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## Fall In Love With Felines

By Diane Coleman, DVM

Dr. Diane Coleman contributed all of the articles for this newsletter. She is passionate about feline health and would like to see more cats receive the veterinary care they deserve. She is pictured here with one of her cats, "Pookie."



## Feliway—Help is in the air....

Feliway is a synthetic recreation of natural feline pheromones. Pheromones are natural chemicals secreted by an animal for various behavioral purposes. In this case, cats use pheromones for territorial marking and for their calming effects, in essence, like soothing "aromatherapy".

Feliway mimics the actions of natural pheromones by making cats feel more "at home" in their environment. Specifically, Feliway is useful for times when a cat feels stressed or anxious. A cat's inborn reaction to stressful events might involve marking the environment with his or her urine or scratching inappropriate surfaces; however, Feliway is designed to counteract the cat's anxious feelings, replacing them instead with a sense of well-being, which should make these behaviors less likely to occur. Feliway can be helpful in the following situations:

- ◆ Urine marking
- ◆ Inappropriate scratching behavior
- ◆ Introduction to a new home or to new pets
- ◆ During hospitalization, boarding or travel
- ◆ Aggressive behavior

"Bear Bear" Kesler



Feliway is available as a spray or as a plug-in diffuser, each serving a different purpose. Feliway does not replace the need for a medical workup and behavior consultation for inappropriate spraying or aggression. It can, however, be a useful adjunct for current treatments. Ask us how Feliway can improve the life of your feline companion.



Cathy with "Bert" and "Tugger"

Our groomer, Janice, and her cat "Janice"



## Do Cats Get Heartworms?



The answer is yes. But feline heartworm infection is different from infection in dogs. Cats have fewer heartworms, but their infection is more serious. One adult heartworm can kill a cat. The symptoms of heartworm disease in cats include vomiting, coughing, difficulty breathing, and fatigue. The most common clinical sign, however, is sudden death. Heartworm disease in cats is very difficult to diagnose, and there is no treatment at this time for cats. *Since heartworm disease is spread by mosquitoes, it is a concern for any cats living anywhere there are mosquitoes, including indoor-only cats.*

There is a topical (on-the-skin) prevention called **Revolution**, which prevents heartworm disease. This medicine is safe to use even in heartworm-infected cats. In addition, Revolution offers protection against **fleas**, ear mites, and certain intestinal parasites. Its convenience (no oral medicine to administer) and its safety (pesticide-free) have set it apart from all other products, and it is the feline heartworm prevention of choice at our practice.

Since there is no treatment for devastating heartworm infection in cats, prevention is key. Ask one of our staff members about this once-monthly, convenient heartworm prevention for your cat.



I wasn't really a "cat person" per se, but I signed up for the feline club at veterinary school anyway. And the rest, as they say, is history. I fell in love with cats ever since, and have had a passion for learning about everything feline. Cats are such amazing and interesting creatures. The way their body works can be different from all other species, and their behaviors are reminiscent of their wild ancestors.

Domestic cats are really coming into their own — they have surpassed the dog as the most popular pet in America. They are cherished as household members by millions of families. However, *cats are half as likely as dogs to be brought into veterinarians for medical care.* It is not for lack of caring on the part of the cat owners; there are two problems, in reality. The first is that cats are masters at hiding illness, often appearing healthy until they are very ill, and the second is that cat owners fear that they will stress their cats by bringing them into the hospital environment.

Studies have shown that routine examinations during all phases of life, and regular lab work during the senior years, can significantly lengthen the life span of cats. The average cat can live to see the age of twelve to fifteen years, and many live even longer. But wellness care is essential for preserving cats' health and longevity. Taking an active role in your cat's medical care can lead to a lifetime of happiness.

"Bear Bear" is two-year old female cat, who presented to us for a routine spay procedure. **Pre-anesthetic blood work** was performed, and an abnormality was found on her clotting profile. A clotting profile is always included in our pre-anesthetic lab work, to determine if there may be any problems with bleeding during a surgical procedure. The procedure was postponed, and further testing was performed by a veterinary diagnostic laboratory.

Bear Bear was diagnosed with a **Factor 12 clotting deficiency**, which is common in cats. Clotting factors help platelets function properly, so that normal clotting can occur. There are a variety of deficiencies that can affect a cat's ability to clot, and can cause abnormal bleeding during surgery. Thankfully, this particular abnormality is not one of them and we were able to proceed with Bear Bear's spay. The information gained from the blood work could help us care for her in the future.

Pre-anesthetic lab work is essential for diagnosing hidden medical problems that could cause surgical complications. Your pet's safety is our priority, and **pre-anesthetic lab testing** can truly be a life saver.

## Inappropriate Urination ('Spraying')

The most common feline behavioral problem is urination outside the litter box, and it results in the surrender of many cats to animal shelters. The two main causes for this problem (1) medical and (2) behavioral.

*A medical reason must always be ruled out first.* Once a medical problem is addressed, the behavior can be corrected. Diagnoses may include: urinary tract disease, hormonal disorders (diabetes or thyroid disease), or musculoskeletal problems (pain due to arthritis). In most cases, once the medical condition is identified and treated, the behavior should cease.

If medical reasons have been ruled out, then we must consider a behavioral problem. Changes in litter box maintenance may be enough to correct the problem, as cats are very picky about their litter box hygiene. Here are some tips for proper litter box care:

- ☑ Clean any inappropriately-soiled areas with an odor eliminator, such as **Nature's Miracle** or **Anti-Icky Poo**, then apply **Feliway** (see accompanying article) to the area once daily.
- ☑ Most cats prefer a fine clumping litter, but you may want to offer a variety of litter types to find your cat's favorite. Also, most cats prefer open (non-covered) litter boxes. Experiment a little to find your cat's litter box preferences.
- ☑ Scoop litter boxes daily, and completely empty boxes and wash with soapy water once weekly (avoid ammonia cleaners).
- ☑ Provide one more litter box than the number of cats in the household, set at opposite ends of the living environment. Keep them in separate areas away from food and water bowls and high-traffic areas.
- ☑ Never allow people or other pets to disturb a cat while in the litter box.
- ☑ Ask your veterinarian how Feliway can help.

Other behavioral problems in the household can contribute, such as aggression between cats or a stressful living environment. Correcting the underlying stressor(s) may help to fix the urination issues. In rare cases, medication may be needed to help resolve the behavior. *Persistence is key with inappropriate urination. We are here to help your family get through this frustrating problem so you and your cat can coexist peacefully.*

**My "Furry Angel" by Karen Curry**

I don't quite know where to start on a subject like "what my cat means to me"...where would I be without them? Even more important, who would I be?

After losing my Siamese kitty of more than 20 years, I hesitated to get another animal. The death of my dear friend after two decades was enough to make me wonder - could I stand going through that again? This relationship had lasted longer than any other in my life, including a marriage!

After a year of being on my own (meaning no felines!) I met Timmy - a three-month old bruised and scarred skinny little runt. I was hesitant to adopt this kid, but I really did want a snowshoe Siamese, and this guy had all the signs, including the crossed eyes! As soon as I picked him up, his purr began - and it sounded like a hot rod with a bad muffler (even now, when I'm on the phone and he's on my lap, my caller on the other end of the line can hear that purr!) Love at fist sight! I was caught!

My little guy grew up to be a bruiser himself - kind of on the hefty side, he is not the most gorgeous kitty you'll ever meet - but he is the sweetest and most congenial. He isn't a snowshoe, but he seems to have some Velcro in his DNA, because he likes proximity. He doesn't always run to the door when I come home, but he always runs to the fridge when I start dinner! He comes when he's called, and stays off the counters - so I know that cats can be trained. As all cats can, he gets his message across when I annoy him, but he's not one to hold a grudge for more than a few minutes. I can tell him my problems of the day, and he doesn't try to solve them for me - he just brushes those long whiskers on my face to let me know he's listening. Although illness is not common in our house, Timmy knows when things aren't right and he becomes a great nurse. His bedside manner is so comforting. He is the one thing in my life that is consistent, day to day. How can you not love a friend with these qualities?



I love my cat-boy enough to make sure that his caretakers love him, too. We thank the CTAH team for caring for both of us over the years. *(Karen is a realtor, a cat-lover, and a long-time CTAH client and friend.)*

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**Meet "Momma Kitty"**



Momma Kitty's story starts in November of 2003, when she and her 5 kittens were left in a carrier on our front porch.

The kittens all found new homes, but we decided to keep Momma Kitty here with us. She was so easy-going, she was the perfect choice to be our 'official greeter.'

In spite of regularly "sampling" several

hundred dollars' worth of cat food, she has made a home in our hearts. Everyone loves to come in and see Momma - when our UPS man, David comes in, she comes running, talking all the way. We call him Momma's 'boyfriend.'

Momma knows when one of us is having a bad day - she'll climb up on your chest as if to say 'It's OK. I understand.' She helps us get through some stressful days and we love her.



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Carla's cat, "Venus"

**"You want me to go WHERE?!"**

Most cat owners agree that a trip to the vet's office is one of the most stressful events in a cat's life. Cats are creatures of habit and do not appreciate changes to their routine, which a vet visit clearly creates. But there are some tips to help minimize the stress of your feline friend when you do have to bring him in to the office:

- ♥ Keep your cat carrier out in plain site at all times, with the door open and some treats, toys, or a comfy blanket inside. Try to make her carrier a "safe haven", where she can feel secure.
- ♥ Spray the inside of the carrier with Feliway (see accompanying article) 10 minutes prior to your departure. This will give your cat a feeling of comfort.
- ♥ Bring your cat's favorite toys, treats, and a blanket. If your cat likes to be groomed, bring your cat's brush along as well.
- ♥ Take him for short car rides in his carrier - some uneventful car rides will make your cat less anxious about getting in the car in the future.
- ♥ Remain calm and speak softly during the visit. Cats are very perceptive and can easily pick up on owners' stress levels.

Keep these tips in mind when planning your cat's next appointment. A prepared owner can make the vet visit a more positive experience.

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Glennia and "Bingo"



Jen's daughter, Paige, and "Pugsley"

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
SAVE 30% On Vaccines!	SAVE 30% On Vaccines!	SAVE 30% On Vaccines!	SAVE 30% On Vaccines!	Expert cat and dog grooming Tuesday - Friday	 Vickie's cat, "George"
Save 25% on Dental Cleanings	 Kate's cat, "Oliver" Save 25% on Spays and Neuters	Save 25% on Dental Cleanings	 Save 25% on Spays and Neuters	Save 25% on Dental Cleanings	Open every Saturday 8-Noon All offers good through 12/31/09. Please call for appointment.

Our best source for new clients is you! **Thank You** for referring your friends and family.

For every new client that you refer, receive a **\$25 credit** toward goods and services at Central Texas Animal Hospital.

\*\*Offer good through December 21, 2009. To received reward, you must be named by referred client at time of appointment or initial visit.

