AGGRESSION BETWEEN CATS

Helping Cats Get Along: Understanding and Managing Feline Aggression

Cats are independent and territorial by nature, and not all will get along right away. Here's what you need to know about feline aggression and how to help your cats coexist peacefully.

Why Cats May Not Get Along

- **Under-socialization** – Cats that grew up alone without exposure to other cats may react fearfully or aggressively when introduced to a new feline.
- **Territoriality** – Cats value their space and may feel threatened by a newcomer.
- **Personality Differences** – Some cats simply don't mesh due to differing social styles.
- **Past Negative Associations** – A bad experience (such as a vet visit or loud noise) can cause one cat to associate fear or stress with another cat.
- **Social Maturation** – As cats age (1–3 years), their social dynamics may change, leading to new conflicts.

Note: Sudden changes in behavior can indicate a medical issue. If you notice unusual aggression, contact your veterinarian.

How to Manage Cat Aggression

❌ **DO NOT let cats "fight it out"** – This will only make aggression worse.
✅ **DO interrupt fights** with a loud noise (clap hands or use a water spray bottle).
✅ **Neuter your cats** – Unneutered males are more prone to aggression.
✅ **Provide separate resources** – Use multiple food bowls, beds, and litter boxes in different areas.
✅ **Create more space** – Add vertical perches, hiding spots, and cat trees to reduce tension.
✅ **Give aggressive cats space** – Do not try to comfort them during an outburst.
✅ **Reward good behavior** – Treats and praise help reinforce positive interactions.
✅ **Try pheromones** – Diffusers that mimic natural calming cat scents may help reduce stress.

Reintroducing Cats After Conflict

For Mild Aggression or Cats That Previously Got Along:

1. **Separate** the cats for a few days with individual resources.

2. **Feed them near each other** but on opposite sides of a closed door.
3. **Swap their spaces** daily so they get used to each other's scent.
4. **Gradually open the door** a little at a time if they remain calm.
5. **Try tuna juice** – Applying it on their heads can encourage mutual grooming and relaxation.

For Severe Aggression or Cats That Have Never Gotten Along:

1. **Keep them separated** for longer and reintroduce them slowly.
2. **Use supervised sessions** with food or play to create positive associations.
3. **Start with distance** and gradually move them closer over multiple sessions.
4. **Consider using leashes or crates** to maintain control.
5. **Only leave them alone together** once they can eat and play near each other peacefully.
6. **Behavioral medication** may help reduce fear and aggression in extreme cases.

When to Seek Professional Help

If aggression persists, consult a **Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB/ACAAB)** or a **board-certified veterinary behaviorist (Dip ACVB)**. Chronic stress is harmful to pets and humans, and in some cases, it may be best to keep cats permanently separated or consider rehoming one for their well-being.

By understanding feline behavior and taking gradual steps, you can create a peaceful multi-cat home. Patience, time, and proper management are key to success!