

Problem Solving for You and Your Cat

Multi-cat Household Disputes



If you are bitten or badly scratched by a cat/kitten, always seek medical care immediately as these injuries can cause severe infection and illness in people.

If one of your cats is bitten by another cat, seek veterinary care as cat bites cause severe infection and illness in cats, and when left untreated for several days not only become more costly to treat but also affect the cat's vital organs.

If you're in doubt about how your existing cat will accept a new cat/kitten into your household, it is advisable not to proceed with adopting a new cat/kitten.

The *Cat Management Amendment Bill 2019*, once passed, will require all households owning more than four cats to apply to the State Government or local council for a permit to keep them. Exemptions will apply to registered breeders, cat boarding facilities, and foster carers working with cat management facilities.

Why do some cats in multi-cat households not get along?

- They have not grown up together.
- Cats are generally solitary animals from approximately 12 months old and not accepting of new cats into the household.
- Inadequate resources available for each cat, causing guarding/ fighting to protect them.
- Limited opportunity to hide/avoid situations of potential conflict.
- External stressors like a neighbourhood cat.
- They don't like each other.

What are the signs of aggression in cats?

Normal interactions

- Play fighting – chasing, rolling around, batting with paws, generally silent.
- Biting is gentle, claws usually retracted.

Aggressive interactions

- Aggressive fighting – hissing, biting, swiping paws, chasing aggressively.
- Passive aggressive signs – staring, guarding resources, keeping a distance from one another.
- Victims may hide and cower when near the offending cat.
- Re-directed aggression – triggered by sounds/movements e.g. seeing neighbour cat outside and attacks housemate instead.

What to do when cats are physically fighting?

DO:

- Identify the primary trigger and make amendments.
- Avoid injury to either the cats or yourself by using a distraction (such as a toy) or barrier.
- Carefully introduce new cats into the home and ensure each cat has its own resources located in an area separate from other cats. Visit: tenlives.com.au/factsheets/problem-solving for information on Introducing a New Pet.

DO NOT:

- Spray water on cats to distract them when fighting, it can increase tension and aggression.
- Punish the aggressor, as it will make things worse.
- Touch cats fighting or immediately after fighting to prevent being

What you can do to help?

Placed in separate locations, provide each cat with the following:

- Food and water bowl.
- Litter tray with access via two separate points to prevent guarding.
- Varied scratching surfaces.
- Private retreat areas – carriers left open or cardboard boxes.
- Plenty of toys, rotating them to keep cats interested.
- Vertical spaces and perches – cats feel safer when up high.

Ensure:

- Daily interactive play sessions and exercise for each cat.
- Rule out medical issues, aggression where none existed before may indicate pain or illness.
- Use calming pheromones – Feliway and/or therapeutic music – Pet Acoustic Pet Tunes which are proven to reduce stress and other behavioural issues in cats.

If the problem continues see a vet or a pet behaviourist.