

**HOWARD COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL
AND ADOPTION CENTER**

Caring for your Adopted Cat



HOWARD COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL & ADOPTION CENTER
8576 DAVIS ROAD COLUMBIA, MD 21045
410-313-2780 WWW.HCPD.ORG



Dear new pet owner,

Thank you for saving the life of a shelter pet. We hope the enclosed information will be helpful during the initial adjustment period as you begin training and caring for your new companion animal.

It is our goal for this to be a successful and happy placement for you, your family and your new pet. Please don't hesitate to call the adoption center for additional assistance. We wish you a lifetime of the warmth, joy and companionship that owning a pet can bring.

**Sincerely,
Howard County Animal Control
Staff and Volunteers**



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DOMESTIC CATS BELONG INDOORS

Howard County Animal Control requires adoptive families to keep their cats indoors.

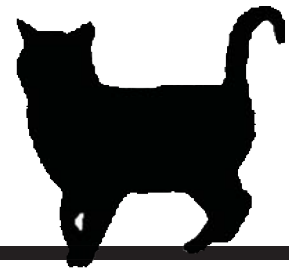
Domesticated cats do not need to go outside for exercise or fresh air. Providing toys, scratching posts and safe climbing surfaces for your cat will allow your cat to get all the exercise it requires while staying safely inside.

Domesticated cats are faced with many dangers when allowed to roam freely outdoors. Dangers to your cat outdoors include:

- Passing traffic
- Parked vehicles (cats often climb inside engines when it is cold outside and can be injured or killed)
- Poisons, such as chemicals and plants
- Predators, such as stray dogs or other large animals
- Traps
- Parasites, such as fleas, ticks and worms
- Diseases, such as rabies and feline leukemia

Remember that in Howard County, domesticated animals must be on a leash or in a carrier and under the control of a responsible person when outdoors. This applies not just to dogs but to cats, as well.

Be a good neighbor and a responsible pet owner. Keep your cat indoors.



THE LITTER BOX

Litter boxes provide your pet cat a safe, indoors location to eliminate its waste. There are several factors that you can control that will make your cat more likely to successfully and regularly use a litter box. The most important things to keep in mind are that a litter box should be easily accessible to your pet, clean and private.

HOW MANY LITTER BOXES ARE NEEDED?

Provide one litter box per cat. If you have more than one cat, the cats will likely use all of the boxes or may urinate in one and defecate in the other. The important thing is for all the animals to have a litter box available, even if another pet is using one. An elderly cat may require a litter box on each level of your home, as its mobility may decrease with age. Be sure the box is big enough and deep enough for your cat; a box your kitten found acceptable may not be the right size for a grown cat.

WHERE IS A GOOD LOCATION FOR A LITTER BOX?

Cats, like people, want a clean place to eat and a clean place to eliminate waste. Do not place a litter box near

a cat's food or water. The litter box should be placed in a quiet, secluded area that is always accessible to the cat. A laundry room or bathroom is often a good location. Some people cut a pass-through in a closet door or utility room door to allow their cats access to a secluded area with a litter box.

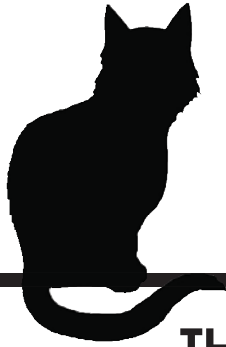
When you first bring your adopted cat home, show the cat the box. Pick the cat up and place it in the box. There is no need to move the cat's paws in a digging fashion in the box.

WHAT TYPE OF LITTER IS BEST?

Avoid scented litters. Cats have a very sensitive sense of smell and generally dislike any odor in their litter box.

Generally, cats prefer fine-grained, sand-like litter. Scoopable, clumping litter is often the ideal choice. Clumping litter lasts longer, requires changing of the entire box less often and greatly reduces odor. Scoop the clumps out once or twice a day.

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THE LITTER BOX continued

To eliminate odors, place clumps in a plastic bag, and tie the bag shut. Place the plastic bags in a diaper pail, trash can with a tight fitting lid or a medium-large sized tin with a tight fitting lid. Dispose of the contents of the pail, trash can or tin on trash day.

If you need to experiment to find a litter your cat likes, purchase an additional litter box, place the new litter in the second box and the regular litter in the original box and wait to see which your cat prefers.

HOW SHOULD I CLEAN THE LITTER BOX?

Clean the box weekly with warm water and soap. Avoid using bleach and ammonia products to clean the box because they leave a strong scent in the box that may cause the cat to avoid using the box.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CAT STOPS USING THE LITTER BOX?

Cats may stop using the litter box for any of the following reasons:

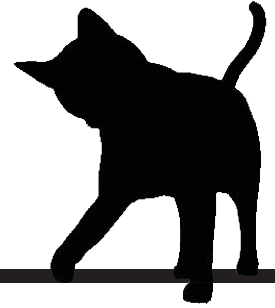
- The cat has a urinary infection or is constipated
- The cat cannot make it to the litter

box in time due to age or incontinence

- An unaltered male cat has come of age and is marking his territory
- An unspayed female cat is in heat
- The cat is stressed by a change in routine or environment
- The cat dislikes the type of litter in the box
- The cat can't find the litter box because it was moved
- The litter box is not clean or smells like deodorizers or chemicals
- The litter box is in a location that is too busy
- Another pet is preventing the cat from using the box
- There are not enough litter boxes for the number of pets in the home
- The cat had a negative experience near the litter box and is afraid

STEPS TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM

- Before doing anything else, take the cat to the veterinarian to make sure there is no medical problem.
- If you suspect stress is the cause, make your cat feel comfortable by allowing for extra play time and attention. Some pet stores carry plug-in scents that mimic cat pheromones that natu-



THE LITTER BOX continued

rally calm down cats during stressful periods.

- Look at the location from your cat's viewpoint, and make sure the box is in a place where your pet will feel safe and comfortable.
- If you have a covered litter box, try removing the lid.
- Switch to an unscented, low-dust litter. Get a new litter box, and clean it only with soap and water, not scented cleaners. Make sure the litter box is scooped on a daily basis.
- If your cat has associated the litter box with fear or pain, get a new litter box, change the type of litter used or move the litter box to a new location to remove the association for the cat.
- Thoroughly clean the area where the cat is inappropriately eliminating with an enzymatic cleaner, such as Nature's Miracle or Simple Solution. Place a new litter box near the location where the cat is eliminating.



HEALTH: UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION

Highly contagious, Upper Respiratory Infection, or URI, is very similar to the common cold in humans and has many of the same symptoms: sneezing, runny eyes and nose, reddened eyes, fever, decreased appetite and sometimes mouth ulcers. URI occurs frequently in cats that are adopted from shelters or purchased from pet stores or private catteries. It also appears in cats that have stayed at an animal hospital or boarding facility. This is mainly due to the closeness of the living quarters and the daily arrival of new cats, which may have the virus.

With proper veterinary care, most cats readily overcome URI and go on to lead a healthy life. However, it is important to note that URI can be quite serious, requiring extensive time and care on the part of the owner and possibly resulting in hospitalization of the cat and expensive veterinary fees. In a worst-case scenario, URI can be fatal.

TRANSMISSION

The reason URI is so contagious is that it is an airborne virus. Cats can contract URI through contact with other cats

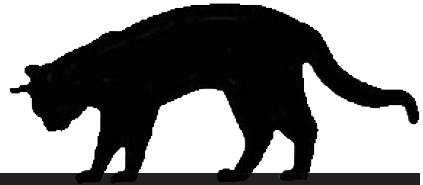
that either have the virus or are carriers of it. They can also catch URI through contact with inanimate objects housing the virus, such as litter boxes, clothing, grooming tools, food and water bowls. Also, while URI has no effect on humans, people can act as carriers for it after touching an infected cat.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for feline viral diseases. The shelter gives a distemper vaccination, as well as a booster shot, to all cats admitted to the shelter as a preventative. This vaccine can help build the cat's tolerance to URI. However, for the vaccine to be effective, it must be given prior to exposure to the virus, which cannot always be guaranteed. Therefore, even though your cat received a vaccine, it may be at risk of coming down with URI even after leaving the shelter.

VETERINARY CARE

If your veterinarian finds symptoms of URI, he or she will prescribe treatment that you should carefully follow. Antibiotics are generally given to prevent secondary infections, which can further



HEALTH: UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION continued

weaken your cat. URI usually just needs to run its course, which can be anywhere from seven to 14 days, depending on the animal and its health.

HOME CARE

If your cat has contracted URI, home care will be crucial to its recovery. Most importantly, this means following all of your veterinarian's instructions regarding nursing care and medication. Wiping the eyes and nose with a moist cloth will prevent discharge from accumulating; these secretions are highly concentrated with the virus. It is critical to make sure that your cat eats and drinks water. When a cat is congested, it cannot smell its food and will probably not be inclined to eat. Try making the food stronger smelling by adding tuna juice, tuna or chicken with broth. You can also try heating chicken, turkey or beef baby food and adding it to your cat's food.

FOR HOMES WITH MORE THAN ONE CAT

If you have another cat or cats in your home, you will want to reduce the chances of spreading the disease. Oth-

erwise, you may end up caring for two or more sick cats. You should keep the cats separated for five to 14 days and until your veterinarian gives the new cat a clean bill of health. This will mean isolating the sick cat in a room by itself with its own litter box and feeding dishes. Wash your hands after contact with the sick cat, and place a towel at the crack under the door to prohibit the cats from touching each others' paws there.



HEALTH: FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS

Feline Leukemia Virus, or FeL V, is responsible for causing leukemia (a blood cancer), tumors, anemia and immunosuppression in cats. After a cat is actively infected with the virus, it rarely lives longer than three years.

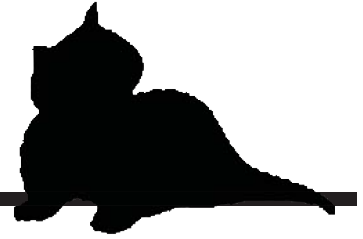
The virus is spread through the saliva and, to a lesser extent, through the urine and feces. It can also pass in the mother's milk. The disease is prevalent, especially among wild cats. Some studies have shown that as many as 30 percent of all stray cats will test positive for this contagious disease.

In the early stages of the disease, there may be no outward symptoms. Often, by the time the disease is diagnosed, there has already been exposure to other cats, and bonding with the family has occurred. For these reasons, it is recommended that all new cats to a household be treated for the virus. This is especially important in a multiple-cat household. It is bad enough when a newly adopted cat has the fatal disease. It becomes a tragedy when other household cats contract it.

It is recommended that all cats of questionable backgrounds be tested. It is far better to find out the day after adoption than to find out months later, after bonding has occurred, that your new cat has a fatal disease.

The test is a simple blood test that can be taken at the time of the adoption physical. Usually, results are available the same day. Pending a negative test result, the cat should be isolated from other household cats.

Cats that have exposure to other outside cats should be vaccinated against the disease. Primary vaccination consists of two inoculations given three weeks apart. Annual booster vaccinations are given thereafter.



HEALTH: PREGNANCY, BABIES & CATS

Adapted from articles by Mary Jo Mersol-Barg and Maryanne Kern, DVM

If you're pregnant or considering starting a family, you need to know some facts about raising a baby with a cat in the home. By following some basic guidelines and using common sense, you can help your cat and your baby enjoy a wonderful relationship.

TOXOPLASMOSIS

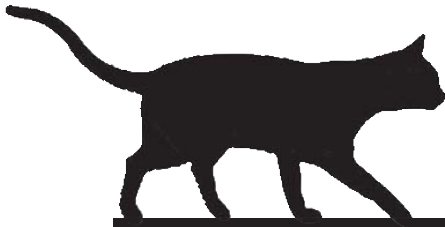
What's all the fuss about pregnant women who own cats? Why are so many expectant fathers forced to take sole responsibility for the litter box? The answer is the concern about the effects of toxoplasmosis on an unborn child. It's unfortunate that this concern sometimes develops into an irrational fear of the family cat when a member of the household is pregnant.

Toxoplasmosis is a parasitic disease caused by a single-cell organism. This tiny organism infects a wide range of mammals, including humans. In humans, the disease usually runs a mild course causing few, if any, symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they usually con-

sist of a variety of flu-like complaints. Although toxoplasmosis is not usually serious in adults, it can cause serious disease when the immune system is underdeveloped or impaired. Toxoplasmosis can also damage the unborn child severely – even though symptoms are mild or non-existent in the mother.

Toxoplasmosis can travel from animals to humans by the mouth through ingestion of the infective microscopic eggs. Many animals harbor the parasite that causes toxoplasmosis, but only cats shed the eggs in their feces. When a cat eats an infected bird or rodent, the parasite multiplies in the cat's intestine, and eggs are excreted in feces. The good news is that eggs are shed only for the 10 to 14 days following the first exposure, which usually occurs when the cat is young and first begins hunting. Unless the immune system of the cat is compromised later in life, shedding rarely recurs. As few as 1 percent of cats are shedding at any given time.

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HEALTH: PREGNANCY, BABIES & CATS continued

Approximately 20 percent of women of child-bearing age in the United States have positive blood tests for toxoplasma antibodies, which are proteins produced by the body to fight off foreign substances. Because these women have been exposed already, they are immune to the disease. There is no threat to their fetuses.

A cat that tests positive for toxoplasma antibodies probably has already shed eggs and is not likely to shed them again. Thus, the animal is not likely to pose a threat under usual circumstances.

If a previously non-infected woman acquires toxoplasma during pregnancy, there is a 20 to 50 percent chance the fetus will be infected.

Regardless of immune status of the person or the cat, appropriate preventative measures always should be taken to avoid infection with toxoplasma. Keep your cat free of infection by feeding it only well-cooked meat or commercial cat food. Make sure to keep the animal inside the house; do not allow it to hunt.

Proper prevention and control is by far the most effective way to avoid infection with toxoplasmosis. As for pregnant women, someone other than the expectant mother should clean the litter box on a daily basis. If she must change the litter, she should use disposable gloves and wash her hands immediately afterward.

DISPELLING MYTHS ABOUT CATS & BABIES

It is common for cats to be jealous of a new family member, such as a baby, who causes changes to routine and results in the family pet receiving less attention.

Despite common myths, though, new parents should not be overly concerned about cats attacking babies while they sleep or smothering babies while trying to take milk from their lips. However, there are some steps new parents can take to make a cat feel more comfortable about the new family member's arrival.

Remember, a spayed or neutered cat will be better able to relax and accept



HEALTH: PREGNANCY, BABIES & CATS continued

the new addition to the household. If you have not had your pet spayed or neutered, do so before baby arrives.

MAKE IT AN EASY TRANSITION

During pregnancy, allow your cat to sniff and inspect new items coming into the house for the baby. Once your cat realizes the items pose no threat, your cat will usually leave these items alone. If you present your baby's room and new items as forbidden, your cat probably will try to get into them.

When you bring baby home, continue to give your cat plenty of attention, and do not banish it from the rooms where you spend time with the baby. Because cats are extremely sensitive, they don't react well to rejection and may display negative behaviors to attract attention.

Your cat will likely be curious about the baby. Closely monitor their interaction to make sure the cats do not walk on the baby, unintentionally scratch the child, knock something over or urinate on the baby's things. This last behavior usually is an act of affection; by urinat-

ing on the baby's paraphernalia, the cat marks the baby and baby items as part of its territory. However, the behavior also can be an act of aggression or resentment.

You may want to buy a cat net, a mesh item that screens the entire top of the baby's crib, cradle or stroller. Make sure it is taut so the cat does not try to lie on top of it while the baby is inside.

Remember to regularly clip the cat's claws to prevent accidental scratches.

KEEP IT SEPARATE

There are two areas where it is important to keep baby and your cat separate. Those are the litter box and the food bowl. Be sure to keep the litter box in an area that is not accessible to your child. A covered litter box may help, too. Also be careful about where you place your cat's food dish. Eventually, your child will outgrow the desire to put everything into his or her mouth, but for a while, it's wise to keep litter boxes and food bowls out of reach.

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HEALTH: PREGNANCY, BABIES & CATS continued

TEACHING CHILDREN HOW TO INTERACT WITH YOUR CAT

Children often don't have the dexterity or ability to softly and gently handle a pet. When a young child inevitably grabs your cat's ears, paws or tail, gently remove the child's hand, then stroke the cat to show the child how to treat the cat. The gentle stroking also reassures the cat that no harm will come to it when the baby is near.

If you follow this example, your baby gradually will realize that your cat is not the same as his or her other toys and will model his or her behavior after yours. At the same time, your cat will realize that the baby is not a threat.

LIFELONG FRIENDS

By interacting with each other, cats and children reap many benefits. Children experience the comfort and warmth only a cat can bring during times of sadness or sickness. Cats profit from this relationship by acquiring new, smaller playmates who add many hours of petting and cuddling. Cats and children can share toys and discover all sorts of new games together, too.



HEALTH: ALLERGIES

Just because you have allergies doesn't mean you must part with your feline friend. If you're allergic to cats, chances are you're allergic to other things, too. Parting ways with your cat will solve just part of the problem.

While allergies can't be cured, they can be managed. Below are some steps you can take to cope with a cat allergy.

- See an allergist. Make your goal clear: You intend to keep your pet. Too often, the cat is the most obvious target and the doctor recommends removing the pet before looking for other possible irritants in the home. Insist on a thorough screening to reveal all of the allergens that bother you.
- Don't give up. Even if the tests show you're allergic to cats, don't be talked into giving up your cat immediately. Since allergic people are usually bothered by more than one thing, it's the total allergen level that causes problems. If you can remove the other allergens in your home, your symptoms may decrease.
- Consider allergy shots. Cat allergies are particularly responsive to these

treatments.

- Breathe clean air. Invest in a good air purifier with a HEPA filter. The air purifier can be installed in your home heating system or can run from a standard electrical outlet. Putting an air purifier in your bedroom and keeping the pets out will help.
- Groom the cat. Brushing your cat daily will reduce shedding.
- Give your cat a bath. Bathing cats in lukewarm tap or distilled water reduces the production of allergy-causing proteins found in cats' saliva and on their skin and coats.
- Feed them right. A high-quality diet that includes some natural fat can prevent excessive hair loss. Adding a little fat a few times a week reduces skin dryness and flaking.
- Beware of litter. Unscented clay litter is least irritating. Use a brand that produces little dust.
- Wash your hands after handling your cat.



HEALTH: POISONOUS PLANTS

Curious felines may try to nibble on or eat household plants. It's important to be aware of plants that are toxic to cats so that you can prevent your pet from becoming sick. If you must have these plants in the house, store them in areas where the cat does not have access. If your pet ingests any of these plants, call your veterinarian immediately. If possible, bring the plant with you to the veterinarian or animal hospital for identification.

Almond (pits)	Burning Bush	Cutleaf Philodendron	Four O'Clock
Aloe Vera	Buttercup	Cycads	Foxglove
Alocasia		Cyclamen	Fruit Salad Plant
Amaryllis	Cactus, Candelabra		
Apple (seeds)	Caladium	Daffodil	Geranium
Apple Leaf Croton	Calla Lily	Daphne	German Ivy
Apricot (pits)	Castor Bean	Datura	Giant Dumb Cane
Arrowgrass	Ceriman	Deadly Nightshade	Glacier Ivy
Asparagus Fern	Charming Dieffenbachia	Death Camas	Golden Chain
Autumn Crocus	Cherry (pits, seeds & wilting leaves)	Devil's Ivy	Gold Dieffenbachia
Avocado (fruit and pit)	Cherry, most wild varieties	Delphinium	Gold Dust Dracaena
Azalea	Cherry, ground	Decentrea	Golden Glow
	Cherry, Laurel	Dieffenbachia	Golden Pothos
Baby's Breath	Chinaberry	Dracaena Palm	Gopher Purge
Baneberry	Chinese Evergreen	Dragon Tree	
Bayonet	Christmas Rose	Dumb Cane	Hahn's Self-Branching Ivy
Beargrass	Chrysanthemum		Heartland Philodendron
Beech	Cineria	Easter Lily	Hellebore
Belladonna	Clematis	Eggplant	Hemlock, Poison
Bird of Paradise	Cordatum	Elaine	Hemlock, Water
Bittersweet	Coriaria	Elderberry	Henbane
Black-eyed Susan	Cornflower	Elephant Ear	Holly
Black Locust	Corn Plant	Emerald Feather	Honeysuckle
Bleeding Heart	Cornstalk Plant	English Ivy	Horsebeans
Bloodroot	Croton	Eucalyptus	Horsebrush
Bluebonnet	Corydalis	Euonymus	Horse Chestnuts
Box	Crocus, Autumn	Evergreen	Hurricane Plant
Boxwood	Crown of Thorns	Ferns	Hyacinth
Branching Ivy	Cuban Laurel	Fiddle-leaf fig	Hydrangea
Buckeyes		Florida Beauty	
Buddist Pine		Flax	



HEALTH: POISONOUS PLANTS continued

Indian Rubber Plant
Indian Tobacco
Iris
Iris Ivy

Jack in the Pulpit
Janet Craig
 Dracaena
Japanese Show Lily
Java Beans
Jessamine
Jerusalem Cherry
Jimson Weed
Jonquil
Jungle Trumpets

Kalanchoe

Lacy Tree
 Philodendron
Lantana
Larkspur
Laurel
Lily
Lily Spider
Lily of the Valley
Locoweed
Lupine

Madagascar Dragon
 Tree
Marble Queen
Marigold
Marijuana
Mescal Bean
Mexican Breadfruit
Miniature Croton
Mistletoe
Mock Orange
Monkshood

Moonseed
Morning Glory
Mother-in Law's
Tongue
Morning Glory
Mountain Laurel
Mushrooms

Narcissus
Needlepoint Ivy
Nephtis
Nightshade

Oleander
Onion
Oriental Lily

Peace Lily
Peach (pits and
 wilting leaves)
Pencil Cactus
Peony
Periwinkle
Philodendron
Pimpernel
Plumosa Fern
Poinciana
Poinsettia (low
 toxicity)
Poison Hemlock
Poison Ivy
Poison Oak
Pokeweed
Poppy
Potato
Pothos
Precatory Bean
Primrose
Privet, Common

Red Emerald
Red Princess
Red-Margined
 Dracaena
Rhododendron
Rhubarb
Ribbon Plant
Rosemary Pea
Rubber Plant

Saddle Leaf
 Philodendron
Sago Palm
Satin Pothos
Schefflera
Scotch Broom
Silver Pothos
Skunk Cabbage
Snowdrops
Snow on the
 Mountain
Spotted Dumb Cane
Staggerweed
Star of Bethlehem
String of Pearls
Striped Dracaena
Sweetheart Ivy
Sweetpea
Swiss Cheese plant

Tansy Mustard
Taro Vine
Tiger Lily
Tobacco
Tomato Plant (green
 fruit, stem and
 leaves)
Tree Philodendron
Tropic Snow
 Dieffenbachia

Tulip
Tung Tree

Virginia Creeper

Water Hemlock
Weeping Fig
Wild Call
Wisteria

Yews

*Source: Cat Fanciers'
Association*



BEHAVIORS: SCRATCHING

Scratching is a natural behavior of cats. Although some may do it less than others, every cat scratches.

Scratching is mostly for the purpose of grooming rather than nail sharpening. Cat nails grow in thin layers, and scratching helps cats to shed old sheaths from their front paws. Cats usually chew their back claws to remove the sheaths from rear nails.

Cats also release scents from their paws while scratching, allowing them to mark their territory and communicate with other pets.

Finally, cats may scratch to communicate frustration, tension or to relieve anxiety.

The trick to controlling scratching is to offer your cat an appealing scratching post so that your pet can practice its scratching behavior without damaging your rugs and furniture.

DECLAWING ISN'T THE ANSWER

Declawing is an operation in which the cat's toes are partially amputated to

remove the nails and related growth tissue. Although many cats recover well, some may begin to have complications and changes in behavior, including biting, aggression and litter box issues.

Even declawed cats have the need to try and will continue scratching motions all their lives. Some can even damage furniture! Most humane groups discourage declawing. By offering your cat a desirable, acceptable scratching location, you can control your pet's behavior and eliminate the desire for declawing.

Clipping your cat's nails regularly is the best alternative to declawing and will minimize damage from unwanted scratching. Cats whose nails have grown long tend to scratch more often. Ask your veterinarian to show you how to trim your cat's nails. Be sure to reward your cat with petting, praise and treats after clipping its nails.

AN IDEAL SCRATCHING POST

An ideal scratching post should be vertical and tall enough for an adult cat to stretch up on without reaching the



BEHAVIORS: SCRATCHING continued

top, sturdy enough to withstand the pull of a full-grown cat and covered with a bulky, heavy, textured woven fabric. Rustic cloths such as sisal (a kind of heavy-duty burlap) are excellent. Fresh catnip inside the cloth covering of a scratching post will also attract a cat.

Some cats prefer to scratch on a horizontal surface. One popular scratcher that is inexpensive features rows of corrugated cardboard tucked into a rectangular frame.

Place the post near your cat's favorite napping or eating spots. Cats particularly like to scratch after waking up or finishing a good meal. Larger apartments and houses will probably need more than one post.

Now that your cat has an attractive place where you want it to scratch, discourage the cat from scratching in the wrong places. Select furniture and upholstery that does not appeal to cats for scratching. Smooth wood, metal, glass and non-textured fabrics like velvet, wool and flat cotton are sensible surfaces that are less desirable to cats.

If necessary, employ some gentle discipline. When you catch your cat scratching inappropriately, clap your hands or use a squirt bottle to startle the cat. Direct your cat's attention to the scratching post, and praise your cat when it scratches in the right place.



BEHAVIORS: AGGRESSIVENESS

It is easy to read a cat's body language and see when a cat is upset. Often, cats snarl, growl or hiss, showing their teeth through a wide-open mouth. They flatten their ears backwards, and their pupils dilate. Understanding the reasons for the different types of feline aggression and learning to recognize the warning signs may help you prevent feline aggression.

Behaviorists often categorize aggression toward people according to the source of the aggression. This allows for a better understanding of the underlying causes to the cat's behavior, which, in turn, can hopefully lead to a better resolution. Following are five types of aggression that cats may exhibit.

FEAR-INDUCED AGGRESSION

When cats are frightened, their "flight-or-fight" response mechanism is activated. Most cats prefer to run away from danger, but if they feel cornered or unable to run away for any reason, they may attack. Even shy or timid cats will strike out if left with no way to escape.

Timid cats may be afraid of all sorts of imagined threats, even sudden sounds or movements. Your cat may also have experienced something traumatic in the past that makes it afraid of something that is difficult to determine.

Fear-induced aggression is also a cat's natural reaction to punishment, especially physical punishment. Cats do not learn from physical punishment. Instead of changing the misbehavior, the punishment is more likely to cause the cat to become afraid of you or react aggressively.

REDIRECTED AGGRESSION

Cats that are not able to retaliate against a source of aggravation may redirect their response to the nearest person, cat or other animal.

Your cat may sit by the window and suddenly notice a dog, raccoon or another cat. The cat becomes agitated, but because it is confined indoors, it cannot deter the perceived danger. The cat may hiss or lash out at a nearby animal or person, seemingly unprovoked.



BEHAVIORS: AGGRESSIVENESS continued

PAIN-INDUCED AGGRESSION

A cat in pain may become confused or defensive and try to attack nearby people or pets. We usually sympathize with our cat when it lashes out at the veterinarian for a painful procedure. Sometimes, it is more difficult to ascertain that pain is the cause of aggression. You may accidentally hurt a cat while picking it up or during a grooming session. Cats have very sensitive skin and may react to pain that we don't even realize we have caused.

ILLNESS-INDUCED AGGRESSION

Cats may become aggressive because of a medical problem. With any gradual or sudden onset of unprovoked aggressive, first consult your veterinarian and check for medical reasons. You know your cat best and you should note any changes in behavior as part of a regular health assessment.

PETTING AGGRESSION

Sometimes, a cat seems content being petted, yet moments later, the cat's tail begins to twitch and suddenly, the cat grabs your hand with its teeth and claws. Some cats become over-stimu-

lated and feel threatened when petted too long. Exactly how long is too long differs from cat to cat. If you live with such a sensitive feline, you will usually learn pretty quickly what it considers to be too long.

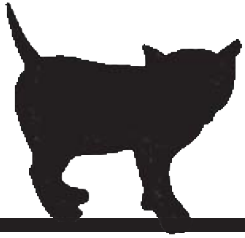
WHEN IT'S NOT AGGRESSION

Most cat owners get bites and scratches not from one of these types of aggressive behaviors but rather during playtime. A cat may get excited when playing with a toy or hunting for toy prey. It may feel the same, but this is different from true aggression. Some cats also show their affection for owners by nibbling softly on a person's hands or head butting an owner.

WHAT TO DO

- If your cat has attacked you and is holding you with its claws and teeth, resist the urge to struggle free, which will only ensure scratches and bites. Instead, keep very calm and do not move or try to pry the cat's mouth open or hit or yell at the cat. With your free hand, gently sooth the cat by softly stroking

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BEHAVIORS: AGGRESSIVENESS continued

the tops of its paws until it releases its grip, all the while speaking gently and calmly.

- After the cat has released you from its grip, stop petting or stroking it entirely. Let the cat sit where it is and try to carefully ease it away from you. It is best to then leave the cat alone for a cooling-off time.

- Be sure to spay and neuter your pets. Although unaltered males display territorial aggression toward other cats, this aggression can become redirected against people.

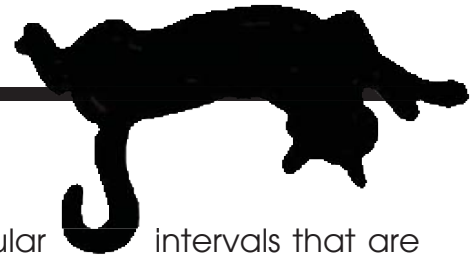
- Reduce stress. Stress may be the underlying cause to many behavioral problems, including aggression toward people. Almost any kind of aggression is likely to get worse when the cat is stressed from changes in routine or environment.

- Never punish the cat for aggressive behavior! Punishing the cat is likely to add to the stress and make the cat even more aggressive.

- Consult an expert. If you feel that things are getting out of control, consult a cat behavior expert. Your veterinarian or an animal behaviorist may recommend drug therapy as a means of

dealing with an aggressive cat, even when the problem is not caused by illness. This will usually complement a behavioral treatment program.

BEHAVIORS: SLEEP DISRUPTION



Cats are nocturnal. It is normal for them to be active at night. If you find this annoying, rather than punish your cat for following its natural activity schedule, train your cat to shift the active phase to earlier in the evening or later in the morning.

The first rule of treating this behavior problem is not to make matters worse. One reason your cat is acting this way is because you are allowing it to. If your cat is lonely or hungry, then play with it or feed it earlier in the evening. Be sure not to let your cat use your bed and bedroom as the playing field.

There are lots of ways to tire out your cat during the day and early evening so that you both can enjoy a restful sleep during the night. Tie a feather or piece of crumpled paper to a length of string and run around the house, dragging it behind. Most cats have a wonderful time rolling around inside a large, open paper bag or box sprinkled with catnip.

The more regular you make your cat's new routine, the more quickly your cat will adjust. Schedule feedings and play-

time at regular intervals that are appropriate for the schedule you wish your cat to keep.

If your cat is used to sleeping all day, wake your cat up for playtime and mealtime during the day. It may take 10 to 14 days to reset your cat's internal clock. If you give up too soon, you will have to start all over again.

After you have provided an enjoyable and acceptable outlet for your cat's stir crazy periods, it is time to teach the cat that bothering you by jumping on your face or meowing outside the bedroom door is not acceptable. Be sure to address your cat's needs before moving on to the discipline phase!

Each time your cat bothers you, give it a quick squirt with a water sprayer kept on the bedside table. Use only plain water in the bottle. After a couple of squirts, your cat will get the idea. If your cat is meowing outside the bedroom door, reach for the water sprayer, quietly get out of bed and slowly approach the door, then fling the door open, squirt the cat and then shut the door.



STIMULATING YOUR CAT

The feline by nature is inquisitive, social and playful, and when their lives become isolated, it can lead to inactivity, boredom and negative behaviors. For these reasons, playing with your cat is extremely important. Just 15 minutes a day can make a world of difference.

BALLS Cats find it very hard to resist a ball as it catches their eye, rolling or bouncing on the floor. Colorful balls intended for cats are made of such materials as plastic, rubber or sponge.

TOY MICE Toy mice allow cats to practice hunting skills. Some toy mice come with springs and other wind-up mechanisms to provide your cat with more action. Toy mice may also contain catnip, which draws your cat's attention.

WAND TOYS The most popular toys for cats are those that have a wand or stick with something dangling from the end, such as a string or a feather.

CATNIP Catnip is a plant that is known to inspire odd behavior in cats. Just being near catnip may cause a cat to become quite active and unusually play-

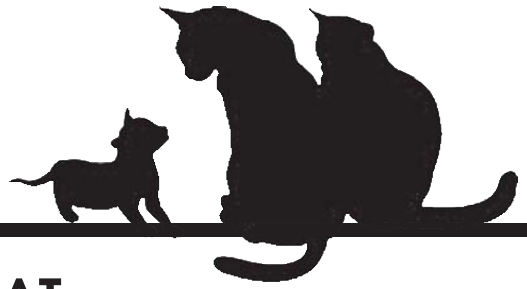
ful. It is completely harmless to cats.

LASER POINTERS The red dot of a laser pointer can keep a cat fascinated and active for a long time. The cat may chase the dot as if it is a bug or other prey.

REACH & SWAT TOYS Cats love to stick their paw inside something to try to get the object out, although they generally just spend a lot of time swatting at it. Balls that go around a track can keep a cat interested for a long time.

HOMEMADE TOYS Plastic milk jug caps, paper balls, drinking straws and cardboard boxes make great toys. It is important to check these toys to make sure they do not contain small parts that the cat might extract and swallow.

AVOIDING DANGERS Curious cats often try to play with household items, but owners should be mindful that some of these items pose a danger. Be careful to put away tempting items such as balls of thread, knitting wool and plastic bags. These items can be deadly if swallowed.



INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT

TO A HOME WITH CAT(S)

Cats that have been exposed to other cats while growing up may adjust more readily to a new housemate. The best way to avoid conflict between cats is to carefully prepare for the first encounter.

For the first few days, keep the new cat confined to one room. Provide fresh food, water and litter daily. Make frequent visits to spend time interacting with the new cat during its isolation. Give it time to adjust to this one location.

Meanwhile, your resident cat will sense traces of the intruder on your clothing and skin. The new pet's odor and sounds will alert your resident cat to its presence. Spend extra time with your resident cat, engaging in favorite activities to minimize tension.

Feeding tends to relieve an animal's feelings of anxiety and may help it adjust to the household changes. Place your resident cat's food dish near the door to the room where the new cat

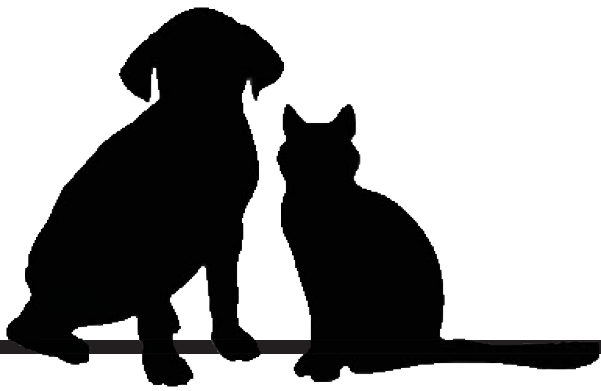
is kept confined. Gradually move the confined cat's food dish closer to the inside of the door. Feed them at about the same time so that they are separated only by the closed door.

You are ready to move on to the next step when neither cat exhibits growling, hissing or spitting when it senses the other is nearby.

Confine your resident cat, with its own food, water and litter box, to a favorite location. Your bedroom may be convenient; most resident cats feel comfortable there because it is associated so strongly with you. Allow your new cat to explore your home for brief periods. Accompany it to extend the comfort of your presence beyond the room where it had been isolated. Several times each day, allow the new pet out of confinement for longer and longer periods.

After one week, allow both cats to roam freely throughout your home for the first time. This should be planned to coincide with regular mealtimes.

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INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT continued

Follow the new cat so that you will be present when they first see each other. Some hesitation and hissing are to be expected. Feed the cats in each other's presence, placing their food dishes at a comfortable distance. Wait only a few minutes after they have eaten to confine the cats to their own separate quarters until the next scheduled mealtime. If either or both cats seem so disturbed that they do not eat in the other's presence, remove the food bowls and confine each to its own safe place. Try again when both cats are calm.

Allow the cats to spend progressively longer periods of time together after they have eaten each meal. Move their food dishes gradually closer to each other at successive meals.

Be patient. With time, most cats learn to accept others in the household.

TO A HOME WITH DOG(S)

Adapted from an article

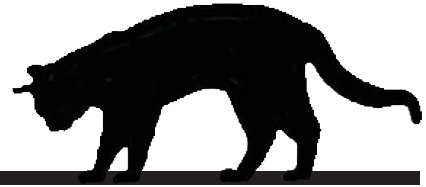
by Jacque Lynn Schultz, ASPCA

To make a successful inter-species introduction in the average house-

hold, one needs little more than a dog who understands a few rudimentary commands and a sturdy baby gate. A canine that has learned to respond to basics such as "leave it," "down" and "come" can most likely be controlled around a new indoor cat.

If the resident dog does not respond well to commands, a house leash and collar can give the caretaker control over the situation. When the dog rushes toward the cat, pull back on the leash. As the dog brakes and turns to look at you, utter the "sit" or "down" command. Make sure to praise the dog when it complies. If your dog shows the slightest interest in chasing the cat, firmly command "leave it" at your dog and praise the dog when it looks away from the cat.

The baby gate is crucial in providing the cat with a dog-free territory. A nervous feline can hop the gate, and a food bowl and litter box placed behind the gate will be untouched by the dog. Make sure you keep feeding stations separate. Countertops and wide window sills can provide out-of-reach dining spots for felines.



PREVENTING LOST CATS

There are steps every pet owner should take to prevent a pet from becoming lost. The first and most important step is to make sure all doors from your home remain secure and closed. Teach all family members the importance of being mindful of your pet when entering and exiting the home. Be sure not to prop doors open when carrying in groceries or other items. If you are having visitors over or home repair workers in your home, let them know about your pets. Better yet, enclose your pet in a safe room if visitors or workers will be coming and going frequently.

Make sure your pet is always wearing a breakaway collar outfitted with a tag that includes your name, home address and phone number. This will increase the chances of your pet returning safely.

Microchipping is another identification method that can help return lost pets to their owners. All animals adopted from Howard County Animal Control have a small microchip embedded between the animal's shoulder blades. The procedure is quick and painless for your pet. You register your contact informa-

tion with the microchip company. If your lost pet is brought to a veterinary hospital or animal shelter, it will be scanned to see if a chip has been implanted. The microchip company is then contacted and provides your contact information to the vet or shelter. It's important to keep your contact information current with the microchip company for this to be successful.

In the event that your pet gets lost:

- Contact local animal shelters and animal control agencies to file a lost pet report. Provide these agencies with an accurate description and a recent photograph of your pet.
- Walk or drive through your neighborhood several times each day. Ask neighbors, letter carriers and delivery people if they have seen your pet. Hand out a recent photograph of your pet and information on how you can be reached if your pet is found.
- Post notices at grocery stores, community centers, veterinary offices, traffic intersections, pet supply stores and other locations. Include your pet's sex, age, weight, breed, color and markings.



SURRENDERING YOUR PET: A LAST RESORT

When you adopt an animal, you accept your new pet into your home and make a commitment to care for your pet for its lifetime. Domesticated animals rely on their owners for shelter, food and water, veterinary care, love and attention.

Responsible pet owners may face challenges with their pets, whether there are behavior or health issues with the pet or life changes for the owner, including financial hardships, relocation, marriage, children or illness.

If undesirable behaviors are leading you to want to surrender your pet, you should first try corrective training and give your pet time to change. Animal Control, your veterinarian and behavior experts are resources available to you to work through any behavior issues your pet may exhibit. Time and patience are key and can allow your pet to continue living a happy life with your family.

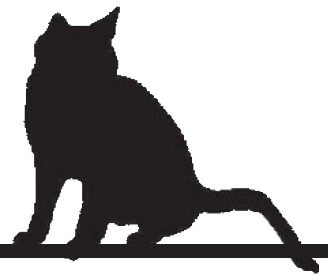
Don't assume that you must get rid of your pet if you become pregnant, have children or move. Just because life changes for you doesn't mean that

your pet should be left behind. With time, your pet can adapt to new family members and households.

If the reasons for surrendering your pet are insurmountable, don't abandon your pet or put it outside. It is illegal in Howard County to abandon your animal. Animals that are dropped off in the woods or by the roadside are often injured or killed by automobiles, or they may fall victim to other injury or to wild animals. Remember, they are domestic creatures that have never had to hunt, find shelter or survive on their own.

You may try to re-home your pet by finding another responsible person to take over its care.

A final option is to surrender the animal to Howard County Animal Control.



ANIMAL CONTROL LAWS

Below is a summary of selected requirements of the county's Animal Control laws.

VACCINATION

Pet owners must continuously maintain a rabies vaccination for dogs, cats and ferrets that are four months of age and older.

LICENSES

All dog and cat owners must purchase Howard County annual licenses for their pets. Each pet shall wear the license tag attached to a collar or harness. Pets properly tattooed, microchipped or ear tagged are exempt from the requirement of wearing the license tag, but the purchase of a license is still required.

LEASH LAW

A domesticated animal must be on a leash and under the control of a responsible person. This person must be capable of immediate and effective restraint when not on the owner's property. Owners are responsible for immediately removing pet defecation when off their own property.

FEMALE ANIMALS

A female domesticated animal in heat must be confined indoors or in a properly ventilated building or other secured outdoor enclosure. Spaying or neutering is not required but is highly recommended.

BARKING

Owners are responsible for preventing their dogs from barking to the extent that it disturbs neighbors.

ODOR PREVENTION

Pet owners must remove an accumulation of defecation from their property to prevent annoying odors.

STREET DISTURBANCE

Owners must prevent their pets from disturbing garbage placed for disposal or chasing vehicles.

APPROPRIATE CARE

Animals must be provided with proper drink, ventilation, shelter, shade, protection from the elements, sanitary conditions, veterinary care and nutritious food in sufficient quantity.

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ANIMAL CONTROL LAWS continued

FENCING

Fencing must be properly maintained.

WILD/EXOTIC ANIMALS

Wild or exotic animals are not permitted as pets. Included in this category are the offspring of domesticated animals bred with a wild or exotic animal.

THREATENING BEHAVIOR

Domesticated animals must not be permitted to threaten the safety or welfare of other domesticated animals or people. Domesticated animals are considered to be exhibiting threatening behavior when they endanger the life or health of another domesticated animal or person, attack a domesticated animal or person or otherwise molest and interfere with a person's freedom of movement in a public place.

ANIMAL TRAPS

Humane animal traps must be properly used and checked frequently throughout the day.

INTENTIONAL INJURY OR ABANDONMENT

A person may not poison or abandon

a domesticated animal and may not cruelly kill, deliberately injure or torment any animal.

FIGHTING

Encouraging animals to fight, raising animals for fighting or participating in animal fights is not permitted.

INJURING AN ANIMAL WHILE DRIVING

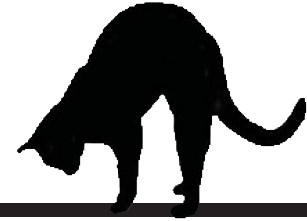
A person who injures or kills a domestic animal while driving must stop, if safety permits, and render assistance as is practical. The driver should notify Animal Control immediately.

ANIMAL CONTROL DUTIES

No person may interfere with an Animal Control employee in the performance of his/her duties.

VIOLATORS

Violators of the Animal Control Laws may be issued civil citations with monetary penalties of \$25 to \$500. Criminal penalties can include up to three years in prison and a \$5,000 fine, pet impoundment and/or mandatory appearances before the Animal Matters Hearing Board.



ANIMAL CONTROL LAWS continued

THE AFFIDAVIT PROCEDURE

A citizen who has personally observed a violation of any provision of the Howard County Animal Laws may wish to file an affidavit. An affidavit is a sworn statement that a violation has been witnessed. An affidavit may not be filed anonymously. An affidavit form may be obtained from Animal Control. After the form is completed by the witness, also known as the complainant, it should be returned to the Animal Control Division for processing.

Once the affidavit is filed, the defendant is, in most circumstances, assessed an appropriate monetary penalty through issuance of a civil citation. The affidavit accompanies the issued citation and must identify the complainant's name, address and telephone number. Upon request, phone numbers may be withheld from the violator.

THE APPEAL PROCESS

The recipient of a citation issued by an Animal Control representative as a result of an affidavit may elect to appeal the citation. The recipient, also known as the appellant, must contact the Animal

Control Division in writing within 15 days after the citation is issued indicating the intent to appeal. The Animal Control Division then schedules a hearing before the Animal Matters Hearing Board.

THE ANIMAL MATTERS HEARING BOARD

The Animal Matters Hearing Board is comprised of seven county residents appointed by the county executive and confirmed by the County Council.

The AMHB meets to hear cases involving alleged violations of the Howard County Animal Control laws. Once cases are heard, board members render a decision to uphold, modify or reverse an imposed penalty.

The board may also recommend or order measures to abate further problems or complaints.

The AMHB notifies the appellant of its decision 30 days after a hearing. Any complainant or appellant who is aggrieved by the decision of the AMHB may request in writing, within 30 days, a hearing before the Howard County Board of Appeals.