

Have you ever wondered why ... ?

Why do our cats do some of the things they do? Some of our pets' common behaviors can be explained, others only guessed at. Here are the "best guess" at some behaviors we see all the time.

Purring

According to research posted by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the purr is something cats are able to do from birth. Purring is used in a wide variety of circumstances, not just when a cat is happy.

Veterinarians have noticed that some cats purr continuously when they are chronically ill or appear to be in severe pain, maybe to solicit care from humans. Others believe that a cat purrs when ill or in pain to ward off threats. If a cat is ill in the wild, he may purr when approached by another cat, so the approaching cat doesn't feel he is a threat and attack.

Ankle Attacks

Your cat is not trying to hurt you! This behavior usually signifies boredom! Cats need to play and to practice their hunting techniques. An indoor cat without adequate stimulation, may well feel that his only chance to practice these skills is on you. A cat doing this needs more scratching and climbing toys, maybe some stuffed animals to drag around, and may well benefit from having another feline friend, who will be able to help burn off some of that energy he feels.

You can try to change this behavior by having one of your cat's favorite toys in your hand. As you reach the spot where your cat usually ambushes you, throw the toy in another direction. The idea is to recognize that your cat wants to engage

you in a play game, but redirect that energy into more appropriate activity.

Chattering

Technically, those are called "articulated sounds" and are associated with solicitation and frustration. Most cats make that distinctive teeth chattering noise when they see birds, squirrels or other "prey". Actually, the noise may be instinctive. House cats kill prey with a bite to the back of the neck. Feline behavior specialists have noted the similarity between that noise and that special neck bite.

Rubbing

Your cat has special scent glands located in various parts of his body, including the area underneath the skin on his chin, and the area around his eyes. When your cat rubs up against you with his head, he is actually "marking" you with his own scent. He is claiming you as "his"!

Rubbing his head against your shoes is also a marking behavior - perhaps your cat is trying to cover up the scents from where you have been during the course of the day with his own scent.

What is Purring?

There has been a lot of speculation on how purring occurs.

Electromyographic tests - they measure the level of electrical activity in muscles - seem to indicate it is caused by the activation of the muscles of the larynx, and partial closure of the glottis (the opening of the larynx).

What is Chattering?

The chattering motion of the teeth helps position them to slide between the vertebrae to sever the spinal cord in an extremely efficient (and humane) killing bite.



OUR SPOTLIGHT CAT



George

Remember George from last summer's newsletter? I wrote about him and the autoimmune skin disease (pemphigus) that was causing his body to attack his skin. The good news is that George is doing great! Luckily, a woman named Georgia saw him on our website and told us to try something called Feline Transfer Factor (FTF). She even bought a can of it for us to try.

Well, George has been on it for about 7 weeks now, and he's doing awesome! The really good news is that George is finally well enough to be adopted into a new, permanent, loving home, which he so deserves. We love him here at our house, but we're up to our soft pointy ears in felines, and George should be where he can get more attention from his humans and not have kittens jumping on him in the middle of the night with "Let's play!"

George is an amazing cat. He's sweet, funny, and intensely loyal. He's allowed outside because his skin does better when he's allowed out, especially in the chillier months -- so he'll need a home where he can safely go outside a little.

When I get home from work, he always runs up to my car to greet me. He then walks up the walkway with me and into the house, telling me about his day, and

lodging his latest complaint about "The Kittens". (He actually likes the kittens -- we've caught him playing with them. He just doesn't want us to know it.)

George loves human kids. If there are kids around, he wants to be in the midst of them. Just yesterday our neighbors were having a kiddie birthday party, and when they were all outside running around on the lawn, George went over to join them.

He is also very funny. He loves to tease our Sarah (a Himalayan cat who thinks she is a princess and should therefore be worshipped) by jumping up on my crafts table, lying down and hanging his head over the side, and bopping Sarah with his paw while she's sitting on one of the chairs. Once he gets her to scream like she's being murdered, he rolls on his back all over the table, like he's just won the lottery. It's very cute. And don't worry about Sarah -- she holds her own with him, and has been found sleeping RIGHT NEXT TO HIM, of her own accord. So we don't feel sorry for her. We know she secretly likes him.

George is the head of the Secret Service at our house. He guards the perimeter, both inside and out, to make sure we were all safe. No matter what we were doing, George loves to walk around the house and check on us, to make sure we were OK. He is brave, solid, and true, and there's not another cat like him on the planet.

Anyway, that's our George. He is the best cat ever. And he needs a home. A little more info:

Age: 6 years
Lap cat: Yes
Sleep-with-you-at-night cat: Yes
Shots and tests: all done
Cost of Leukeran: \$45 per month
Cost of FTF: \$22 per month
Vet visits: 2-3 per year
(for the pemphigus -- a blood check)

If you'd like to know more about George, please call Animal Rescue at 503-284-8768 or email us at arcf@pdx-pet-adoption.org.

-- Jackie Fischer

Flea Season is Here!

Fleas start hatching as soon as the weather begins to warm up (early spring). Keep a close eye on your pets and apply a topical flea inhibitor (such as Advantage or Revolution) as soon as you notice your pet scratching.



LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

We want to be more interactive with our readers. Do you have comments, questions, problems, stories, advice? Have you found a new pet-related product that you love? Do your kids have a pet story they'd like to tell us? Let us know!

Email us at:
arcf@pdx-petadoption.org

or write us at:
P.O. Box 14956,
Portland, OR 97293



ANIMAL PLACEMENT UPDATE

In November, December, and January, we placed 30 cats in new loving, responsible homes.

Our major expenses for those three months were: Veterinary fees: \$26,785*; Advertising to find new homes: \$237; Food, meds, supplies: \$274**; Newsletter "Animal Talk": \$862

*These expenses also include veterinary care for the dogs of Portland's homeless and a few emergency care visits. We also had expenses for several severely injured and some very sick pets.

**Most volunteers pay for food and litter for the animals they care for.

ASK THE VET

West Nile Virus

by Dr. Elizabeth Colleran

Given recent news stories about the presence of West Nile Virus, there's some concern about the possibility of our feline friends becoming ill or transmitting the disease to people.

The Center for Disease Control quotes a study that found cats who have been bitten by infected mosquitoes or eaten infected prey can have the virus circulating in their bloodstream within 12 to 36 hours of exposure (although none was isolated from the blood more than 4.5 days after exposure). A small number of cats showed mild, non- neurologic signs (mild lethargy and mild fevers) for a brief time. The study suggested that infected prey animals (mice, etc.) may be a source of infection to the animals that eat them. However, it also indicates that cats are unlikely to develop high enough levels of the virus to function as a source of infection if uninfected mosquitoes bite infected cats. (To date, there is no documented evidence of any cat-to-person transmission of the disease.)

My recommendation is to follow all guidelines recommended for decreasing mosquito numbers and your exposure to them in your home environment. Continue good health care of your feline family members and, as always, call your vet if you have any concerns.

Call for Volunteers

- **Deliver the newsletter.** Take copies of our newsletter to places of business (pet stores, vets, dr. offices, groomers, day care, libraries, restaurants, etc.). You can do this in your own neighborhood -- you pick the spots. You can deliver 3 or 300 -- up to you.
- **Stuff envelopes** (for the newsletter). You can do this in your own home, on your own time. You can stuff 5 or 500 -- up to you.
- **Provide transportation.** Transport cats to/from vets, pick up and deliver food/litter, pick up and deliver newsletter, etc.
- **Write for us.** Write blurbs describing cats for the ARCF website. Write articles for the ARCF newsletter.
- **Make things for our animals.** Make collars and tags for foster cats. In your own home. Make catnip toys. In your own home.
- **Do marketing/PR.** Figure out ways to get our name out there and known (and then do it).
- **Do outreach.** Be a liaison with other animal rescue groups.
- **Check addresses of potential owners.**
- **Be a foster home or emergency foster home.** (An emergency home means you will have the animal for two weeks maximum.)

To volunteer, please contact ARCF at arcf@pdx-petadoption.org or 503-284-8768.

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Animal Rescue & Care Fund, Inc., is a private, non-profit, tax-exempt corporation funded solely by private donations. A board of directors makes decisions on policy and activities. All funds are used exclusively for veterinary care, food, classified advertising to find suitable homes to place animals, and publishing the quarterly newsletter, "Animal Talk." Volunteers provide good temporary homes until the animals are placed in responsible, permanent homes.

SUCCESS STORIES

Ozzie (Spunky)

Spunky was born in a home where his human mom had dementia and forgot to feed her cats. A neighbor called someone responsible for her, and she was moved to a care facility. Then the neighbor took the surviving cats to a vet.



One didn't make it, two were sent to a shelter, but Spunky was so scared of everyone and everything that the shelter didn't want him. After more than a month at the vet's office, he began to realize he was safe (and well fed) and started warming up to people. He even began playing with some of the other boarders at the hospital. Someone called us and asked if we could help find him a home.

Spunky found a home with two other ARCF-placed kitties. He was renamed Ozzie, and within no time he had charmed all residents of his new home, both human and feline. He and his new brother, Emmett, were soon chasing each other, tussling, playing, and grooming each other.

His new sister, Cinnamon, at first refused to make his acquaintance. Later, however, she allowed him to be on the bed with her for afternoon naps. They have even been caught sleeping close together in a sunny patch on the living room rug. Ozzie is now a sweet and affectionate kitty and the perfect companion for his new human mom, who has been at home recuperating from surgery.

He cuddles with her during the day and does everything to be a good nurse- - except bring her meals!



Ozzie (orange) & Emmet (black)

SUCCESS STORIES



Jasper (white) & Sox (tabby)

Jasper & Sox

From Carma, ARCF volunteer: When Jasper and Sox first came to my house, they scurried behind the furniture and came out only when no one could see them. Eventually they got comfortable enough to come out and meet the gang, and I have never seen two more loving cats. The only problem was, at the first sight or sound of an unknown person, they would run for cover and not come out until the stranger was gone again.

I worried that no one but me would ever see their wonderful personalities. And then we got a call from Teresa and Dave, who had an empty spot in their house and hearts where a cat used to be, and needed to fill it. They saw the photo of Jasper and Soxs and wanted to meet them.

We explained that these boys would require a little extra patience, and a room of their own, until they got brave enough to explore and claim the rest of the house. This did not deter Teresa and Dave, and they took Jasper and Sox home.

Several weeks later, Teresa wrote us: Sox goes to everyone who will pet him and wanders all over. Jasper is pretty much a one-person kitty. He has decided that I am his and he tolerates the others only for short pets. Jasper purrs, rolls over for tummy rubs, comes to me, etc., and for the others he has a resigned look. Not sure when I have laughed so hard or as much over the antics of a cat.

Both are love babies. We are sure enjoying them and are very glad that they are with us. They are also getting spoiled!



AN UPDATE



Steve the Dog (Hercules)

You may remember Steve from our Winter 2006 newsletter -- the little dog who was found running in traffic on a dark, rainy night. He was scheduled to be euthanized by the county shelter when ARCF stepped in and saved him.

Our favorite part of his story is where Steve ended up. He now has a new name -- Hercules -- and is living with a wonderful family. His new (and forever) mom seems to be a magnet for animals that need a really good home.

Hercules is living with his buddy, Asta (the dapper blond boy in the picture), two cats (one blind), several chickens, and a delightful seven-year-old girl. Hercules loves them all, including the chickens.

Because of good food, baths with a good-quality pet shampoo, great walks at the dog park, and most of all a lot of love, Hercules (as you can see) now looks happy, healthy, and much younger than the 12 year he was estimated to be.

Hercules is the third rescued senior in his family. Even though his new mom knows that the seniors will not be with her as long as puppies or kittens would be, she still finds it very rewarding to adopt them. She also knows what all rescuers know: sometimes the older ones appreciate a great home more than the younger ones do, and give their people more love because of it.

Have You Adopted from Us?

We are asking all ARCF alumni to check in and give us an update on your pets, no matter when you adopted from us. Send us an email, a note, a photo, whatever. We want to run some "where are they now" features in the newsletter. If you adopted kittens from us, it would be fun to see baby pictures and grown-up pictures.

Email us at arcf@pdx-petadoption.org or write us at P.O. Box 14956, Portland, OR 97293-0956.

Spay & Neuter Coupons

On request, we can provide coupons for spaying and neutering cats and dogs. These coupons make this procedure very affordable. Several good, full-service vets participate in this program. For coupons please call Pam at 503-284-8768.

Remember: cats and dogs are fully sexually mature at the age of 6 months and can be safely spayed or neutered at that age.

Tabitha & Marshmallow



I got my girls from ARCF when they were 12 weeks old. They're now a year old and I can't believe how fast they have grown -- they're not my babies any more! They are very happy and sweet girls who are excellent companions. Attached are their 1-year pictures.

-- Debra Engels

Is Your Cat Peeing Outside the Litter Box?

Cats urinate outside the litter box for all kinds of reasons. Usually they are trying to tell you something -- they may be sick or in pain, or something happened to them or their environment that they don't/didn't like. If your cat is doing this, the first step is ALWAYS to take the cat to the vet to make sure there's nothing medically wrong (like a kidney problem, bladder infection, urinary tract infection, etc.). If there's nothing medically wrong, read on.

All of us at ARCF experience this from time to time -- sometimes its the foster kitties, but our own cats do it, too. For example:

- My cat started urinating outside the box when I moved the cat tree out of the bedroom and into the hall. I moved it back in and she stopped and was fine. It can be tough trying to figure out what the problem is -- sometimes it can be just a little thing.

- If I accidentally leave any clothes on the floor of our bedroom, my Sarah will pee on them. I finally figured out the reason: my foster kitty, Sam, won't let her on the bed to sleep with us at night -- he sits on the bed and guards it all night long. Now some nights we shut the bedroom door so Sarah can sleep with us.

- I have a cat who urinates on all my rubber-backed throw rugs. I finally had to buy throw rugs with no backing on them. She doesn't pee on the new rugs.

- I have one who urinated when I was getting ready for work. She did not want me leaving the house. Then I went away on vacation for a week, and she miraculously stopped doing it.

- I decided to try corn-based litter because it is nontoxic, flushable, and much lighter weight than the clumping litter I had been using. Very expensive, but seemed worth a try. Shortly after that I noticed inappropriate puddles, especially on cat beds, throw rugs, and stacks of towels in the area near the litter box.

There were no foster cats in my house at the time, but I do have a multi-cat household. Nobody raised a paw to confess, so I staked out a watch by the box.

A certain male feline, whom I'll call Hank (names changed to protect the innocent), headed for the box, set one toe in, and yanked it back out again as if he just got burned. He did the same with another foot. He stared at the box for a bit, then attempted to perch on the side of the box and pee into the new litter without actually touching it, but the box wouldn't support him. So he gave up and went over to a towel I had placed conveniently on the floor nearby, and piddled on that. The corn litter instantly went away, the old litter came back, and there were no more outside-the-box experiences from Hank.

I found nothing to complain about with the corn litter, but clearly it was very offensive to him in some way.



Here are some of the reasons for inappropriate urination:

- Using a different kind of litter, litter box, litter box liners, etc. can cause it. Cats can be very picky that way. Some don't like any changes at all.
- The kitty may not like her litter box location. She might want more privacy, or less traffic, or the litter box may be too near her eating area, etc.
- Someone (a child, perhaps) may be interfering with the kitty while in the litter box.
- Dirty litter box. Some cats are really picky about wanting a clean litter box. So try scooping more often and changing the litter more often.
- Some cats don't like sharing a litter box and want their own.
- Food -- your cat may be tired of the same old food, so try something different. Or, maybe you changed your kitty's food and she doesn't like the new food.
- Something may be going on outside (like another cat in your yard).
- Another cat is trying to dominate the urinating cat.
- Cats will sometimes urinate where another cat has been urinating, or where another cat has marked a spot with his saliva or paws. They can literally get into peeing matches with each other.

Cleaning up is key

The challenge of cleaning up cat urine is to get rid of the odors that only cats can smell or they will continue to use the same spot.

The only thing that will do this is an enzyme cleaner (for example, OxyQuick, Urine-Off, Nature's Miracle, Petzyme, Get Serious, Simple Solution) that you can find at a pet store. There are many on the market, and we here at ARCF all swear by different ones. You may have to try several before you find one that works best for you.

The product manufacturers recommend keeping the cat off the area so the enzyme can work. So after you clean the area, put foil or double-stick tape over the area to keep the cat off of it and let the enzyme do its job (it might take several applications).

Another idea: after you've cleaned and treated the carpet, put a litter box in that spot, with a mat under it (or anything that makes the carpet itself unavailable. After a couple of weeks, move the litter box to somewhere else in the same general area and put something else over the spot (scratching post, dresser, etc.), still making sure the carpet itself is not accessible. Gradually move the litter box to where you want it to be.

You may even have to put the litter box on the bed, the sofa, etc. The point is, you need to communicate back to the cat that the litter box is a must.

Some vets suggest putting the cat in a small, easy-to-clean room, such as the bathroom or utility room, with many litter boxes covering the floor. This statement lets the cat know exactly what your response is to the peeing.

One nice thing about both cats and teenagers: they grow out of things. Aggressive young cats can turn into really nice, mellow adult cats who would rather die than urinate outside the box. Sometimes they just have to get that teenage thing out of their system.

All About Ollie

I adopted Ollie, a beautiful tuxedo cat, when he was seven. He was terrific companion and a loving lap cat, who hardly ever got sick. Then, when he was 12, he was diagnosed with diabetes. I gave him daily insulin shots, and he lived for four more years.

The end of Ollie's life was quite an adventure. In June 2006 (when Ollie was 16) we were due to have our first baby. I thought sending Ollie to stay with my dad for a little while (just an hour away) would be good for both him and Dad, since I knew there would be a lot of commotion at our house when the baby came.

After 10 days at Dad's, Ollie got out one night and didn't return. We walked the neighborhood over and over, calling him, asking neighbors if they'd seen him, left food out for him, and checked with the local shelters to see if he was there. After three weeks, I was sure he had gone off to die. Then one night my dad called -- Ollie had shown up! He was extremely emaciated and quite wobbly on his legs, but he was alive.

I immediately took him to the vet, which brought some bad news. Not only had he lost 30 percent of his body weight and was severely dehydrated, he also had a large mass in his abdomen. The vet said the prognosis was not good. At 16 and diabetic, I thought he'd made it as far as he could, so I made the tough decision to put him down.

My husband was gone at the time and asked me to hold off a day so he could say goodbye. The vet gave me an IV to give him fluids and keep him comfortable overnight. By morning, Ollie had perked up and was eating more. He stayed close by wherever we were, and even meowed by the refrigerator as usual. A week passed, and then one day he went out to our backyard and disappeared. I thought this was it for sure. He had come back to say goodbye, but now he had left again to die on his own terms.

Another week passed -- and he showed up again! There he was, sitting at the sliding door at 5:00 a.m. He was very weak and dirty. I gave him some fluids and some tuna water, but he wasn't interested in eating. He was so weak that he couldn't take more than a few steps without lying down.

This time, I knew he was too tired to go on. That same day, Ollie was laid to rest. I cried big tears and held him the whole time. He was a champ till the very end.

IN MEMORIAM

- *Cindy, Tim and Shaun Silvas family lost their darling Sinbad.*
- *Linda Anderson lost her beloved Lionel, whom she adopted from ARCF 17 years ago.*
- *Jim Sutherland lost his good friend Moses, a fine and noble puss.*
- *Elvis has left the building and Lisa Merino misses him very much.*

The Kitty Corner

This has been another year of rescues and successes as you have read in Animal Talk throughout the year.

For me this work reminds me of when I played golf. Hitting one good shot in 18 holes was enough to get me to play another 18 the next weekend. But I've moved on to this work and finding a good home for one hard to place cat keeps us looking for a good home for the next one (or more).

We have been extra happy lately to have placed a number of wonderful cats that have been a little older or a little shyer in terrific homes. It certainly gives us the boost we need to find that perfect home for cats like George, who is the greatest cat in the world, and the energy we need to face kitten season.

Some people might say Rock On! But I say spay and neuter!

-- Pam
Brooks,
president



SUCCESS STORIES

Spring Allergies in Your Cats



As new plants and flowers burst into life this spring, so too do the symptoms of hay fever. But humans aren't the only ones who suffer. Blooming plants, grasses and flowers can trigger allergic reactions called *atopy* in dogs and cats.

The allergy is similar to hay fever that humans suffer. The animal reacts to inhaled particles such as mold, pollen, and dust. But instead of sneezing, pets typically have itchy skin and will persistently scratch, lick and bite to get relief. Like in human sufferers, the allergy is an inherited predisposition.

"If left untreated, dogs and cats with seasonal allergies will scratch or lick themselves constantly," says Dr. Link Welborn, AAHA past president. "In an attempt to relieve themselves, dogs and cats often create sores that become secondary infections."

If the signs of atopy occur for less than three months out of the year, oral medications (like cortisone) may be used to control itching. In more severe cases, pets are given a skin allergy test to pinpoint what allergies the animal is sensitive to. Your veterinarian can then give injections of the allergic material in minimal doses to build up immunities in your pet's system. Other treatments for allergies include immunotherapy, antihistamines, steroids and medicated shampoos.

If you suspect that your pet may be suffering from seasonal allergies, please visit your veterinarian.

-- AAHA,
printed with permission

YES! I want to help

Animal Rescue & Care Fund depends entirely on your donations to help the animals. Our work includes rescue, medical aid, food and shelter, humane education, neutering/spaying, and more. All workers are volunteers.

Your contribution goes directly to help the animals. All contributions are tax-deductible.

I enclose _____ for humane work.

(\$35 sponsors a cat, but of course, we are grateful for any amount.)

Sponsors can receive a photo and a story about the cat.

I'm interested in receiving a story and a photo.

I'm interested in being a volunteer. Please contact me at _____.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Mail to: Animal Rescue & Care Fund

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