



Credit: Kieron Adams



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Starting from scratch

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Why ethology is important

- Solitary – not evolved complex facial expressions
- Cats are hard to 'read' and understand
- They are very good at hiding stress and pain
- Not good at diffusing conflict – lack appeasement signals



Possible causes



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Credit: Zoe & John Photography, UK

Always get a vet check!

Rule
out

➤ **pain**

➤ Hormonal issues -
hyperthyroidism

➤ Neurological
conditions

➤ Skin
conditions

Possible causes

Case study – skin rippling

Tommy, male, neutered, 5 years old

Possible causes:

- Parasites, eg fleas
- Hyperaesthesia
- Irritation, eg skin condition, allergies etc
 - Behaviour - frustration



Credit: Cats Protection

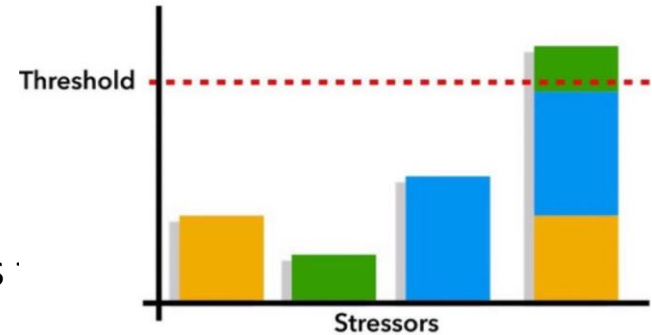
Understanding aggression



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Aggression is a behaviour, not personality trait

- Individuals may be more likely to show aggression if they have:
 - Other medical or behavioural problems
 - Poorly socialised
 - Learning from past experiences that aggression is most successful strategy
 - Faced multiple stressors in succession (trigger stacking)



Body Language of Feline Anxiety



Slight crouching



Major crouching

More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



Dilated Eyes



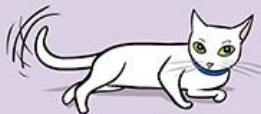
Ears Turned Back,
Furrowed Brow



Staring,
Focused on Object



Hiding,
Looks Half Asleep



Laying on Side,
Tail Flicking



Hair Raised, Staring,
Ears Turned Back



Walking with Flat Back,
Tail Down, Head Down



Ready to Jump Off Perch



Suddenly Grooming,
Excessive Grooming



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- Cats are the masters of hiding negative affects
- Owners seldom recognise pain, fear or anxiety

“But she still jumps up on the window sill”

- Look out for micro-behaviours, such as:
 - Nose licking
 - Gulping
 - Quick blinking

Body language



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Credit: Cats Protection

This cat is showing a typical fear response

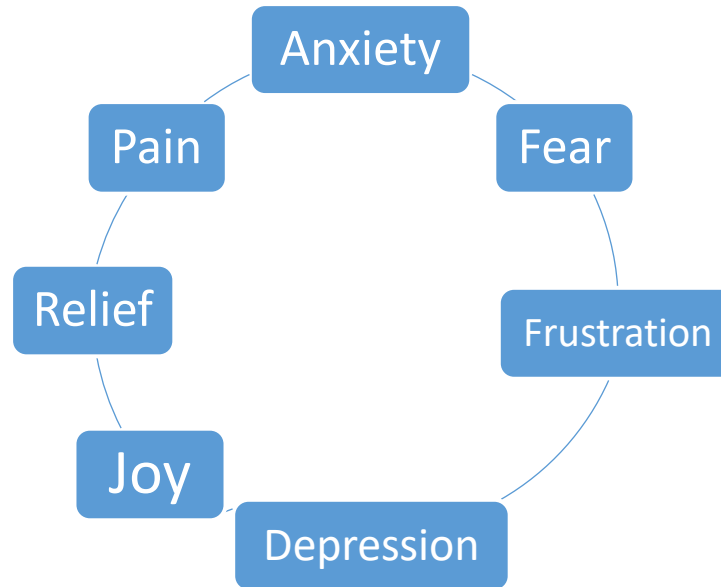
Feline emotions?



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Credit: Nicky Trevorrow



Credit: Cats Protection

What to do – health and safety

- Cat bites and scratches can cause injuries and issues like cat scratch disease
- Keep people safe – wear protective clothing and footwear
- Especially consider vulnerable people such as children, elderly people and immuno-compromised people



Credit: Cats Protection



Different reasons for aggressive behaviour



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Credit: Cats Protection

Misdirected play behaviour



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Desire seeking – positive emotion

- Not 'aggressive' behaviour, but a social play or misdirected play behaviour



Conflict around food and other resources



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Credit: Nicky Trevorrow

What can we do to help?



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Credit: Cats Protection



Cats Protection – Cat profile questionnaire

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. It is important we get as much accurate information as possible to help with the care of your cat. Please answer in as much detail as possible.

Cat name:

Cat-a-Log number (CP use only):

Cat description			
Breed	<input type="text"/>	Colour	<input type="text"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Neutered?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Age	<input type="text"/>		
Reason for rehoming	<input type="text"/>		
Where did you get your cat from? <i>(eg Cats Protection, other cat rescue, stray, online, family/friend etc.)</i>	<input type="text"/>		
How long have you owned your cat?	<input type="text"/>		
How many previous homes has your cat had, excluding your own?	<input type="text"/>		



Treatments	Date of treatment	
Vaccinated? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="text"/>	If yes, please bring vaccination card with you.
Wormed? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="text"/>	Product: <input type="text"/>
Treated for fleas? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="text"/>	Product: <input type="text"/>
Microchipped? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Has ongoing medical condition? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>If yes, please describe.</i> <input type="text"/>	Vet practice registered with: <input type="text"/>	

It's all about
history
taking



Reducing stress levels

- Provide cats with:



- somewhere to hide
- somewhere to get up high
- the same caregiver
- consistent routine
- Feliway®
- something from home
- Avoid staring



Providing resources



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Privacy



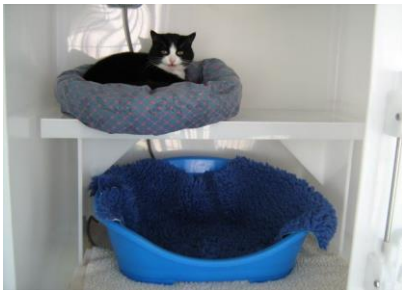
Assess social
groups



Hiding
places



Avoid cats
seeing
other cats

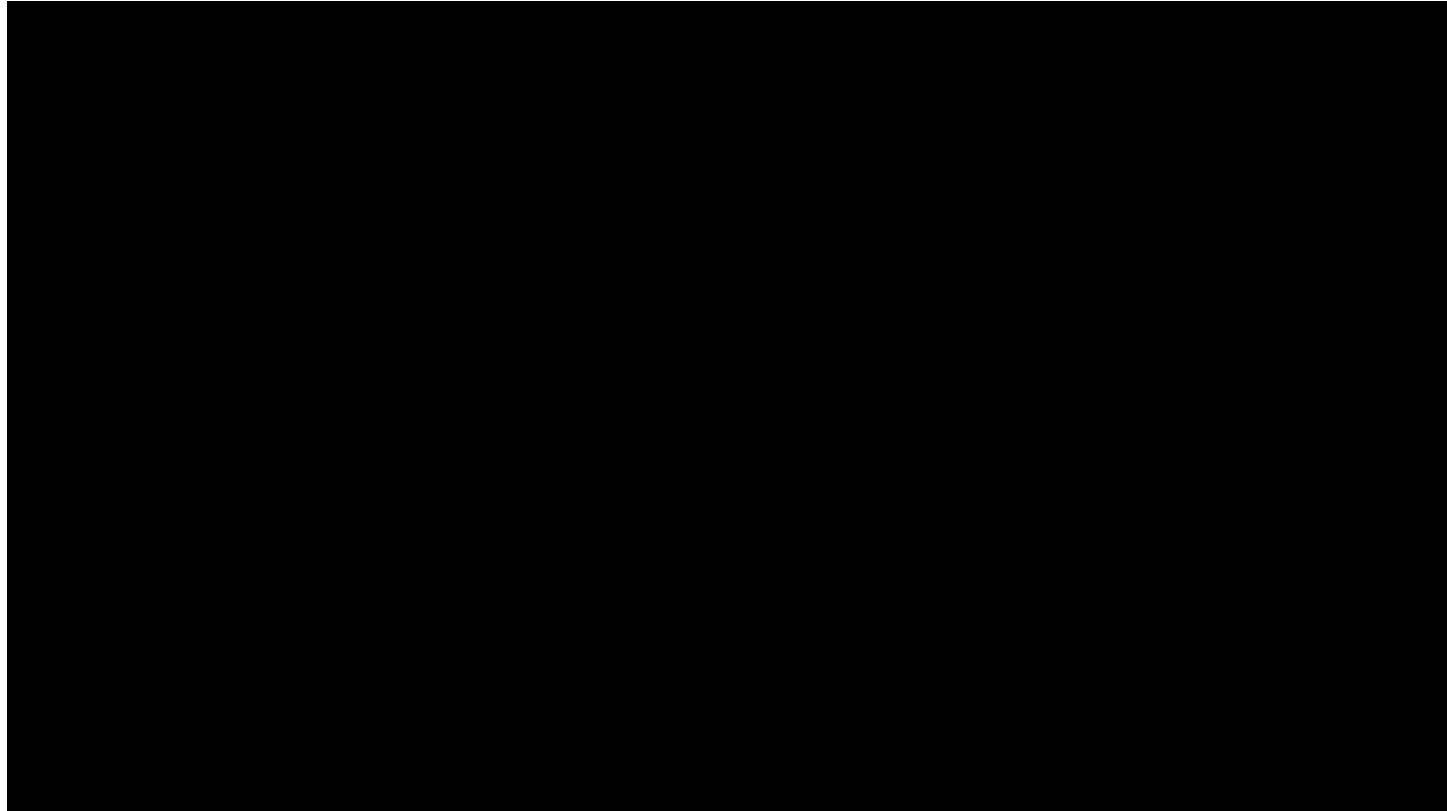


Elevated
perches

Desensitisation in action



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Credit: Cats Protection

How do we desensitise cats?

- Where do we start?
- Where the cat feels safest and at a distance that the cat feels calm in your presence
- This is different for every cat
- Sometimes you need to start quite some distance away from the cat





Reading the cat's body language

- It's a two-way form of communication
- Always ask yourself -
 - "What is the cat's facial expression telling me? "
 - "What is the underlying emotion?"
- If you need to go back a step or two, do so
- It must be done at the cat's individual pace

The cat doesn't react to me being there, it that ok?



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- 'Doesn't appear to react' is not the same as 'calm in your presence'

*Hunched,
tense body
posture*



*Ears to the
side and
following
you*

*Avoiding
eye
contact*

Credit: Cats Protection

The cat seems to be asleep or ignoring me



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- Remember that feigned or fake sleep is another sign of stress



Ears following you

Avoiding eye contact and eyes tightly closed

Hunched, tense body posture

Will 'cringe' or lean away from you

Credit: Cats Protection

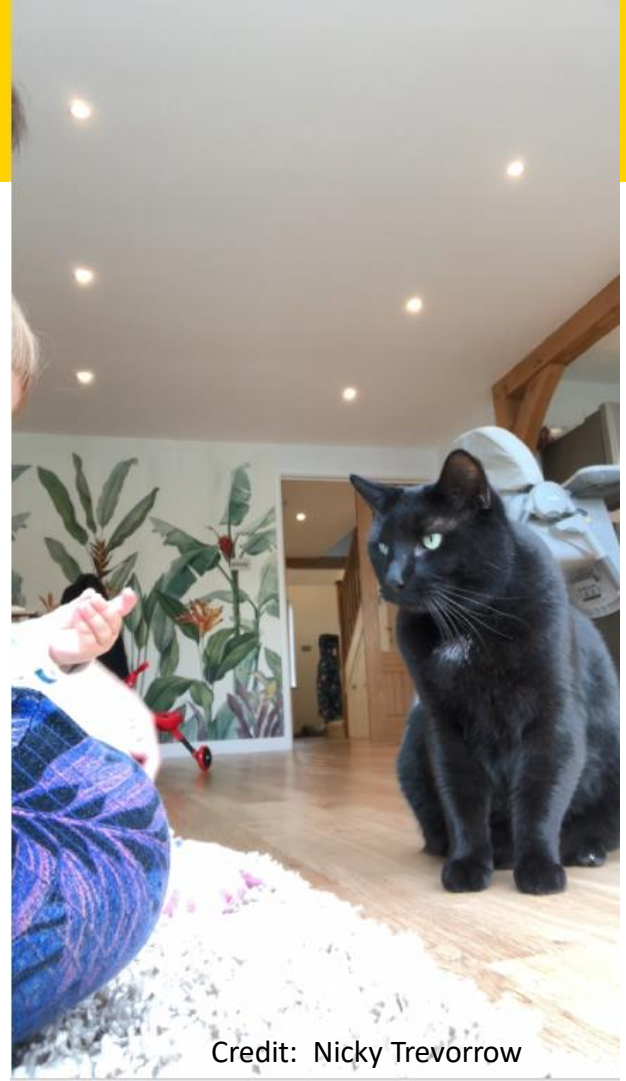
Counter conditioning!

Definition = Changing from a negative association to a positive association

Often using treats or something the cat finds rewarding

Care needs to be taken to avoid the cat feeling conflicted

Using treats to change a cat's opinion of babies to a positive association



Credit: Nicky Trevorrow

Triaging cats – what are you going to do?



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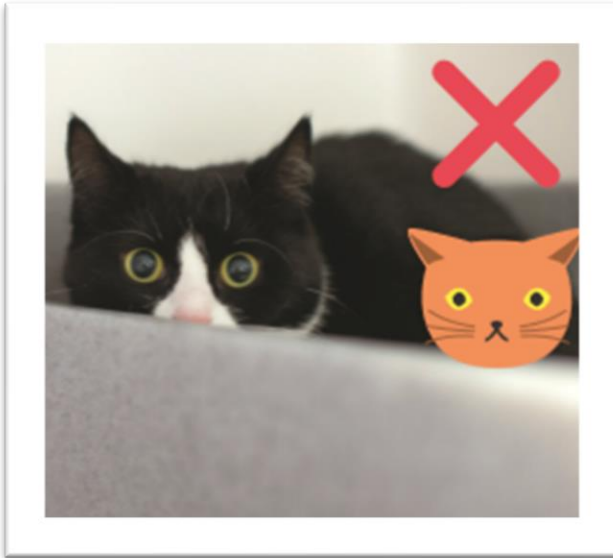
- Be realistic
 - Consider your resources, finances, time, and safety
 - **Above all – best welfare option for the cat!**
- It may best to TNR (Trap, neuter, return to original site)
- Only desensitise socialised pet cats with homes available (not feral cats)



Which cat are people more likely to adopt?



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Credit: Cats Protection



Credit: Cats Protection

Summary of the plan



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Behavioural first aid

- 1) Medical assessment – vet check
- 2) Assess risk and mitigation
- 3) Prevent behaviour deterioration
- 4) Stress reduction measures
- 5) Keep a diary
- 6) No punishment
- 7) Next steps



Credit: Nicky Trevorrow

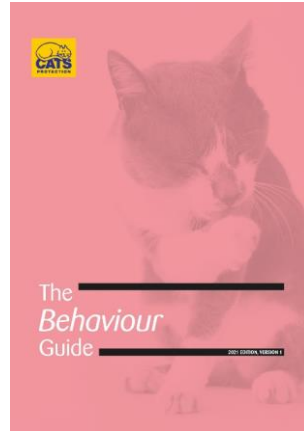
Summary



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- Change in behaviour is normal and to be expected with change of environment (Change of attachment or familiarity?)
- Remember cats are sentient animals that have emotions
- A cat's ability to adapt will depend on a number of factors:
 - Genetics
 - Socialisation
 - Previous experiences
- Shouldn't assume that a cat is 'happy'
- Cat welfare must always come first





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Resources currently available



Credit: www.cats.org.uk



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Ukrainian leaflets

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Information and support for people and their cats relocating from Ukraine.

Hello and welcome to the UK! We know that you and your cat have had a long journey to get here and even though you have found a safe place to live, we understand that this will not be an easy time for either of you. These three leaflets have been written so that you have all the information you need to be able to ensure your cat settles in well to their new home. Even if they have previously lived as an indoor cat there are still some considerations to take to ensure they feel happy and comfortable in their new surroundings.

The leaflets, in both Ukrainian and English, can be viewed online as well as being downloaded and printed at home or by your vet.



Caring for your indoor cat

Topics covered: checklist for what cats need, settling a cat in, exploring the house, understanding your cat's behaviour, helping cats cope indoors. To save ink print pages 2-7 (Eng), 2-8 (Ukr).



Cat behaviour problems

Topics covered: signs of pain and stress, nervous cats, aggressive cats, house soiling, scratching. To save ink print pages 2-9 (Eng), 2-10 (Ukr).



Introducing cats to others

Topics covered: introducing cats to other cats; dogs; children. To save ink print pages 2-6 (Eng and Ukr).

Ukrainian leaflets

<https://www.cats.org.uk/Ukrainian-leaflets>



Thank you



Credit: Cats Protection