

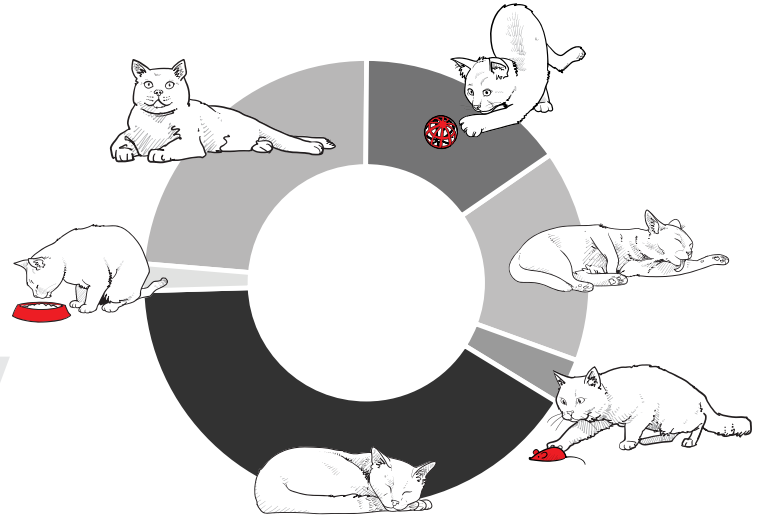
UNDERSTANDING FELINE PERSONALITIES TO MEET ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS

83% OF NON-MEDICAL EUTHANASIAS ARE FOR BEHAVIOURAL REASONS

Chronic stress in cats leads to disease. And perceived “behaviour” problems lead to relinquishment and euthanasia. If we can prevent this, by providing owners with accurate information early and often, we will get the best results for these animals and keep cats happy, healthy, and in homes.

Most behavioural disorders result from situations where cats are prevented from performing their natural behaviours, which include hunting, grooming, roaming, sleeping, eating and resting.

All cats have basic environmental needs to limit their stress. However, every cat is an individual, with unique personality traits and habits. These needs can look very different for different cats.



A RECENTLY DEVELOPED SYSTEM IDENTIFIED 23 UNIQUE FACTORS TO MEASURE THE MORE COMMON DIMENSIONS OF CAT BEHAVIOUR.

To simplify this complex categorization, consider two basic groups:



PASSIVE CATS

- ✓ Nervous
- ✓ Timid
- ✓ Shy
- ✓ Introvert
- ✓ Hides

Signs of stress include fear, anxiety, defensive aggression, marking, house soiling, and decreased environmental exploration and interaction

ACTIVE CATS

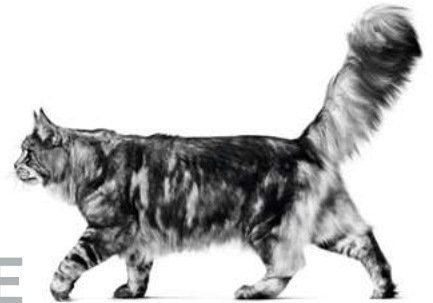
- ✓ Active
- ✓ Outgoing
- ✓ Loud
- ✓ Extrovert
- ✓ Roams



Signs of stress include frustration, predatory aggression, marking, increased motor activities, and exaggerated environmental exploration and interaction



PASSIVE CATS REQUIRE SECURITY



ACTIVE CATS REQUIRE STIMULATION



A SAFE PLACE

When faced with a perceived threat, cats seek to “avoid & evade” rather than confront, to reduce the risk of injury.

- ✓ Vertical space to elevate and withdraw (e.g. shelves)
- ✓ Concealment to feel safer (e.g. boxes, carriers)
- ✓ Marking to enhance environmental security (e.g. scratching posts, pheromones)

- ✓ Vertical space to improve visual stimulation (e.g. shelves, window-seating)
- ✓ Opportunities to explore the environment (e.g. safe outdoor access)



RESPECTING SENSE OF SMELL

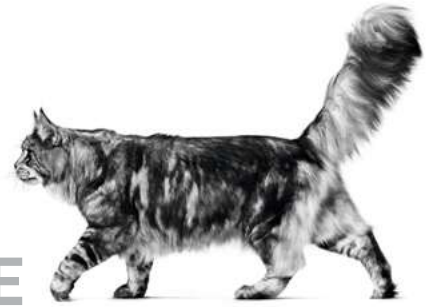
Communication (through posturing and marking) is meant to prevent altercations over food and territory. Marking enhances the recognition of the environment and creates an increased sense of security.

- ✓ Clean food bowls thoroughly
- ✓ Avoid strong cleaners and detergents, or scented cat litter
- ✓ Regular cleaning of litter boxes
- ✓ Allow to mark the area for increased sense of security (e.g. scratching posts)
- ✓ Rotate cleaning of bedding to maintain olfactory consistency

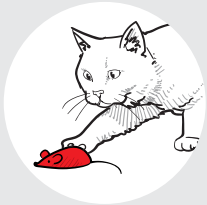
- ✓ Clean food bowls thoroughly
- ✓ Avoid strong cleaners and detergents, or scented cat litter
- ✓ Regular cleaning of litter boxes
- ✓ Interesting smells that increase stimulation (e.g. catnip, plants)



PASSIVE CATS REQUIRE SECURITY



ACTIVE CATS REQUIRE STIMULATION



PLAY & PREDATORY BEHAVIOURS

Predation consumes a significant portion of daily activities. It is an innate need that extends beyond food. Play is an important part of any cat's environment, and taps into a cat's natural hunting behaviors.

- ✓ Increase feeding time budget (e.g. interactive puzzle feeder; typically easy, quiet and stationary)
- ✓ Encourage exploration through foraging
- ✓ Play sessions focus on positive reinforcement
- ✓ Cat-owner/handler movements and interactions
- ✓ Quiet and individual

- ✓ Increase feeding time budget (e.g. interactive puzzle feeder; rotate both type and difficulty)
- ✓ Encourage exploration through hiding kibble
- ✓ Play sessions focus on increasing stimulation
- ✓ Complete entire predatory sequence to avoid frustration
- ✓ Rotate toys, avoid using hands



POSITIVE & PREDICTABLE INTERACTIONS

Cats tend to prefer high-frequency, low-intensity social interactions. There should be no forced interactions. Maintain consistency of handlers, timing and schedule. Avoid punishment, and use positive reinforcement.

- ✓ Use treats to create positive associations
- ✓ Interact in a calm and quiet environment
- ✓ Respect their need to isolate or withdraw

- ✓ Clicker train to come, do not reach for cat
- ✓ Respect choice to stay close, but perhaps without contact
- ✓ Short petting or grooming sessions



ALL CATS NEED



MULTIPLE & SEPARATE RESOURCES

Cats need individual and separate access to resources: this includes food, water, and areas for toileting, sleeping, scratching, and playing.

- ✓ There should be no competition for resources.
- ✓ One resource per cat is necessary, with multiple entrances.
- ✓ Toileting areas should be kept away from other resources.
- ✓ Food stations should be visually separated.



INDIVIDUAL NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

Cats are individuals, each needing an individual nutritional recommendation based on patient factors, diet factors, and environmental/feeding management factors.

- ✓ Feed in a safe place without interruption by other individuals.
- ✓ Provide multiple and individual feeding locations.
- ✓ Encourage predatory behaviours through puzzle feeders, and by hiding the kibble to encourage foraging.
- ✓ Provide positive interactions by maintaining a consistent feeding schedule.
- ✓ Clean dishes regularly to respect sense of smell.

Selected References and Resources:

1. Bradshaw, J. (2018) Normal feline behaviour...and why problem behaviours develop. *J. Fel Med Surg.* 20(50), 411-421
2. Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, Cats in Canada 2017 Report. ([Open access link](#))
3. Duffy et al (2017). Development and evaluation of the Fe-BARQ: A new survey instrument for measuring behavior in domestic cats (*Felis s. catus*). *Behavioural Processes.* 141:3, 329-341
4. Ellis et al (2013). AAEP and ISFM Feline Environmental Needs Guidelines. *J. Feline Med and Surg.* 15, 219-230.
5. Panaman, R. (1981) Behaviour and ecology of free-ranging female farm cats (*Felis catus L.*) *Zeitschrift für Tierpsychologie.* 56(1), 59-73
6. World Small Animal Veterinary Association Nutritional Toolkit. ([Open access link](#))