



Island Cats Mews

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My Cat is Looney: Cat Behavior 101

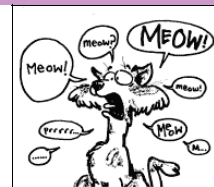


Ever found yourself wondering “Is my cat crazy?!” It can sure feel that way sometimes. Generally, the behaviors cats exhibit are normal, but may be difficult to live with or not make sense to us humans. Some behaviors we perceive as “problems” may be perfectly natural to a cat, or may be due to an unrecognized environmental stressor or health problem.

A mostly non-verbal species, cats attempt to get their messages across to us with their body language and actions. Sadly, we humans often misunderstand the message. So what are we supposed to do? To start, cats wish we humans would “respect the cat” by gaining an understanding of what’s normal and do a better job of learning the silent language of their ears, eyes, tails, and posture. We must understand, recognize, and respect their natural biology and social structure -- perhaps even change our own behavior -- because “When the cat ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy!” (cont. pg 2)

Hyper Cat or Hyperthyroid?

Feline hyperthyroidism is a very common middle age or older cat malady: One in 300 cats becomes hyperthyroid, with an average age of 13 at diagnosis. It is often overlooked because cats tend to have great appetite and activity levels. What’s the classic hyperthyroid cat look like? What we hear most often: “My cat eats all the time. I don’t know why he’s losing weight,” “My cat wakes me up all night long!” or “My cat vomits all the time but otherwise seems fine.” Symptoms can include increased vocalization, voice change, increased appetite, weight loss, vomiting, and increased or decreased activity. When a cat produces too much thyroid hormone, its metabolic rate soars to the point where it can burn off more than half of its body weight. If left unchecked, serious cardiac and liver problems develop, (cont. pg 2)



Bickie Baby

On Friday, October 24th, we lost our beautiful Biscuit. She went into irreversible heart failure and at 5:15 p.m. we said a tearful-goodbye to our beloved Bickie. She was twelve years old and had a history of asthma compounded with heart issues. Biscuit spent all twelve of her years with us here at Island Cats and she will be greatly missed. Despite her sassy nature, she loved all of the clients and staff of Island Cats. We thank you for your love and attention for our special girl all of these years.

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The CATalyst Council

CATalyst is a national initiative to champion the cat in light of troubling recent statistics released by the American Veterinary Medical Association that show an increase in the cat population coupled with a decline in veterinary visits for cats. At the CATalyst Summit, key influentials from more than 20 leading organizations and companies came together to discuss how to address some of the following statistics regarding health care, or lack thereof for cats:

- Nearly half (49.2%) of all cat owners consider their cat to be a family member
- The number of owned cats has increased 38% since 1996.
- The current domestic cat population in the U.S. was 81.7 million at the end of 2006, almost 10 million more than dogs.
- However, overall veterinary visits for cats have decreased almost 11% since 2001.
- In 2006, 36% of cats did *not* visit the veterinarian, compared to 17% of dogs. (cont. pg 2)



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Hyperthyroid (cont. from pg.1)

and the cat can die. Because of the seriousness of the disease, it is now considered good practice to screen cats over 8 years old. Many medical problems in older cats (and several inappropriate behaviors) can be attributed to this disease. The treatment of hyperthyroidism is one of the bright spots of feline geriatric medicine. There are two very effective treatments. One-time radioactive iodine therapy is a popular method since it has a cure rate of 90-95%, however not all cats are good candidates. The second option is a medication that binds the extra thyroid hormone. It involves daily pills and regular blood rechecks. It is often a good alternative for cats who are not candidates for iodine therapy, or for stabilizing a cat prior to therapy. Make sure your older cat is screened at his or her next annual exam. Call Island Cats right away if your cat is currently experiencing any of these symptoms.

Looney Cat...? (continued from pg. 1)

Historically, a vast number of resources have been available for dogs. Scan a typical pet store, and note which aisle has the bigger selection of books, toys, and rhinestone water bowls. The gap in availability of cat resources may imply cats need less understanding, environmental enrichment, and appropriate exercise than dogs. Cats would tell us “Not so!” Cats have different social structures, but they are not asocial.

Sadly, more cats in our country are euthanized or relinquished for behavior issues than any other issue. The doctors and staff at Island Cats Veterinary Hospital have a special interest in feline behavior, and educating owners about cat behavior is one our most important jobs. We would be happy to discuss feline behavior with you in an appointment (please let us know when scheduling so we can reserve enough time – some issues are complicated). We can help owners prevent problems through an understanding of proper cat socialization, appropriate environmental enrichment, and address any emerging problem behaviors. Occasionally, we refer a cat and it’s owner to a boarded veterinary behaviorist, a veterinarian who has completed additional residency training in animal behavior.



Another favorite resource we like to share is author and cat behaviorist Pam Johnson-Bennett. Pam’s books are informative, accurate, fun to read, and address the full range of cat behaviors. She also explains and offers suggestions to help prevent and remedy feline behaviors humans find objectionable. You can find her online as founder of Cat Behavior Associates or purchase her books at any bookstore or at Island Cats.

Additional resources that are making strides in offering behavioral information via the internet include Animal Behavior Associates (ABA) and The Ohio State’s Indoor Cat Initiative. ABA has two helpful videos: [Helping Cats Coexist](#) and [Helping Kitty Be Good](#) available online. For a bit of fun and to learn more about your cat’s behavior health, take a cat behavior quiz at:

www.animalbehaviorassociates.com/quiz_cat.htm

Related links: vet.ohio-state.edu/indoorcat.htm; catbehaviorassociates.com

...Catalyst Council (continued from pg. 1)



So why are less cats visiting the doctor for their annual physicals? In addition to a gap in community education, cats tend to be neophobic (afraid of anything unfamiliar), so it’s a chore to get them into their carriers, they yowl in the car on the way, and they might panic during their exam. Many people feel that preventive veterinary care is more stressful than the perceived benefit. It’s the mission of the CATalyst Council to bring together companies, organizations and individuals to create a broad-based initiative to raise the standard of care for all cats. Dr. Jane Brunt, CATalyst Summit chair and past-president of the American Association of Feline Practitioners said “I am pleased to continue forward with this initiative that is so important to the lives of cats. I believe that by working together, we can all make a difference. It truly is all about the cat.” Cats are being left undiagnosed and untreated for illness, disease, pain and discomfort. Robert Rohde, president of the Dumb Friends League and vice chair of CATalyst Council put forth, “The statistics regarding feline health can’t be ignored, and it is clearly time for allied animal health and welfare organizations to come together for this cause. Our mission is to improve health care for our feline companions, encourage responsible pet ownership, enhance the stature of cats, and enrich lives.” For more information, visit: www.catalystsummit.org