Behaviour problems in cats

Behaviour problems in cats include behaviours that owners find objectionable, such as house soiling and aggression, as well as abnormal behaviours associated with stress or disease. As behavioural problems are a common reason for relinquishment or euthanasia of cats, resolving these problems has important welfare implications.

**CAB Abstracts** contains a wealth of information on the behaviour of cats, including normal behaviours, why undesirable behaviours develop, identifying signs of pain and disease, and environmental, behavioural and pharmacological approaches to problems.

**CABI's CAB Abstracts database comprehensively covers hot topics that matter**

CAB Abstracts sources the world literature to provide the complete picture on feline behaviour, including information on:

- **House soiling**: Urinating or defaecating outside the litterbox is a common behavioural problem for which cat owners seek assistance from veterinarians.
  
  *House soiling by cats: two case studies with contrasting behavioural diagnoses and treatment approaches.*
  
  *Companion Animal, 2018*

- **Common risk factors for urinary house soiling (periuria) in cats and its differentiation: the sensitivity and specificity of common diagnostic signs.**
  
  *Frontiers in Veterinary Science, 2018*

- **Signs of pain and disease**: A change in behaviour may indicate that an animal is unwell, but recognizing pain in cats is not easy.
  
  *How do we know they hurt? Assessing acute pain in cats.*
  
  *Veterinary Record, 2018*

  *Measuring pain in dogs and cats using structured behavioural observation.*
  
  *Veterinary Journal, 2018*

- **Environmental requirements**: Keeping a cat in a suitable environment is important for minimizing stress and reducing the risk of behaviour problems.
  
  *Relationship among cat-owner bond, cat behaviour problems and cat environment conditions: a study with 1553 Spanish cat owners.*
  
  *Proceedings of the 11th International Veterinary Behaviour Meeting, 2017*

  *Evaluation of the relationship between cats and dogs living in the same home.*
  
  *Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research, 2018*

- **Treatment of behaviour problems**: In addition to behavioural therapy, psychotropic medications and pheromone therapy are being trialled.
  
  
  *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery, 2018*

  *Advances in behavioral psychopharmacology.*
  
  *Veterinary Clinics of North America, Small Animal Practice, 2018*
### Introducing CAB Abstracts

**CAB Abstracts** is the leading English-language bibliographic information service providing access to the world’s applied life sciences literature from 1973 onwards, with over 380,000 abstracts added each year. Its coverage of the applied life sciences includes agriculture, environment, veterinary sciences, applied economics, food science and nutrition.

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### Stress

Stress is a complex response to external or internal stressors that can lead to a wide range of physiological and psychological effects. The stress response is mediated by the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which is activated in response to a stressor. The HPA axis stimulates the release of corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH), which in turn stimulates the release of adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) from the pituitary gland. ACTH then stimulates the release of cortisol from the adrenal gland.

The stress response can be divided into three phases: the alarm reaction, the resistance phase, and the exhaustion phase.

1. **Alarm Reaction:** This phase is characterized by a rapid activation of the stress response. Physiological changes during this phase include increased heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration, as well as increased production of stress hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine.
2. **Resistance Phase:** In this phase, the body attempts to adapt to the stressor by mobilizing resources. This can include increased energy production, increased immune function, and improved cardiovascular and respiratory function.
3. **Exhaustion Phase:** When the stressor persists, the body may enter the exhaustion phase. This phase is characterized by a decrease in the body's ability to respond to stress and a decrease in the body's stored energy reserves.

### Fear

Fear is a normal response to perceived threats. It is characterized by a sense of immediate danger and a desire to avoid or escape the threat. Fear can be caused by a variety of factors, including physical or psychological stimuli.

Fearful behaviors in cats can be categorized as follows:

- **Fearful, shy cat:** This type of cat is very fearful and avoids contact with strangers, handling, and restraint. It may also be aggressive in certain situations.
- **Fearful, anxious cat:** This type of cat is still very fearful but may be more willing to interact with strangers, handling, and restraint. It may not be as aggressive as the fearful, shy cat.
- **Fearful, aggressive cat:** This type of cat is very fearful and may be aggressive with strangers, handling, and restraint. It may also be aggressive in certain situations.

Understanding and managing fear in cats is important for their welfare and the well-being of those who interact with them. It is important to approach these cats with caution, provide a safe environment, and offer positive reinforcement when they show signs of being calm or relaxed.

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**Small Animal Shelter Medicine**

Distinguishing Feline Behaviors in Shelters: Stressed, Fearful, or Feral?

By [Author Name]

This paper explores the various behaviors that cats exhibit in shelters and discusses how these behaviors can be used to distinguish between stressed, fearful, and feral cats. The authors present a classification system for these behaviors and provide recommendations for managing each category.

The authors note that many cats in shelters exhibit behaviors indicative of stress or fear. These behaviors can include crouching, hiding, or freezing. The authors propose a system for categorizing these behaviors based on the degree of stress or fear exhibited by the cat.

The paper also discusses the importance of understanding these behaviors in order to provide appropriate care and treatment for the cats. The authors emphasize the need for shelters to provide a safe and controlled environment for these cats, as well as to offer targeted interventions to help them adjust to their new surroundings.

Overall, the paper provides a valuable resource for shelter workers and animal welfare professionals looking to better understand and manage the behaviors of cats in shelters.

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