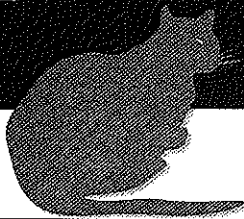




Cat Watch

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



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A study suggests that cats lack the taste receptor gene for bitterness.

Their Scratching Preference 2

Could pheromones — the scent signals from another cat — attract them?

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They may spark our joyous laughter, but do our cats really enjoy them?

Ask Elizabeth 8

Causes of lameness in an aging cat can range from sprains to osteoarthritis.

IN THE NEWS ...

Your 8-year-old Cat?

He's 48 in Human Years

The American Association of Feline Practitioners continues to campaign for regular veterinary checkups as the key to happy, healthy feline lives. Cats' rapid rate of aging is one compelling reason.

They reach the equivalent of approximately 15 human years in their first year and 24 human years when they reach 2 years of age, the association says. "Each year thereafter, they age approximately four 'cat years' for every calendar year."

The message is clear:

"Veterinary care is crucial because a lot can happen in four years," the group says. "Veterinarians are trained to detect many changes or abnormalities that could be overlooked and to detect many problems before they advance or become more difficult to treat."

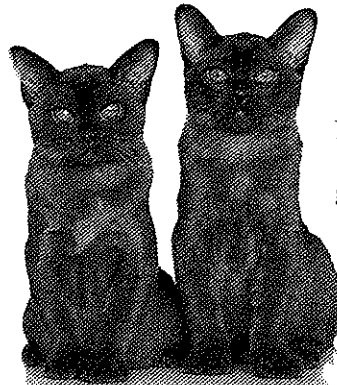
For instance, while periodontal disease is the most common disease in cats 3 years of age and older, most affected cats still eat without a noticeable change in appetite. ♦

Is Your Cat Squinting and 'Head Shy'?

These could be subtle signs of glaucoma that require immediate veterinary treatment to avoid loss of vision

If your cat squints or his eyes are increasingly tearing, take a closer look. Does he have a red eye with a cloudy blue tint to the surface and a dilated pupil? These could be signs of glaucoma that require immediate treatment to avoid significant or complete loss of vision. Because of the subtle nature of the symptoms, some cats don't have a veterinary examination until substantial damage has occurred.

The challenge for owners is early recognition of symptoms. "Sometimes the signs of



Burmese are prone to primary glaucoma.

glaucoma can be very vague, such as the cat sleeping more or acting a little head shy when you go to pet him on the top of the head," says ophthalmologist Kenneth Pierce, DVM, MS, ACVO, at Cornell University Veterinary Specialists in Stamford, Conn.

Like a Headache. Pain can cause a cat to be wary of petting. "I typically tell owners the pain associated with glaucoma is like hav-

ing a constant headache," Dr. Pierce says. "You can still function, but your head

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'Living Fully to the Last Moment'

At-home hospice care is a commitment but can provide relief from symptoms and pain, and extra time together

Whether your cat is suffering from disease or the effects of extreme old age, a time may come when medical treatment can no longer help. In the past, that might have meant euthanizing your cat.

Today, however, veterinarians increasingly suggest hospice care as an option. Some clinics offer house calls with staff members providing hospice services, while in some cases owners decide to provide care at home under veterinary supervision.

Natural Process. "Hospice is a philosophy of care that accepts dying as a

natural process and embraces quality over quantity of life," says Katherine Goldberg, DVM, a lecturer on the topic at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine and founder of Whole Animal Veterinary Geriatrics & Hospice Services. "Hospice prioritizes living fully until the last moment of life."

Hospice focuses on pain and symptom relief, communication and help navigating the healthcare system, Dr. Goldberg says. "In both veterinary and human palliative medicine, we view the family as the unit of care, not solely the patient."

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