



Dealing With “Cattitude”

By Brenda F. Barnette, CEO

Cats are often described as independent animals who are known for walking through the eye of chaos without even twitching a whisker of concern. But as hard as they might try, even cats are susceptible to the stresses and anxieties that are all part of our faster-than-fast everyday life.

No two cats are alike and they respond differently to potential stress situations such as seeing you leave for work each morning, visiting the veterinarian, traveling or moving to a new residence. What you might consider even a very minor change could be very upsetting to your favorite feline’s world.

But a stressed or bored cat will get her message across very clearly with Cattitude. When you’re ready to leave for work, some cats will run to the door, crying, climbing the wall and begging you to stay. Others will deliberately begin leaving you messages “outside” their litter box. Cats may become reluctant to allow you to pet them, when they are normally friendly. They can begin to scratch or bite you or start to scratch your furniture. Cats can even stop grooming, while others will begin to pull out patches of fur. If your cat starts continually doing anything out of the ordinary, a trip to your veterinarian is suggested.

The best plan is to prevent problems before they start. Here are some stress and boredom relief tips:

- Make sure your cat has two 15-minute aerobic workouts – once in the morning and once in the evening. You can simply pull a toy on a string to exercise your cat while relaxing with your coffee or sitting in your favorite chair.
- Change your pattern of departure for work in the morning: leave from a different door, don’t rattle your keys, and don’t do a long, mournful “Good Bye”. Make your cat a special departure plate of her favorite treats as a distraction. Leave while she is eating. Be sure to pick up this plate when you come home.
- Stimulate his mind with toys that have moving parts and challenges while you’re gone. Track-balls, crinkle balls, or balls that contain a cat treat inside will require them to work at releasing the treat. Even an old gift box with some holes and a few foam balls trapped inside can be fun, inexpensive and relieve boredom.
- Leave the TV or radio on so she can hear human voices in the house. You might find she soon has her favorite weekly animal programs.

- Add a carpeted cat tree to your house décor – cats love to sit up high and watch the world go by. Or just place a chair near a busy window so your cat can watch the birds, squirrels and folks in the neighborhood.
- Consider getting a second cat. Most cats like company and will entertain each other during the day taking the pressure off you.

Make your home cat-friendly. Have lots of places to curl up on blankets, safe warm spots to sit and lots of things to do. Use your patience, understanding and creativity to deal with Cattitude. Never scold a cat for something wrong after the fact. Be proactive in diverting your cat's attention and refocusing his energy. Your cat will reward you with a lifetime of companionship, fun and unwavering