

# Your Talkative Cat

Vocalizing is a normal behavior in cats. Some cats are more vocal than others, but most cats do make noise at least some of the time. We're all familiar with the "meow" and the meaning of hissing and growling, but there are also many other sounds that your cat is capable of, and a variety of reasons for vocalizing.

## Medical Reasons

If your cat's behavior changes suddenly, the first thing you should do is take her to your veterinarian for a thorough health exam. Cats can be very stoic until they're seriously ill. Any change in behavior may be an early indication of a medical problem. It can also be associated with aging and any stage of cognitive dysfunction.

## Breed Tendency

Be aware that some cats, like the Siamese or Oriental, are known to be very chatty. To help reduce this natural tendency, avoid giving her any attention when she is vocal and instead, give her attention when she is quiet.

## Attention-Seeking Behavior

Some cats are vocal because they know they'll get a reaction. People may talk back, fill the food bowl, yell, lock her in another room, or pick her up and soothe her. All of these responses could encourage attention-seeking behaviors. To discourage this behavior, try to ignore your cat when she vocalizes and when she is quiet pour on the love, feed her or give her some treats. This may take time so don't give up.

## Your Cat Wants To Go Outside

We encourage indoor only cats. If your cat was previously an outdoor cat here are some suggestions to help make the transition to indoor only easier on both of you:

- Spaying/neutering will rid your cat of those hormonal urges to go out and seek a mate.
- Play Schedule: Schedule play times to enrich your cat's indoor life.
- Window Perches: Be sure your cat has a view of the outdoors and a sunny place to lie. Cats like to watch birds, so putting a bird feeder or bird bath outside this window is likely to make it a favorite spot for your cat.
- Hunting Instincts: Satisfy your cats' natural hunting instincts by hiding bits of dry food around the house in paper bags, boxes, and use food dispensing toys. This is great to do right before the family leaves the house for the day or closer to bedtime if your cat "talks" when wanting out at night.
- Attention: Try to give your cat extra love and attention during this difficult transition to inside-only.
- Build a "Catio": These outdoor enclosures provide cats a safe way to enjoy the outdoors.
- Aversives: As a last resort, if your cat still won't give up meowing by the door, try a mild aversive. Leave strong citrus scents by the door or hide behind a wall to make sure your cat doesn't see you and shake a pop can filled with coins, or use a water spray to interrupt the behavior.

## Grief

Sometimes after the death of a person or animal in the cat's life, she will vocalize to express her grief. This is a normal part of the grieving process. Even a long vacation or hospital stay for the owner can be confusing and lonely for the cat and can cause her to vocalize more than usual. The best thing you can do for her is keep her schedule the same (or as close as possible) and spend some extra cuddle and playtime with her. With time, this problem should take care of itself.

## **Transition**

If your cat is new to your home or has just gone through a change (move, new person/animal in the household, person moved out) and has just started her talkative behavior, be patient. This may be happening due to the transition and will stop on its own - if the behavior is not inadvertently rewarded. Remember, even scolding can be perceived by your cat as attention and encourage the behavior.

## **Nocturnal Activities**

Your cat may be most active in the early hours of the morning. Since this is a normal behavior for a cat, the suggestions below are given to help reduce the impact of the behavior.

- Exercise your cat before bed, until she is very tired. You'll know she is tired by her choosing to stop play. Try using a wand toy or other toys that require little human exertion.
- Add catnip with those evening games. Sometimes catnip can help a cat sleep longer.
- Be sure the cat's bowl has food in it for the night. Many cats like to wake at 4 am and hunt or feed, so just providing food may keep the cat quiet.
- As an alternative to simply providing food in a bowl, you may hide dry cat food around the house, preferably away from your bedroom. Try putting a few pieces of dry cat food inside a paper bag, under the sofa, beneath a piece of newspaper, or inside a cardboard box. The purpose is to provide a hunting aspect to the nighttime activity. You may need to hid some in an easy-to-find location until she figures out the game.
- Having an enriched "cat room" for night time can also help with cats who yowl all night. In addition to the above, you would feed your cat in her room at night, close the door and "train" her that this is her night time palace where she rests until you let her out in the morning. It can take time for your cat to adjust to this change so be consistent to get the best long term results for a peaceful night's sleep.
- Only if you were considering it already, you may try getting a second cat. There's no guarantee this will solve the problem, but many people report that the two cats who get along can amuse each other, allowing the humans to sleep.

**Need Help? Call our free Pet Behavior Help Line (503) 416-2983.**