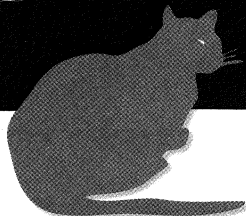




Cat Watch

Expert information on medicine, behavior and health from a world leader in veterinary medicine



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New guidelines on managing pain stress an integrated approach.

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A study shows that cats respond more quickly to music made for them.

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Exposure to *leptospira* can occur from infected urine in a fenced backyard.

Ask Elizabeth 8

Vestibular syndrome causes her to sway and constantly fall.

IN THE NEWS ...

Study Seeks to Develop Nonsurgical Sterilization

Researchers have struggled for years to develop a nonsurgical way to sterilize dogs and cats. Now the Gary Michelson Foundation has awarded a Harvard professor of bioengineering a \$700,000 grant to develop a vaccine to sterilize animals by disrupting gonadotropin, a hormone that controls reproduction.

David Mooney, Ph.D., hopes to extend his team's work in implantable, injectable vaccines that activate the immune system to fight cancer and infectious disease to develop a one-time contraceptive vaccine.

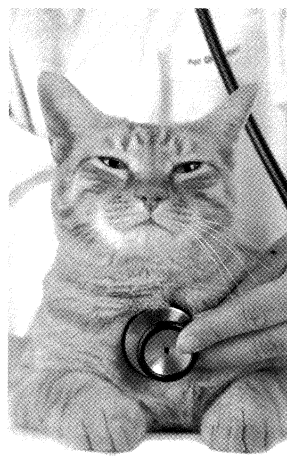
At Cornell, S.H. Cheong, DVM, Ph.D., a specialist in theriogenology (reproduction), says the possibility of avoiding surgery is

Why Cats Hate Veterinary Visits

They fear the unfamiliar — the noise and smells — but these seven easy steps can help ease their anxiety

More than half of cat owners — 58 percent — report that their cat hates going to the veterinarian, according to a study by Bayer Veterinary Care. They hide, hiss and howl for one simple reason: They're afraid. Through no fault of their own, cats' native instinct to stay safe by avoiding the unfamiliar doesn't serve them in the crate, the car and the clinic.

"Cats may be unfamiliar with loud noises, such as barking dogs or vocalizing



Many clinics practice gentle handling of feline patients.

cats, strange odors in the air and on the floor of the clinic, and that translates into fear," says Leni K. Kaplan, MS, DVM, a lecturer in the Community Practice Service at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "Cats are also routine-oriented, and going to the vet, which most likely involves traveling in a car, is not part of their regular routine."

Missing Checkups.

Owners aren't immune to stress either. Thirty-eight

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A DNA Test Helps Diagnose Anemia

It identifies bacteria among the many causes, including injuries, chronic diseases and bone marrow problems

Cats suffer kidney disease more often than many other species, including dogs and humans. Almost all geriatric cats have some kidney damage. Because the kidneys produce a hormone that stimulates red blood cell

ever, advances in veterinary medicine are providing hope.

A Blood Sample Clue. One breakthrough in the diagnosis of the cause of anemia is the

VISITS... (continued from cover)

percent in the Bayer study say that they become stressed just thinking about taking their cat to the clinic. Many avoid veterinary visits, resulting in 52 percent forgoing annual check-ups for their cats.

"Sometimes I think the owners are more apprehensive about the visit than the pets — understandably so," Dr. Kaplan says. "Their cats are their family members and owners perceive that their pets are stressed."

In some cases, cats may be wary of vet visits because they had negative experiences previously, such as rough restraints and injections. You can reduce your cat's anxiety, however, with this expert advice:

1) Be positive. "Cats can sense our anxiety or frustrations, which may cause them to become fearful or anxious," according to "Getting Your Cat to the Veterinarian," a brochure from the American Association of Feline Practitioners.

"Many owners are concerned about the veterinary visit as well. Perhaps they worry about controlling the pet or that something painful will happen

or there is a serious medical problem," said Debra Horwitz, DVM, ACVB, of Veterinary Behavior Consultations in St. Louis, Mo. "Either way, their unease may be transmitted to their pet, increasing pet anxiety as well. Remember, it is not necessarily problematic to be afraid of something new, especially if you then learn it can be a pleasant experience."

2) Train your cat to accept touching. Begin at an early age by gently handling his head, feet and face, and using food as a reward. When the veterinary staff does the same, your cat won't be so nervous. If he shows signs of distress or irritation when touched in certain areas, avoid those areas, and tell the veterinary staff so they can work at your cat's comfort level.

3) Accustom him to a crate. Cats are usually cued about an impending vet visit when you pull out the cat carrier. Training him to accept the carrier



Positive reinforcement can train cats to use the carrier. Put treats inside, and, when your cat enters, use a consistent word so that he associates the word with the act.

is easier than you may think, says Ilona Rodan, DVM, ABVP (feline), at Cat Care Clinic and Feline Consultations in Madison, Wis. She was the co-chair of the committee of the American Association of Feline Practitioners that developed "Feline-Friendly Handling Guidelines" for veterinarians, among other goals to reinforce "the veterinarian-client-cat bond, trust and confidence, and thus better lifelong medical care for the cat."

"Positive reinforcement works very well in cats, and enticing them and rewarding them with what they love when they are close to or walk into the carrier works very well," Dr. Rodan says. "Remember, though, it needs to seem like it is their choice."

Start by placing the carrier in a permanent and familiar place, such as a family room. Put treats or toys on the floor near the carrier and gradually move them closer. Reward your cat if he approaches the carrier. Ignore him if he doesn't and try again the next day.

Put treats inside the carrier, and when your cat goes inside, use a consistent word so that he associates the word with the act, Dr. Rodan says. "It could be 'in,' 'carrier' or anything you

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If a crowd of owners and dogs in the waiting room unnerves your cat, book the first appointment of the day and ask to be taken directly into the exam room.

LEPTOSPIROSIS ... (cont. from page 3)

- ◆ Do not allow your cat or other pet in your household to drink from puddles, lakes or other water sources that may be contaminated. In a multi-pet household, a dog returning from a hike can have the bacteria on his paws and can pass it on to an indoor-only cat.
- ◆ Work with a pet-friendly pest control company to reduce the chance of mice, rats or other rodents on your property. Your cat may develop this disease if he comes into contact with an infected rodent.
- ◆ Always wash your hands in warm, soapy water after cleaning up a pet mess or the litter box.
- ◆ Clean and dry food and water bowls daily.
- ◆ Avoid picking up or handling stray cats you encounter outdoors. ❖

PEOPLE WHO ARE AT SPECIAL RISK

Cases of leptospirosis have increased worldwide since the 1980s in people and animals, with outbreaks generally occurring in periods of wet as well as hot, humid weather, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Most cases develop during the fall.

People who work outside or with animals, such as farmers, sewer workers, slaughterhouse workers and veterinarians, are more at risk for this disease.

In people, this bacterial disease can occur through contact with urine from infected animals or contact with contaminated water, soil or food. While some infected people may show no symptoms, leptospirosis can cause:

- ◆ Elevated fever
- ◆ Headaches
- ◆ Chills and muscle aches
- ◆ Abdominal pain and diarrhea
- ◆ Vomiting
- ◆ Rashes

In extreme cases, a person may suffer meningitis or kidney or liver failure if the disease is untreated. Antibiotics, such as penicillin or doxycycline, are used to treat this infection.

VISITS... (cont. from page 4)

choose as long as it is said calmly and positively. Some cats will be trained to the carrier in a few hours and some in a few weeks."

As you train your cat, the guidelines on vet visits say, "Often, you will first see that treats are removed from the carrier during the night," adding that, "Adding bedding or clothing with your scent to the carrier can help your cat feel more secure."

4) Practice car rides. Some cats are wary of cars because they develop motion sickness. If necessary, your cat's veterinarian can prescribe medication to prevent it. To accustom him to the car, put him in his crate and briefly drive around the block. Praise and treat afterward. You can move on to longer rides as your cat becomes more at ease.

5) Visit a cats-only clinic. They're extremely effective in curbing anxiety in their patients, Dr. Kaplan says. "These hospitals are quieter and implement low-stress tactics to help calm their patients, including having a

team of staff and doctors who are very good at working with cats using low-stress restraint techniques."

6) Try calming aids. Cat-appeasing pheromones are available in a variety of applications. "Using Feliway prior to a visit is helpful," Dr. Kaplan says. "Feliway diffusers can be used in the house a few days prior to the veterinary visit. Wiping the carrier down with a Feliway wipe or spraying the carrier and blanket with Feliway about 30 minutes before travel will also have calming effects on your cat."

An over-the-counter product called Zylkene is intended to relax cats. It's formulated with casein, a lactose-free protein in milk. "Research suggests that it does improve stress and anxiety in a proportion of patients," Dr. Kaplan says.

7) Call ahead. If you have any reservations about taking your cat to the clinic, call ahead of time to discuss your concerns so the staff can prepare accordingly. "If we have a cat

who is very stressed, for example, we will make that pet a first appointment when no other pets are expected to be at the clinic in order to minimize the stress for the owner and pet," Dr. Kaplan says. "We can also escort them directly into an exam room instead of having them in waiting room."

"Employing these simple steps can make cat veterinary visits relaxed and happy for everyone — and promotes longer, healthier lives," Dr. Kaplan says. "It is such a great feeling when an appointment finishes and the owner is surprised but happy that everything went so well." ❖

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the American Association of Feline Practitioners at www.catvets.com/guidelines for its brochure on "Getting Your Cat to the Veterinarian."