

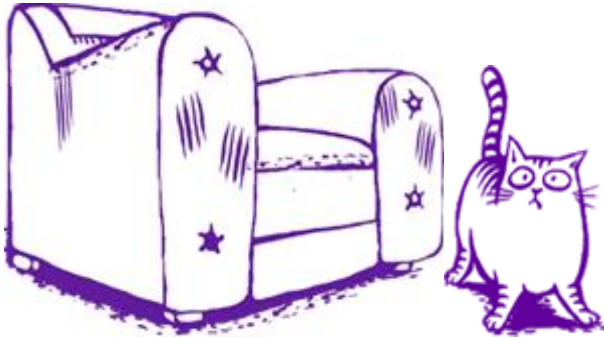
CATS AND STRESS

A Blue House Guide



RECOGNISING STRESS IN CATS

Stress is not always obvious. Have you noticed any of the following in your cat?



- Scent marking in the house (urine spraying)
- Defecating in strange places around the house
- Scratching furniture or walls
- Overgrooming – licking him/herself so much they become bald or sore
- Seeming withdrawn, quiet or not keen to eat
- Cystitis (bladder inflammation)
- Aggression to other pets / family members

IS MY CAT AT RISK?

Any cat can be affected by stress, but cats in certain environments are more at risk. Cats are sensitive souls, and sometimes something as simple as moving a bit of furniture around can make them feel confused and uncomfortable in their own home. The main sources of stress include:

- Multi-cat households
- Moving house, or during building work
- New pets or people in the house (including visitors or new baby)
- Visiting the cattery or veterinary practice
- Social events such as parties or Christmas
- Strange cats coming into the house or garden



WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP REDUCE STRESS?

- Always allow your cat the opportunity to 'get away from it all' if he or she is finding things stressful. Allow plenty of **hiding places**. Cats feel safer at a height so the top of the wardrobe or a high shelf is ideal.
- Try to keep to a **routine** as much as possible. Be aware of situations that may upset the balance – be it visiting friends, building a new conservatory or even moving the TV to a different part of the room – and pay special attention to your cat's behaviour.



- If part of the stress is due to other cats coming into the house, consider a cat flap that responds to your cat's microchip to stop unwanted intruders. Magnetic ones are also available but require your cat to wear a collar.



- Use **Feliway Diffusers** in the rooms where your cat spends most of his/her time. This is a synthetic version of feline facial pheromone, which is used by cats to mark their territory. It creates a state of familiarity and security.



- If your cat is urinating in the wrong place, the best way to break the habit is to keep the cat away from the area as long as possible, **remove any smell** that the cat can detect and change the geography of the location by using pieces of furniture to block access. Wash the area with a 10% solution of biological or **enzymatic washing powder** and then rinse with cold water and allow to dry. Spray the area (using a plant mister) with surgical spirit, scrub and leave to dry. You may want to try a small area first on delicate fabrics. Petfresh “Urine-off” Urine Stain and Odour Remover is a particularly effective product to remove residual odours.



- If your cat is spraying urine in a particular place, or scratching a particular surface, apply **Feliway Spray** to the surface daily.



- **Anti-stress medications** such as Zylkene (capsules to be sprinkled on food) or KalmAid (gel to be applied to food or onto the paws) can help reduce anxiety during stressful situations. These are non-prescription medications based on milk protein that have no known side effects and are very safe.

WHY ARE MULTI-CAT HOUSEHOLDS SO STRESSFUL FOR CATS?

It is common to have more than one cat, but in fact cats are naturally solitary animals that value their privacy and are not well adapted to competing for resources such as food or a good sleeping spot. Multi-cat households can work, but special measures need to be put in place to help the cats cope.

- Do not force cats to compete for resources. Ensure that you have **plenty of litter trays** available (one per cat plus one extra).
- **Feed your cats separately** – ideally in different rooms. Sharing a feeding space is a common cause of stress in cats.
- Allow **plenty of hiding places and beds** so that the cats are not forced to share sleeping space.
- Pheromones such as **Feliway** can help ease tension between cats and help them feel more secure in their environment.
- When taking on more than one cat, it is best to go for littermates, who will get on better. Failing this, introduce a kitten rather than an adult cat wherever possible. If you already have one cat, you may need to think carefully about whether or not to introduce a second cat at all.



If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to us! Give us a ring on 01782 522100 or call in. Further information is available on our website www.bluehousevets.com