

Disciplining your new kitten....

The below information was taken from

<http://www.cat-world.com.au/AggressionInCats.htm>

but I think should assist our customers with further information....

Feline aggression is a serious behavior which requires treatment.

It comes in several forms including;

Predatory aggression

Fear aggression

Petting induced aggression

Play aggression

Redirected aggression

Territorial aggression

Inter-Male Aggression

It is important to properly diagnose the cause of the aggression so proper treatment &

behavior modification can be put into place.

Whatever type of aggression your cat is displaying, it is important to address the

situation, your first stop should always be your veterinarian to rule out a medical cause.

Predatory aggression:

This may be directed towards humans, other cats or other animals.

The cat will crouch down low & slowly

move towards its prey until lunging forward & attacking.

Cats learn predatory behavior from their mother & practice on litter mates.

Predatory aggression can be dangerous to humans (for example, if you are walking

down some stairs & suddenly pounced on), unfair on other pets & cruel on the wildlife,

and sometimes fatal to the cat if it chooses the wrong prey, such as a snake.

Cats should be either kept indoors or confined to an enclosure so they can't hunt the

wildlife.

The best way to deal with this type of aggression is to redirect it towards a more

appropriate source such as cat toys.

Ensure you provide your cat with adequate toys in which to explore his predatory

behaviors such as wand type toys (on a rod, with a feather at the end of some string)

to chase & soft toys to attack.

Spend 30-60 minutes per day actively playing with your cat, this provides an outlet for

excess energy & you can direct the play fighting towards appropriate toys.

Fear/defensive aggression:

As the name suggests, fear aggression occurs when a cat is put in a situation it

interprets as dangerous.

It may be a visit to the vet fear of unfamiliar people or an encounter with another cat

which leads to fear aggression.

Most animals would rather avoid confrontation in fearful situations, but will attack if they have no option to escape.

Body language displayed during fear aggression is the cat hunched down low,

ears back, legs & tail tucked into the body, body on an angle.

Fear aggression may also be seen in cases where the cat is sick or injured.

Always be careful when approaching a sick/injured cat you don't know, and be

careful when handling your own cat who may be in pain as he could lash out.

If possible, such as with veterinarians, accustom your cat to visits w

hich

don't involve examinations.

In her book *Twisted Whiskers*, Pam Johnson-Bennett recommends bringing

your cat in for brief periods of time, just to be petted.

Slowly building up your cat's confidence that the vet's office isn't a place to be feared.

Obviously, if possible the way to address this is to avoid fearful situations, veterinary

visits are inevitable, but if other situations may be best avoided. If this is not possible,

then slowly helping your cat adjust is the best course of action.

This may involve offering food treats if the cat is fearful of humans, slowly introducing

the cat to other pets etc.

Petting Induced Aggression:

This is a common problem cat owners encounter. You are enjoying some time

petting your cat & all of a sudden he turns around, takes a swipe & then runs off & hides.

The cause of this behavior is unknown although it is theorised that some cats

can only accept a certain amount of petting before becoming uncomfortable.

Being aware of your cat's body language will help prevent these attacks.

We have one cat who will attack if petted too long but he does give

off warning signs first. His tail will begin to twitch, his pupils will dilate

e & he will

begin to look around (presumably preparing for his escape), as soon as we

notice these behaviors, we stop petting him.

Play Aggression:

Play aggression is usually seen in kittens & young active cats under 2 years of age.

As frustrating as it can be towards their human companions, play aggression

is quite normal in kittens. This type of aggression is predatory in nature & is commonly

seen among littermates, and not only does it provide exercise for the kittens but also

serves

as a way to practice & learn predatory behavior which in the wild is necessary to

hunt down & kill prey.

While a kittens littermates are happy to engage in this type of behavior with one

another, it is not so enjoyable to us humans or older cats.

The good news is that play aggression does taper off as the cat reaches adulthood.

As with predatory aggression, the best way to deal with this type of aggression is to

redirect it towards a more appropriate source such as cat toys.

Ensure you provide your cat with adequate toys in which to explore his predatory

behaviors such as wand type toys (on a rod, with a feather at the e

nd of some string)

to chase & soft toys to attack.

Spend 30-60 minutes per day actively playing with your cat, this provides an outlet

for excess energy & you can direct the play fighting towards appropriate toys.

Never use physical punishment on a kitten or cat. This will not discourage play

aggression, in fact it could make the situation worse. It also serves to make your cat

fearful of you.

SEE BELOW FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON PLAY AGGRESSION.

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Redirected □ Aggression:

This type of aggression occurs when the cat attacks a person or other animal as a

result of arousal from an external stimulus such as a neighbourhood cat in the garden,

a bird etc.

If the aggression is a result of a household cat, you will have to work on re-introducing them slowly. If it is an external factor, such as a neighbourhood cat, taking

steps to discourage the cat from entering your garden.

Ultimately, the best method is to be aware of the body language your cat is displaying,

and if he seems to be worked up, avoid petting him until he's calmer.

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Territorial □ Aggression:

By nature, cats are not pack animals the way dogs are. Often you will have cats who

are close companions, but many cats enjoy their own company & don't seek out

companionship from other cats.

Territorial aggression occurs when another cat enters your cat's territory.

It may also occur when a new cat is introduced to the household.

If it is an 'intruding' cat causing the trouble, then discouraging the cat from entering

your garden is your best bet.

If the territorial aggression is occurring between two cats in the same household then

reintroducing them slowly should be tried. If this fails, trying to provi

de each cat with

their own areas may be of help.

Be aware that redirected aggression may occur in the case of a neighbourhood cat

entering your garden, so be careful.

If your cat(s) isn't desexed, do so. This can reduce the amount of territorial fighting which occurs.

Inter-Male Aggression:

Intermale aggression is a common form of aggression in cats, occurring as the male

reaches sexual maturity, around 2 years of age.

It can also become worse during mating season when males vie for females in heat.

If your cat(s) aren't already desexed, do so.

Medical causes of aggression:

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, sometimes aggression occurs as a result

of a medical condition.

Diseases including;

Hyperthyroidism

Rabies

Painful conditions including;

Gum & dental disease

Abscess

Arthritis

Other:

Brain injury

Thiamine deficiency

Summary:

Always seek veterinary advice for any cat displaying aggression.

If you are bitten or scratched,

it is a good idea to have it checked out by your doctor because cat bites/scratches

can easily become infected.

Never use physical punishment on a kitten or cat.

This will not discourage play aggression, in fact it could make the situation worse.

It also serves to make your cat fearful of you.

What causes play aggression?

Play aggression is usually seen in kittens & young active cats under 2 years of age.

As frustrating as it can be towards their human companions, play aggression is quite

normal in kittens. This type of aggression is predatory in nature & is commonly seen

among littermates, and not only does it provide exercise for the kittens but also

serves as a way to practice & learn predatory behavior which in the wild is necessary

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behavior with one another, it is not so enjoyable to us humans or older cats.

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How to deal with Play Aggression

The best way to deal with this type of aggression is to redirect it towards a more

appropriate source such as cat toys.

Ensure you provide your cat with adequate toys in which to explore his predatory

behaviors such as wand type toys (on a rod, with a feather at the end of some string)

to chase & soft toys to attack.

Spend 30-60 minutes per day actively playing with your kitten, this provides an outlet for excess energy & you can direct the play fighting towards

appropriate toys.

If your kitten is attacking you during petting, learn to read your cat's body language.

Before an attack its eyes will be wide, tail swishing & the ears may be back & flat on

the head. This is the time to stop petting.

Often cats will ambush you as you walk down the stairs, or hide around a corner

ready to pounce on you. Be prepared for this. If your cat jumps out at you,

use a noise deterrent (such as a whistle) to startle the cat.

Put a collar with a bell on your cat, giving you a better chance of hearing your cat

before it startles you. At all costs, avoid playing roughhouse with your cat & wrestling

with your hands.

Use remote punishment as a way to discourage your cat from attacking

king.

Some ideas for remote punishment include a water gun or alarm.

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What are some good toys for my kitten?

There is an endless variety of toys on the market for cats.

Toys which give your cat the opportunity to stalk, pounce & attack a

re the best.

I have had great pleasure watching my cats play with wand type toys.

Cheaper options include ping pong balls, old cotton reels (with the cotton removed),

empty cardboard boxes, empty toilet rolls, basically anything that your cat can

interact with.

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