



Scratching Post

From the Kentwood Cat Clinic

Fall 2008

The Flip Side—Topics in Alternative Medicine Environmental Enrichment By Maria Berger, DVM

Environmental enrichment is a term that means to make the living space of a pet or non-domestic animal as stimulating as possible. For years the concept that animals might get bored in captivity was laughed at, and it was routine to keep zoo animals in bare cages with nothing to entertain them. Thankfully, we live in a more enlightened age. It is now recognized that mental and physical exercise is an important part of keeping all animals healthy and happy.

In the case of our pet felines, environmental enrichment can be used to help keep them mentally sharp, increase their level of daily exercise, and help to transition them from being outside cats to inside cats. Remember, a cat that is involved with his/her environment is less likely to be destructive or to spend time finding other ways to get into trouble! In my mind, I divide this concept into three sections: toys, sensory stimuli and mental puzzle games.

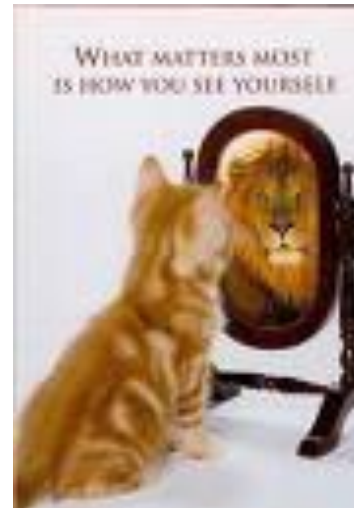
The word “toy” evokes all sorts of images of children playing, but it is important that everybody sets aside time for play. Toys for cats are not just limited to catnip mice. Floor to ceiling scratching and climbing posts are awesome toys for cats as they encourage climbing in a good way. Carpet and rope coverings provide interesting textures. Tunnels can be created out of cardboard and pipe pieces, while feline walkways can be set up around ceiling tops. Human-feline interactive toys, including feathers and fluffy stuff on the end of a stick, and self propelled mice, help to foster the human-feline bond. Remember, a toy sitting there on the floor is boring, but a toy that you are playing with along with your cat is loads more fun! Fetching games are enjoyed by many cats. How about throwing part of your cat’s kibble meal down the hall a piece at a time? You can increase your cat’s exercise and invoke his/her hunting skills all at the same time!

Sensory stimulation includes anything that will allow your cat to use his/her eyes, ears, nose, etc. There are now CDs and DVDs available for your pet cat; images of animals, birds, fish, etc. to play on your TV, and the sounds of birdsong to play on your tape or CD player. In a pinch, you can turn on the radio and alternate classical musical with an all talk station for your cat. Bird and squirrel feeders can be set up outside windows for further visual stimulation as well. Catnip, as well as small amounts of other spices or vanilla can be rubbed periodically into cat trees and other areas that your cat regularly spends time in to provide a rich “scenting” experience for your pet.

Puzzle games include anything that will encourage your cat to use his/her mind to solve challenges. Most pet shops and pet catalogues now feature balls that are hollow inside. They can be

filled with kibble or low calorie treats so that as the cat rolls the ball around, every so often a treat will pop out of one of the holes. Feeding bowls can be moved around the house to encourage “prowling” and “hunting” to find food. Treats can be hidden in locations around the house, and you can even teach your cat to play hide and seek with you.

In short, providing a fun and entertaining home-life is a wonderful way to keep your cat mentally and physically healthy—the goal of all medicine, “alternative” or “traditional.”



Cat Story From Hurricane Ike Galveston Resident Rides Out Storm

By [Joel Achenbach](#)

Washington Post Staff Writer

Saturday, September 13, 2008; 11:56 AM

GALVESTON, Tex., Sept. 13 -- Marjorie Anderson Henck, 67, heard a cry in the night: a feeble meow of a stray kitten.

She could hear it only because the eye of Hurricane Ike had passed over Galveston and the screaming storm had gone into a temporary hush.

Henck was alone but for her three cats, Smokey, Sandy and Big Bob. She had refused her son's entreaties to leave the island. He told her at four in the afternoon Friday to come with him -- "This is your last chance" -- but she refused. She had been through every hurricane since the unnamed storm of 1943. Her grandmother, Annie Apffel Anderson, born in 1888, had survived the killer storm of 1900.



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So she rode it out. A mistake, she said Saturday morning with her hair still wet from fetching ditch water to flush her toilet.

"It was horrendous," she said. "I'm feeling rattled right now and I'm hungry."

But in the process of the night her household gained a new member: An orange kitten, maybe 6 weeks old, cowering under her bed. She heard it meowing in her backyard. It was sitting on a cushion that she had used as patio furniture. The cushion was floating like a raft in the water that flooded her backyard. She brought the kitten inside and tried to get it to eat.

"If it doesn't eat, it'll die," she said. It showed no interest in a bowl of wet cat food. The other three cats looked ready for a nap.



Toxicities and Other Dangers and Nutritional Challenges in Cats- Don't Let your Cat Get into Trouble!

By Tammy Sadek, DVM

Cats are not small children or small dogs, even if they sometimes act that way or we think of them as "cat children". **Many of the over the counter medications used in humans including toddlers are poisonous to cats.** Even some medications that can be used safely in dogs are toxic to cats. Because cats are carnivores (meat eaters), their metabolism is set up differently than omnivores such as dogs and humans (that eat meat and other

things like grains and vegetables). In particular, the cat is missing or has reduced amounts of several liver enzymes that are needed to process certain foods and many medications. Cats also cannot produce certain essential amino acids that dogs and humans can produce. They need to obtain these amino acids from their food. This is **why cats being fed dog food as the main part of their diet will eventually go blind and/ or die from heart failure.** The dog food does not contain enough of the amino acid taurine that the cat requires but the dog can synthesize directly.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, and aspirin need to be broken down and processed in the liver. The cat does not have enough of the enzymes needed to process these medications and consequently toxic levels occur and kidney and liver failure result. **Never give your cat over the counter pain medications.** In certain instances, prescription pain killers can be used in cats at very low doses and reduced frequencies and under the close supervision of your veterinarian. Often times this use requires blood or urine testing to evaluate for safety and any side effects. These medication uses may be considered off label use as many of these prescription medications, although used extensively, have not yet been approved in the United States for use in cats by the FDA.

Foods containing **onions or onion powder** contain substances that cause red blood cell damage and anemia in cats and should be avoided. **Chocolate** contains theobromine, a stimulant type substance that can cause vomiting and diarrhea and in large amounts liver damage in cats. Chocolate should be avoided in cats, although ingestion of small amounts such as licking the ice cream bowl is unlikely to cause any problems. Certain plants, in particular the **lilies**, are highly toxic to cats. Chewing on the leaves, flowers, stems, or roots of these plants can cause fatal kidney failure even if small amounts are ingested. These plants, including Easter lilies and Calla lilies should not be accessible to cats. **Mistletoe** is also highly toxic to cats. Other plants such as **poinsettias** are more likely to cause vomiting and diarrhea when ingested. These plants should be avoided but are less likely to cause serious disease if nibbled upon. Holiday decorations such as **tinsel and Easter basket grass** are can be attractive to cats. Many cats will eat these thread-like decorations, which can accumulate and cause an intestinal obstruction or intestinal perforation requiring surgery. Keep these decorations out of your cat's reach. If they are eaten, call immediately. Sometimes rapid intervention can treat the cat and avoid surgery. Other attractive items for cats to play with and unfortunately swallow are **dental floss, needles and thread, and hair binders.** Store these items away where your cat cannot reach them.

Sometimes **prescription medications** spill on the floor where they can be eaten by inquisitive cats. Call us immediately if your cat does eat some of your medication. There are antidotes and treatments available for many prescription drug toxicities. **Recreational drugs** should NEVER be administered to cats-



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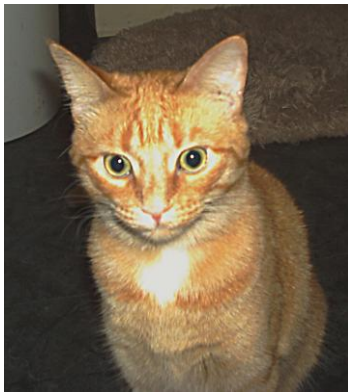
most are highly toxic and can cause death. Call us if your cat may have ingested any medication inadvertently.

Household cleaners such as bleach and ammonia are very caustic and irritating and can cause severe chemical burns.

Antifreeze is often sweet and attractive to cats. Even small amounts of many types of antifreeze can cause kidney failure and death in cats.

In general, assume that any medication not prescribed for your cat is poisonous and do not administer it. Also assume that any plants are toxic and other household cleaners are poisonous or caustic. If your cat does get into something, call us immediately. Often early intervention can avoid potential deadly results.

Featured Cat by John Gaylord Moxie



Moxie is a stray with a spitfire attitude and curiosity adopted by a young couple. While at home enjoying the scenes outdoors, the window that she was sitting in fell on her, trapping her leg. Young cats heal quickly so the prognosis looked good. Of the options available the leg was put in a splint. The surgery went well until Moxie woke up and decided she did not want a splint on her leg. Thrashing around bent the wires making the break now a compound fracture with the bone sticking out through the skin. Plan B was to apply a soft bandage splint with appropriate pain medication to keep activity level down. Miss Moxie did well initially but after a short time she had gotten this off too! Orthopedic surgery was now the option using an external fixator with pins, rods, screws, and super strong putty. The care for Moxie was more than the young couple, with full time jobs and school, could handle so one of our staff, Marci, took over the care.

An infection developed and Moxie needed constant and specialized care. Moxie traveled home every night with Marci and had her own cage during the day at the clinic for supervision and treatment. More surgeries and Xrays were required over the next 3 months along with long term pain control.

When Moxie finally got the fixator off the young couple decided that Moxie had grown as attached to Marci as Marci had grown attached to Moxie. Moxie is now part of the family with Stewie the cat and Dheli the dog. Moxie's nickname is Ninja Cat as she

runs and jumps all over. Maybe after the long confinement she just can't stand to sit still. Moxie has recovered fully from her injury and is crazy normal now.

Cat Quotes

"No matter how much cats fight, there always seems to be plenty of kittens." - *Abraham Lincoln*

"One cat just leads to another." - *Ernest Hemingway*

"Dogs come when they're called; cats take a message and get back to you later." - *Mary Bly*

"There is no snooze button on a cat who wants breakfast." - *Unknown*

"Cats are rather delicate creatures and they are subject to a good many ailments, but I never heard of one who suffered from insomnia." - *Joseph Wood Krutch*

"With the qualities of cleanliness, affection, patience, dignity, and courage that cats have, how many of us, I ask you, would be capable of becoming cats?" - *Fernand Mery*

"People that hate cats, will come back as mice in their next life." - *Faith Resnick*

"There are many intelligent species in the universe. They are all owned by cats." - *Anonymous*

"I have studied many philosophers and many cats. The wisdom of cats is infinitely superior." - *Hippolyte Taine*

"We humans are indeed fortunate if we happen to be chosen to be owned by a cat." "Cats are intended to teach us that not everything in nature has a function."

"How we behave toward cats here below determines our status in heaven." - *Robert A. Heinlein*

"No heaven will not ever be Heaven be; Unless my cats are there to welcome me." - *Unknown*

"Thousands of years ago, cats were worshipped as gods. Cats have never forgotten this." - *Anonymous*

Why do you ask me to bring a fecal sample every year, even when my cat stays indoors???

By Dorene Culp, LVT

Did you know that approximately 80% of all kittens (and puppies) are born with roundworms?

Did you know that PEOPLE can get parasite infections from their pets?

Did you know that a roundworm infection in a child can lead to blindness?



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While all of this is true, and very serious, please understand that parasite infections are easily treated and prevented. Also, rest assured that we do our best to help decrease your risks.

First, we ask that you bring in a sample of fresh feces (<24 hours old) for us to test. We take this sample, mix it with a salt solution, spin it in a centrifuge, and using a microscope, look for the eggs and larvae of parasites. Certain parasites can migrate into the muscle tissues and form cysts that remain dormant until the animal is under stress. This stress can come in many forms, including hormone changes, illness, or major disturbances to the daily routine. Once exposed to a stress factor, the cysts hatch and the larvae migrate to the intestinal tract, and a new infection begins. This can happen at any life stage, even in cats that have lived strictly indoors for many years.

Second, we recommend a deworming schedule for the individual cat, based on its age and lifestyle. Most kittens get a series of deworming medications, spaced 2-3 weeks apart, for 2-3 treatments. Cats that go outside (and/or hunt birds and rodents,) should be dewormed regularly. This can be achieved by giving either a monthly preventative like Revolution or Heartgard, which also protect against heartworms and other parasites, or by administering an oral dewormer every 3-4 months. Since heartworm is passed to cats by the bite of an infected mosquito, even cats that remain indoors should be protected from heartworms. The monthly preventatives are an excellent choice to help them stay free from parasites. Be aware that these treatments are by prescription only.

Third, a great way to decrease your risks is to wash your hands well after any contact with animals and their feces. For those of you that have cats that like to lick you a lot, (and for those of you that have dogs, too) be very careful not to play "kissy face" with them as this is a common way for parasites to get spread to people. Also, be very careful to wash hands after playing in the sandbox and after gardening, as these areas are favorite "public toilets" of outdoor cats!

Finally, when we are evaluating the fecal sample for parasites, we also look for other signs of potential problems, like excess hair, plant material, pollen, and blood cells. Occasionally, we discover other things, like plastic, or rubberbands, or other things that kitties should not be eating! Therefore, it is important for all cats to have their feces checked every year.

Cat Poetry The Rum Tum Tugger

The Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat:
If you offer him pheasant he would rather have grouse.
If you put him in a house he would much prefer a flat,
If you put him in a flat then he'd rather have a house.
If you set him on a mouse then he only wants a rat,

If you set him on a rat then he'd rather chase a mouse.
Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat--
And there isn't any call for me to shout it:
For he will do As he do do
And there's no doing anything about it!

The Rum Tum Tugger is a terrible bore:
When you let him in, then he wants to be out;
He's always on the wrong side of every door,
And as soon as he's at home, then he'd like to get about.
He likes to lie in the bureau drawer,
But he makes such a fuss if he can't get out.

Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat--
And there isn't any use for you to doubt it:
For he will do As he do do
And there's no doing anything about it!

The Rum Tum Tugger is a curious beast:
His disobliging ways are a matter of habit.
If you offer him fish then he always wants a feast;
When there isn't any fish then he won't eat rabbit.
If you offer him cream then he sniffs and sneers,
For he only likes what he finds for himself;

So you'll catch him in it right up to the ears,
If you put it away on the larder shelf.
The Rum Tum Tugger is artful and knowing,
The Rum Tum Tugger doesn't care for a cuddle;
But he'll leap on your lap in the middle of your sewing,
For there's nothing he enjoys like a horrible muddle.
Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat--
And there isn't any need for me to spout it:
For he will do As he do do
And there's no doing anything about it!

T. S. Elliot

Holiday Boarding By Marla Mountain

Going over the river and through the woods this Christmas time?
Just can't ask your neighbor to give your cat his or her daily medications while you are gone? Or does your cat need extra Tender Loving Care to help keep them content while they are waiting for you to come home from your travels? We have a wonderful sunlit boarding area where your cat will have a great view of the outdoors and the bird feeder, as well as great food and attention and any medications needed. We would love to help your cat have a great time at our kitty "bed and breakfast". Our "suites" fill up quickly around the holidays, so make your cat's reservation soon! Call us at 241-6369.