



## In this month's issue



### 1 CATS WITH DIABETES

Living with a diabetic cat can feel overwhelming, but with proper treatment diabetic cats can continue to live long and healthy lives.

### 2 HYPERTHYROIDISM IN CATS

Feline Hyperthyroidism (thyrotoxicosis) is the most common endocrine disorder in cats – especially in older cats over the age of 10. Read about potential options for managing this disease in your pet.

### 3 CAT BEHAVIOUR – UNDERSTAND YOUR CAT

Cat behaviour can often seem strange to us and some of it drives us crazy. However there is always a reason behind the behavior and often it is triggered by the cats own natural instincts or reactions to the world around them.

## Cats with Diabetes: Living with a diabetic cat

Having your cat diagnosed with diabetes may seem overwhelming, however, with some guidance from your veterinarian home care is fairly straightforward.

Diabetes occurs when the cat's pancreas no longer produces the levels of insulin needed to permit the body's cells to use glucose for energy, or when the cat's body becomes "insulin-resistant" and can't use the available insulin properly. Sugar builds up in the blood and urine, causing the kidneys to work overtime trying to rid the body of the excess sugar. The cat eats more and more, in an effort to get the fuel needed to survive.

### Diet

Consistency is the key: the same food, same amount and same time each day. We now know that a change in diet can positively affect the course of diabetes and, in some cases, even help send it into remission. Studies have shown that diabetic cats who eat high-protein, low-carbohydrate foods are easier to manage and may sometimes even go back to normal, meaning they no longer need insulin injections. However, a diet change isn't an option for every diabetic cat, so talk to your vet before changing your diabetic pet's food.

### Insulin Injections

Daily insulin injections replace the naturally occurring insulin that the body is no longer making or can't use effectively. There are several types of insulin available for cats, and your veterinarian can show you how to give the injection properly. The needles used are small and fine, so many cats seem to barely feel them. Most cats tolerate injections without a fuss.

### Blood Glucose Monitoring

Good control of blood glucose levels,

especially in the early stages when the disease is first diagnosed, makes for better management. This is done initially by your vet, but your vet can teach you to perform these at home over time.

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### Your Own Observations

Paying attention to how much your cat is eating, drinking and peeing in the litter box can help you keep tabs on how well he's doing. Learn to recognize unusual behaviour such as seeming weak or appearing "lost" in a corner, which can indicate hypoglycaemia, or low blood sugar. Rub some honey on his/her gums and get him to the veterinarian ASAP. With good management, though, you can expect many more happy years of companionship with your cat.

Our veterinarians at PKVH are experienced in helping cat owners learn to care for diabetic cats, so whenever you need help or have a question, check in with your cat's doctor!

**Sources:** <http://www.felinediabetes.com/>  
<http://www.vetstreet.com/dr-marty-becker/how-do-i-care-for-a-cat-with-diabetes?page=2>





## Hyperthyroidism in Cats

Hyperthyroidism is a common feline endocrine disorder, most often diagnosed in older cats over the age of 10. Left untreated, hyperthyroidism can have serious consequences on vital organs such as the heart and kidneys. The good news is, this disease is highly manageable and can be controlled with proper veterinary care.

The thyroid gland, located in your cat's neck, uses dietary iodine to make thyroid hormones that help regulate important body functions including your cat's metabolism, body temperature, blood pressure, heart rate and gastrointestinal (bowel) function.

If your cat has hyperthyroidism, his or her thyroid gland will be enlarged and be producing excessive amounts of thyroid hormone.



### Signs of Feline Hyperthyroidism

Signs of hyperthyroidism can vary in severity depending on how a cat has been ill. Signs of hyperthyroidism include:

- Weight loss
- Increased appetite
- Diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- Increased thirst
- Poor skin and coat condition
- Hyperactivity

### Managing Hyperthyroidism

There are four potential options for managing cats with hyperthyroidism:

**Radioactive iodine therapy:** radiation to treat abnormal thyroid tissue

**Daily nutrition:** limiting dietary iodine intake reduces excess thyroid hormone production.

**Daily medication:** anti-thyroid drugs inhibit the production of thyroid hormones.

**Surgery:** removal of abnormal thyroid tissue.

### The Importance of Nutrition

Proper nutrition plays an extremely important role in the treatment of a cat with hyperthyroidism. Hyperthyroid cats develop muscle wasting as well as many metabolic complications because of their disease. Therefore, they have special dietary needs and require sufficient amounts of all essential nutrients in their daily diets. This includes adequate amounts of high-quality proteins, fat, minerals, vitamins, and water.

Hills Pet Nutrition have released a new food to help manage feline hyperthyroidism under veterinary care: y/d Feline Thyroid Care pet



food. This new prescription pet food has been clinically proven to help manage thyroid health when fed as the sole source of nutrition. y/d Feline Thyroid Care contains limited iodine which reduces excess thyroid hormone production, while still providing a complete diet for adult cats that need restricted iodine intake.

Other benefits include that your cat no longer needs to be medicated twice daily.

Please call your veterinarian today on **9524 6644** to find out more about this new product!

**Source:** <http://www.hillspet.com.au/cat-care/cat-disease-hyperthyroidism-in-cats.html>

## Cat Behaviour – Understanding your cat

Now this may sound obvious, but many people expect their cats to react in the same way a human would. This is simply not the case and once you begin to think like a cat, their sometimes strange behaviors will become more clear. It will also help you resolve some of your cat behaviour problems.

Unfortunately some natural cat behaviors can cause problems in the home and this is when owners need to have patience and understanding in helping their feline friend through difficult situations which could be triggering the behaviour.

Let's take a look at one of the most common reasons why a cat may behave in a destructive manner for instance, scratching the furniture, meow a lot or even over eat and become fat.

### Boredom

Many cat Behavior problems arise simply when an animal is bored or frustrated.





This is especially true of indoor only cats. It is essential to make sure that your cat's environment is stimulating. This can be easily resolved by providing things like an indoor kitty tree, climbing post, lots of toys or a 'kitty gym'.

Luckily today you can find whole ranges of cat furniture from a range of retailers allowing you to create a veritable kitty adventure playground!

### **Why Do Our Cats Hunt Even Though We Feed Them Every Day?**

The cat hunting instinct is strong and remains in our domesticated cats. But to us owners, it can be rather upsetting to find dead mice and birds left on our doorstep, especially if they are well chewed.

There is not much we can do to stop this behavior except to keep your cat indoors.

### **Urinating and Defecating in the Home**

This has to be one of the most distressing and annoying cat behavior for many of us, especially if we have a cat who does this frequently, ruining carpets and soft furnishings.

However, unless the cat is ill and can't help it, this behaviour is usually triggered by the cats natural instinct to scent mark their territory. But doing it in the home is extreme and is normally caused by some anxiety the cat is experiencing.

### **Aggression**

Whether it be fighting with the neighbours' cats, between siblings or other family cats or pets or even towards us, aggressive cats are a problem.



However, there is no one reason for any of these situations and they must be approached differently.

- ◆ Sudden aggression towards us or other pets in the home could be caused by what is known as aggression trauma and can be brought on by some traumatic recent experience such as a visit to the vets.
- ◆ General aggression is often a learned behaviour and is often associated with cats who have been abused or have not had the benefit of being brought up with their mother or siblings. We humans can also have a hand in promoting this behaviour, although we are probably unaware that we are doing it.

◆ Cat Bites - Have you ever wondered why a pet cat will sometimes bite for no apparent reason? Understanding a cats body language can help us to avoid being bitten.

- It may be a manifestation of so-called status-induced aggression, in which cats seek to control a situation.
- There may be some neurologically significant negative stimulus associated with being petted at length that affects these cats in particular.
- These cats may be especially subtle at letting humans know when they're unhappy, so that their change in attitude appears more sudden than it truly is.

### **Scratching Furniture**

I think every cat owner has suffered this problem at least once.

As mentioned above, this is mainly due to boredom but it can also be triggered by new furniture coming into the house and the cat wanting to mark it in some way.

It may also be caused by the cat simply not understanding the rules of the house. It's true some cats need to be trained not to sharpen claws on furniture but to use their scratching posts only.

### **Excessive Meowing**

You wake up bleary eyed in the middle of the night, the cat is loudly meowing outside your bedroom door again. Does this sound familiar?

Again unless your cat is ill in some way, this cat behaviour is a learned behaviour often for attention. Unfortunately cats do not keep the same social hours as we do and unless we can set up a routine at night for our cat, we will continue to be woken in the small hours.

### **Cat Personalities**

Every cat has its own individual personality. Some may be very outgoing and love to meet and greet new people while others seem to be afraid of everything and hide away at every opportunity.

Of course family genetics plays a part but life experiences can play an even bigger part in your cat behaviour.

### **Nervousness**

Unfortunately not all cats get a great start in life and this can cause them to react badly to the world around them. There's nothing worse than seeing your pet constantly hiding away or shying away from human contact all the time.

Some cats are just more fearful than others, especially to things like loud noises and new people or animals.

### **Discipline**

Unlike our children cats cannot be disciplined in the same way, they simply won't understand what is happening.

Humans, when angry or afraid, will shout or lash out in some way. Both of these will simply frighten your cat and instead of correcting the behaviour will simply make them afraid of you.



## Understanding Our Cats

Understanding our cat behavior is very important. It will not only help us to prevent many antisocial cat behaviours but will also promote a better relationship between owner and pet.

### The Feline Social System

Many people believe that cats are aloof and selfish, doing exactly what they want when they want. However, cats in the wild often live in colonies, similar to a pride of Lions and can display very social cat behavior to one another.



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**Bonding** - The human, cat bond is not always a natural one. For some cats who are new to a home and who may have previous unpleasant experiences with humans, are not always happy to be around humans. This can be very upsetting for the new cat owner, who simply wants to love and care for their new feline friend.

**Clingy Cats** - Although we as cat owners love to have a pet who wants to be around us and displays lots of affection towards us, in some cases this can become a problem. A clingy cat who is distressed when left alone is an unhappy cat and this can lead onto other antisocial behaviors such as defecating in the home.

### Odd Cat Behavior

Cats will also show some unusual behavior from time to time. Well, it looks odd to us anyway, but in many cases there really is a good reason for it. One of these odd behaviors is eating grass, a behavior that we have all seen. But as odd as it looks there is a reason why our cats eat grass.

### Feline Vocabulary

Cats have many methods of communication with each other. Developed in the wild, these sounds and actions have far more meaning than mere meowing for the pleasure.

The signals range from very obvious direct ones, to subtle gestures we may not notice, but which send very definite messages to other cats.

### Vocal

They can be very vocal at night time, which is the normal time for cats to be out and about hunting or looking for mates.

However, it is thought that cats have also learnt to be more vocal with us, perhaps copying our own verbal communication, in an attempt to try and get us to understand what they want. Many cats make a different sound for when they want to go out or want feeding etc.

Purring is another form of communication.

## Physical

The cat's sense of smell, touch and hearing are the most important senses they have, and cats use them far more keenly than humans. They also use body language to communicate many emotions, from fear and aggression to pain and contentment.



**Smell:** Cats have a special organ in their nose called the vomeronasal organ, which helps them to detect smells. You may have noticed your pet slightly opening their mouth when they have smelt something new, they are using the vomeronasal organ when they do this.

**Scent** is also an important communication method. They identify each other by smell and also use it to mark out their territory. Cats have scent glands around their mouths and also their feet. That is why you may see your cat rubbing its face around furniture or people; they are just marking it, to say that it belongs to them.

**Body Language:** By understanding your pet's body signals you will notice when they are not feeling well, if they are afraid of something, or are generally not in the mood for a cuddle and would just rather be left alone. A cat's face will give a lot away; if the pupils of the eyes are wide this will indicate either a scared or angry animal especially if they have a fixed stare.

Or it could mean that they are quite excited about something. Their body language will also help to clarify their emotions.

Ears folded back means aggression while completely flattened against the head means that they are really scared. Ears pricked up and held slightly forward means that they are confident and a happy cat.

## Conclusion

By watching and listening to our cats more closely we will gain a better understanding of their needs as well as their delightful social interactions with us. It may even help to alert us to when our cats are feeling unwell. A subtle change in cat behavior can often be the first indication that something could be wrong.

*Source:* <http://www.our-happy-cat.com/cat-behavior.html>

## APOLOGY

We wish to apologise for having inadvertently omitted attribution to Julie Gordon Photography for 8 images used in our past newsletter editions. These images were an important and valuable contribution to our newsletters.

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