

Ask the Vet



Cecilia Ho, DVM

Dr. Ho is a graduate of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University. She decided to specialize in feline medicine two years into private practice as she found feline medicine to be more challenging and rewarding. Dr. Ho opened Cat Care Hospital in 2003 in the Sedgefield area and welcomes new patients.

Relieving Feline Stress

Two of my four cats are constantly fighting and one of the remaining two cats is urinating inappropriately. Could stress cause these behaviors and if so, how can I fix it?

Stress can play a large role in the cause for these behaviors. Firstly, make sure your cats are examined by a veterinarian to ensure that there are no medical reasons for these behaviors. If there are none and stress seems to be a contributing factor, there are several things that can be done to achieve a happier household. Keep in mind that modern living has led many owners to keep their cats indoors, thereby forcing some cats to live in close proximity to each other. Tension arises when there is competition for personal space, access to food, shelter/protected area to sleep and rest, the toilet/litter box and affection from owners.

One of the simplest things that you can do is to use a Feliway plug-in diffuser. This is a product that releases a pheromone which helps calm cats. It is also available in a spray bottle and as wipes. One diffuser will cover 650 sq. ft and it is usually placed in an area where the stressed cats spend most of their time. Humans are usually unable to catch the scent though some sensitive individuals may detect a slight scent. The pheromone that is released will help calm most cats without sedating them. There are several different brands available at pet stores but Feliway is the only brand that is available through veterinarians.

You may also try several naturally-derived anti-anxiety products. These are products that are formulated with natural ingredients and do not contain any anti-anxiety medications. Two of the most commonly used products are Anxitane and Feline Composure. Anxitane comes as a chewable tablet that is readily accepted by cats and Feline Composure comes in the form of a treat. These products do not act as sedatives but instead help to calm cats naturally. Each cat may respond in varying degrees and it is very important that you discuss any dosing changes with your veterinarian before doing so.

If you have a large number of cats or are having difficulty getting your cat to take either the Anxitane or the Feline Composure treat, you may consider feeding the Calm diet from the Royal Canin food company. This diet is formulated with a protein derived from milk, the amino acid L-tryptophan (the famous sleep-inducing protein after a Thanksgiving meal) and Vitamin B3. All of these ingredients have been shown to have relaxing and anti-anxiety effects. The diet appears to be readily accepted and is designed for cats and small dogs. Naturally, you should discuss any dietary changes with your veterinarian before doing so especially if your cat has strict dietary requirements for certain medical conditions.

Finally you may want to consider environmental enrichment techniques. These include simple things that you can do for your cats that will help make their days more stimulating and interesting. A good source for a list of these things can be found from the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) website. You may also consider building an outdoor enclosure so your cats can safely be outside. There are several companies that provide different styles of outdoor enclosures. One of these is the Purrfect Fence company and another is Catio Showcase (their website is CatioShowcase.com).

Hopefully, by formulating a plan with your veterinarian that may include some or all of the recommendations listed above, you will once again achieve peace and harmony among the cats in your household.

CAT CARE HOSPITAL

Cat Friendly - Dog Free



- Needle-Free Vaccinations
- Dentistry
- Behavioral Consultations

- Laser Therapy for Pain

November is Diabetes Month.
Concerned owners may drop off their cats for diabetes testing.

Monday-Friday 7:30am - 6pm
Saturday 8:00am - 12pm, Sunday Closed
Daily drop-off appointments available.

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**5002-E High Point Rd., Hunt Village
Greensboro 27407**

336.235.0770

