



# BEHAVIOR & TRAINING



## STIMULATING THE MIND OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD CAT



Imagine your cat slinking through the forest, hunched down, muscles tense, and eyes wide. Every movement planned and ready to pounce. What if this hunt meant life or death? This is the not so long ago history of our present day house cat. They once had to survive on their own. They are fully equipped, predatory beings in need of some hunting like games in the home.

Cats enjoy playing, stalking, climbing, scratching, chasing and pouncing, and need proper outlets for these natural behaviors. If they don't get the chance to do so, behavioral problems may result. Some of the most common behaviors seen are:

- Aggressive play with either people or other animals in the home.
- Pestering by soliciting play or attention at unwanted times during the day and night.
- Becoming destructive with objects in the home such as furniture or plants.
- Becoming more reclusive, including retreating when new people or objects enter the home.
- Overreacting to new sights or sounds that may cause stress.

Following are some ways to help your feline friend receive both physical and mental enrichment that are easy as well as inexpensive:

- **Provide a variety of toys.** Introduce new toys periodically to prevent boredom. There are many toys that cats can play with on their own. Many cats like to bat toys around, pick them up, throw them and carry them around!
- **Play with your cat.** Cats will appreciate interactive toys that require your participation. Dangle toys on strings or wands and allow your cat to swat at the object. Dragging the toy along the ground will encourage your cat to chase it. You can also purchase automatic toys that move and dangle a wand toy for your cat. These toys can be great entertainment while you are away at work!
- **Be an explorer.** Give your cat different objects to investigate and explore. Cardboard boxes of all sizes, paper bags, packing paper, and toys that allow them to explore holes with their paws. Each time you get a package, or go shopping your cat can have a new playhouse!



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- **Feeding time.** Modern day cats can benefit from having to search for their food. Try feeding them a few small meals a day instead of one large one. Place the food in small piles on the floor. Begin with the food in plain sight. Place it around the area where the cat usually eats. You can gradually increase the difficulty by spreading the piles further apart, then hiding the food near furniture around the house. During the day your cat will spend her time seeking out her food.
- **Will work for food.** Cats are great at problem solving. They have a natural inclination to explore and investigate, especially if it is to get something they want like treats or food. Try placing your cat's favorite treats in an empty egg carton. Begin with it open to entice your cat to investigate. Once she gets the hang of this you can try closing the carton. Let her use her problem solving skills to get it open. You can also use other recyclables to entertain your cat. Toilet paper rolls, or yogurt cups are great to hide treats in.
- **Entertainment.** Install a bird feeder outside your window or leave the TV on while you're away from the home. Cats will delight in watching the environment change. This will often entertain them for hours.