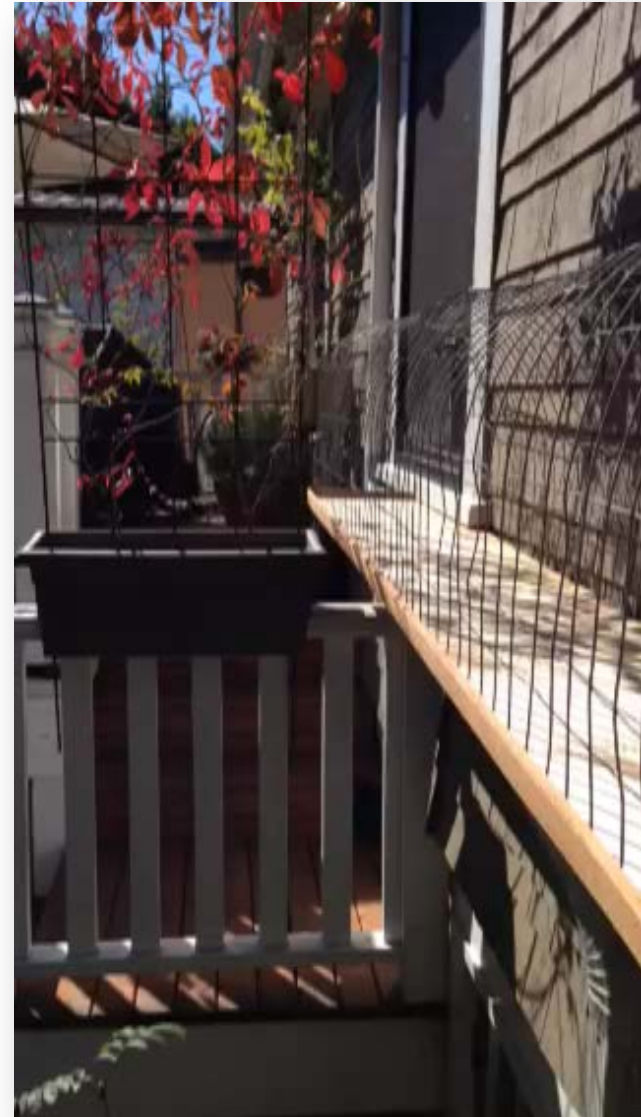
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Catios – the best of both worlds



Courtesy of Rhonda Ashcroft – for Larry =>



- Cats use a combination of these different signals in any situation.
- Look for all of them and interpret them together.

Putting
it all
Together







Next up:
putting
purrerspective
into practice

hypurr@aol.com