

No More Homeless Pets Forum

Date: July 31 – August 4, 2006

Topic: Cats on the Couch



Renowned cat therapist and rescue advocate Carole Wilbourn answers questions about the kitty psyche.

Introduction from Carole Wilbourn

You love your cat and you're a terrific guardian. But sometimes you're totally perplexed by your cat's behavior. Why is he tearing up your rug or not being consistent with his litter box habits? The other day, he beat up his companion and he hates your boyfriend. What to do?

Whatever the problem is, you need help. Are you wondering if you both need time "on the couch"? Let me offer my advice so you and your cat can be in sync. A happy cat makes me a happy therapist.

Bio for Carole Wilbourn

Carole Wilbourn is a cat therapist and rescue advocate whose work and advice are covered regularly in countless magazines and newspapers, including the *New York Times*, the *New York Daily News*, the *New Yorker*, *National Geographic*, *Biography* magazine, *L.A. Life*, *Marie Claire*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *London Daily Mail*, the *National Post*, and the *Montreal Gazette*.

Carole makes house calls coast to coast, and consults by telephone internationally. She works with many veterinarians to devise programs for cats with psychological and emotional disorders. She is a staff consultant at Westside Veterinary Center (<http://westsidevetcenter.com>) in New York City.

Carole's monthly column "Cats on the Couch" ran for 16 years in *Cat Fancy* magazine. The column now appears on Carole's page on the In Defense of Animals website (http://www.idausa.org/cat_therapist/index.html). IDA is a national nonprofit organization that works "to protect the rights, welfare, and environments of animals." Other areas of their website are excellent resources for all animal welfare information.

Carole was co-founder of the first hospital for cats only, located in Manhattan. Over a career lasting three decades, Carole devised the "Wilbourn Ways" of curing and preventing cats' behavior problems.

Carole lives in Greenwich Village, New York, with her cat, Diana-Moon-Dust.

Alternative treatments for peeing cat

Question by alaskamaryann: Hello, Carole, and thanks for being here for us. Here's yet another pee problem. I have three cats: littermate sisters Nutmeg and Ginger (age

10) and an unrelated boy, Mr. Rosemary (age 11). Nutmeg and Ginger arrived at a home at the age of about three months, adopted from the local shelter. Mr. Rosemary came later, picked up off the street.

Many indications point to some abuse to Nutmeg and Ginger by their previous caretaker. We moved into their house when they were six months old, and the suspected abusive caretaker moved out. We didn't notice for awhile, but it turns out that Nutmeg had been peeing in the plants (and perhaps kept them alive). I effectively stopped that behavior by putting orange slices on the soil. But, every now and again, she will go through phases of peeing on other surfaces.

She has peed on the bathroom sink, the bedroom comforter, the living room blankets, a pile of clothes on the floor, the dog's bedding, the couch cushion. She will pick one place/item and pee there for a couple of days, then stop. She also uses the litter boxes regularly (we have two – one upstairs, one downstairs). She is the brattiest of the cats, always provoking the others, then screaming for help when cornered.

The vet has checked her out and she is physiologically fine. She never poops outside the litter boxes. Admittedly, when the litter boxes are not up to snuff (sniff), she gets peeved and pees elsewhere, which I can understand. What other issues could be causing this intermittent peeing behavior, and can I stop it?

Response from Carole Wilbourn: In my opinion, annoying urination bouts can be a symptom of residual angst. Nutmeg probably suffered some traumas that she relives when she becomes anxious. When that happens, her bladder becomes uncomfortable and she avoids the litter box. Also, it becomes a habit. Rivalry probably sets her off.

Try the following suggestions:

- Spend some private daily time with her.
- Praise her whenever you see her use the box.
- You could also try a third box and use strips of paper towels instead of litter.
- Some cats like to be escorted to the box; it makes them feel special and cozy.
- Mention her name when you speak to the other cats so she feels included and special. When she feels left out, she acts out!
- Add some digestive enzymes to her food (<http://prozyme.com/> is one resource) – maybe also 1/4 teaspoon of brewers' yeast, if her kidneys are healthy.
- A homeopathic remedy such as arsenicum album (6c, 1 pellet daily), for two weeks, should help her to assimilate things better. A drugstore that sells homeopathic remedies should carry it. There may also be others that will help but this could be a start. A homeopathic vet could advise you further; there is a national directory at www.altvetmed.com.
- Lavender oil or potpourri should also add a calming effect to the environment.
- An anti-anxiety drug is another alternative, but Nutmeg would need blood chemistries done, if she hasn't already had blood work, to rule out any organic problems, such as a liver dysfunction.

She is a candidate for one-on-one therapy, but this will get you going!

Feral cat having trouble integrating

Question from Lkn4cats: Loretta is only two years old. She was born on a farm to a feral mother, but raised by me since six weeks of age, in a rescue setting with lots of cats around. She didn't show well for adoption and I kept her as my own kitty. She sleeps with me at night. Any time another cat approaches, she crouches down and growls, but is a big chicken and doesn't attack anyone.

She will run. Consequently, most of the cats chase her, especially Gidget, who will stare out the windows and follow her around the house (window to window). Loretta pees in our bathroom on the counter (unbeknownst to us). There are three litter boxes in there, a Feliway plug-in, and no cats can get her in there. I am really at my wits' end with her. The vet says there is absolutely nothing wrong with her. Ideas?

Response from Carole Wilbourn: This looks to me like a plea for privacy from a feral cat. Loretta has been spayed so her indiscriminate urination is not related to being intact. The reason it's a factor is that an unspayed cat will often avoid the litter box when in heat and sometimes continuously. A female can reach sexual maturity sometimes as early as five or even four months. When in heat, she will usually become very affectionate, crouch and roll about and become very vocal. It's not unusual for an intact female to have a silent heat or to go in and out of heat.

When the latter occurs, it's usually because of cystic ovaries. When a cat is spayed, the ovaries and uterus are removed and the recovery period is usually about 10 days, at which time the sutures, if not absorbable, are removed. The proper name for the surgery is an ovariohysterectomy.

Did the vet run a urinalysis? If not, this should be done and have her anal glands checked out. Yes, it is a behavioral problem, but it may also be medically related. It's important to cover all the bases. Deviant behavior is frequently caused by multiple factors.

The best way to start Loretta on the way to becoming emotionally healthy is to set up a spot where she can have all her creature comforts and the security of knowing she won't be attacked by Gidget or the other cats. This will help her to slowly but surely, in time, increase her self-esteem and become more confident.

Loretta's anxiety level is high and her indiscriminate urination can be a symptom of anxiety. If she has her own space during the day, perhaps one of your other cats, if amenable, could hang out with her.

This special space could become her security object where you can interact with her. But when you do this, announce to the other cats that you're taking care of her for them. The better Loretta feels, the better they'll feel. They won't understand your words, but your body language and tone of voice will communicate your meaning and their connection. So, they'll feel that they are in the loop and not neglected.

You could also make a door of expandable puppy gates to her space so they can view

each other. This would make it possible for you to play with them on either side of the gate so they can get used to being close without Loretta being the scape-cat. Could be she may never become integrated into the gang, but it's not too late to start over now. This way, she'll have peace of mind, which is a strong plus.

Perhaps if Loretta has this security during the day, when she sleeps with you at night, she will be more at ease and so will you. Sounds like your cats could all use some healthy supplements added to their diet. A cat's behavior is affected by his or her diet, especially B-complex vitamins. A homeopathic remedy such as the Bach Flower Rescue Remedy for anxiety can be added to their water. It also comes in a spray, and both are available at most health food stores or naturopathic pharmacies.

Thanks for being socially responsible and adopting a feral cat.

Why is Spaulding being a bully?

Question from ingridg: The boy who says he's king (over and over and over ...)!

I have a 2 1/2 year old boy, Spaulding, who we found on the street when he was a kitten. He is the most social of our family as far as people are concerned. The other cats are all girls: two five-year-old sisters, Cali and Noodle, and Peek-a-Boo, the baby TNR'd kitten who was never released who is about 1 1/2 years old. She was the last to join this four-cat unit.

Everyone is healthy and relatively peaceful times prevail, but every other day or so Spaulding the boy decides he has to prove his kingship by cornering and biting someone until I hear "the scream" that breaks it up.

Usually no harm is done and things seem to go back to normal pretty quickly, but he knows I disapprove of this behavior and always acts ashamed when I call out his name during these incidents. Many times he will give himself a "time-out" on his bed or on a cat tree. It's really true – like a dog!

He lost his big brother, James, in March and sometimes he wanders the apartment calling out with a sad and lonely "me-oooow."

Cali and Noodle were the first in this group of cats and they are dual queens as far as I am concerned, and as far as they are concerned, too! Is he trying to de-throne them? He does go after Peek-a (the youngest) sometimes, but it is far less often. Peek-a also seems to go after Cali and Noodle sometimes. Is there such a thing as cat mutiny? Thanks for your time.

Response from Carole Wilbourn: Poor Spaulding! Could be the loss of his brother is the reason for his aggressive behavior. A cat like Spaulding often terrorizes his companions because deep down he feels insecure. So when threatened or agitated from his point of view, he resorts to "fight" instead of "flight." He is probably still in mourning and it's coming out in bully-like behavior.

See if you can get him to play with Peek-a. The laser beam might be a way to get them to interact together and this could lead to a decent relationship.

Brushing would make him feel better. Use a moistened paper towel if he's brush-shy. Sometimes a comb is preferred. Brushing can be a plus for all of your cats.

Catnip may entice them. Sprinkle some on tissue paper. The first reaction is usually playfulness, which leads to becoming relaxed. The more relaxed a cat's body is, the better the feelings and ultimately the reactions. Yes, relaxation is a strong suit.

Sounds like all of your cats could use some vitamins added to their diet.

If you didn't already have a full house, I would suggest the adoption of a playful male kitten of the late James' coloring and to use "The Wilbourn Way of Introduction" (described in my post about Loretta the feral cat, and further in my book *The Total Cat*).

Make it a practice to mention Spaulding's name when you interact with his companions so he feels regal and this way they're all going along in tandem.

A physical exam may be an option at this time to make sure he hasn't developed any medical problems because of the loss of his brother. May your catdom become a peaceable one.

What is single cat syndrome?

Question from guerrpm: Hi, Carole! I have a two-year-old male that has always been a biter. We took him in after he showed up on our doorstep when he was about nine months old, so I don't know anything about him prior to that time. I can pet him for awhile, but invariably he grabs onto my arm and sinks his teeth into it. He also gets under my feet and nips at my feet and ankles, often drawing blood. I often wonder if he is just cranky when he bites my ankles, because a lot of times the next time I see him, he will be fast asleep. I have started squirting him with a spray bottle when he bites. Sometimes when it looks like he's about to do it again, simply picking up the bottle is enough to make him back off. I'm wondering if you have any other suggestions? Thank you!

Response from Carole Wilbourn: Sounds like your cat has some internal angst that surfaces when his energy builds. He becomes overstimulated easily – short fuse!

Stroke him briefly to avoid this deviant behavior. Some warning signals that it's time to stop would be flicking tail, back ripple, intense stare or twitching ears. If there aren't any such signals, count your strokes – perhaps limit to three – and stop before he starts.

I'll assume that he's been neutered, but if not, that should be taken care of right away. A male cat can become sexually mature as early as five months. Some signs of sexually mature or tomcat behavior are aggressiveness, spraying and yowling. The surgery can be done at five months and many shelters do it earlier (as early as eight weeks) to prevent the birth of unwanted kittens.

If he's your only cat, he may be a victim of "single cat syndrome." Because he doesn't have a feline companion, he's interacting with you the way he would with another cat. You've become his cat! My book, *The Total Cat*, will give you more info on how to match him with the right kitty and my introduction protocol.

Maybe you could arrange a play date or at least a visit from a friend with a mellow dog. Of course, the dog would be on a lead and you wouldn't personally interact with the dog, to prevent your cat from becoming jealous.

The dog would provide your cat with a wonderful distraction. Merely observing and speculating about this four-legged, non-cat creature would use up some of your warrior's energy – less pent-up energy to ambush you. There's a chance the dog could even become a regular play date for your cat. And the more you play with him, the less worked up he'll be, but wind down slowly and use toys, not your hands.

You're a caring guardian. May your warrior cat become a diplomatic cat and in time a Zen cat!

Thin-skinned Abner gets a kitten

Question from Sujaha: Thanks so much for agreeing to host this session, Carole! In this era of the "Dog Whisperer," it's nice to get some similar valuable help for our feline friends.

We have 10 cats and a dog. All are spayed/neutered and it's rare to have spats. No litter box issues and very rare marking instances. Sounds like utopia, right? Well, not quite ...

Abner is a nine-year-old albino Siamese mix. We adopted him two years ago from a no-kill shelter where he'd lived in a cage for six years. At the shelter, he showed extreme aggression. Several times, when volunteers would let him out of the kennel, he would attack them – and I do mean attack! Circle them, rush at them, jump on them, and bite repeatedly. It got to the point where volunteers were understandably hesitant to let him out. He also was a chronic marker in his kennel, soaking everything in urine. He had surgery for urinary tract stones, was put on prescription food, and experienced no further physical problems. The spraying continued, however.

Because we have a large house, we decided to give Abner a chance, thinking that a good part of his behavior might be due to "cage craze" and near complete lack of stimulation. According to the shelter manager, Abner attacked all other cats, and she highly recommended that he be an only cat.

In deference to her advice, Abner has his own bachelor pad downstairs at our house. Though he's isolated from the other cats, he has three large rooms with windows; plenty of fresh air; lots of birds, squirrels, and rabbits to watch in the backyard. Our only TV, recliners, and computer are down there, so he gets lots of daily interaction and play with us as well. He's turned into a lap-snuggler, drool dripper, purr manufacturer! In two years, he's never sprayed, not once ... and until the other day, showed no aggression whatsoever.

Here's what happened: Two of our other cats got into a spat on the other side of the door leading to the basement where Abner lives. Goldy Meir – one of the cats involved – has two vocalizations: a glorious purr and a blood-curdling scream. (She only has three legs, and that sound is a very effective defense for her!) You can guess which sound she used in this instance, can't you?! The disagreement was quickly resolved and they went back to their individual pursuits.

My first mistake was opening the door to check on Abner as soon as things settled down. My second mistake was not paying more attention to the body language I'm sure he was sending. My third mistake was being so complacent and consequently surprised, thinking that he was "cured" of aggressive behavior.

He proceeded to attack me with full force – screaming, circling, lunging, biting repeatedly. By grabbing a picture off the wall, we were able to "herd" him to the bedroom (where his food and litter box are kept), and we wisely (belatedly) left him until that evening. At that point, he was subdued but still on edge. We've added Rescue Remedy to his food every day since then, but I'm no longer kidding myself that this can't/won't happen again. The worst part is that I'm on my guard with him now, no longer trusting, and somewhat scared. I hate that.

So, my question to you is: What can we do to address this behavior? Is there anything we can do to help Abner cope and not totally freak out? This is Abner's forever home, for better or worse, but I sure want to do whatever I can to minimize the chances of another attack like that happening again. I'd appreciate any insight, any suggestions, any help you can give us. Many thanks!

Response from Carole Wilbourn: You certainly have been all-giving in your care for Abner. He is, indeed, an emotionally thin-skinned cat, which makes him so very vulnerable. It's so very hard for him to cope but because of your help, he has increased his stress tolerance immensely. But because he is so fragile emotionally, he relives residual angst and trauma when he is subjected to, particularly, heavy-duty stress.

That is what happened when Goldy Meir became hysterical. It created a ripple effect. Abner also became hysterical, had a full-blown anxiety attack and, unfortunately, you became his tension target. It was a case of displaced aggression. He redirected his pain and angst to you. You are so wise to be able to realize that you overestimated his coping ability and became "fair game."

His private quarters are a marvelous sanctuary for his healing. Abner has come a long way but it's a long journey. I have found in my years of practice that a cat with an aggressive catsonality benefits from a feral kitten. There is a mutual benefit. So if you located a sturdy, young feral kitten that adored other cats, the kitten would reach out to Abner and Abner would eventually accept him.

The kitten would help Abner to channel his jangled energy in a constructive way. A kitten with similar coloring would be a good match. A cat determines color by scent, so a kitten of Abner's own coloring would be familiar and speed up the relationship process. Gender is optional unless Abner has shown a preference.

You could place the kitten in a large crate or cage with all the creature comforts. Arrange for a neutral (unknown to Abner) person to leave the kitten in this container in Abner's sanctuary. After a while, you can enter and concentrate on Abner. Don't tell him the kitten's for him. It should be his choice. Once you're sure that Abner has accepted him, you can leave the crate or cage open. Be patient, as an adjustment period could take a few weeks. My book, *The Total Cat*, will give you additional tips for the introduction and integration. The prognosis is decent!

The kitten would have to be tough and spunky, but very cat-oriented, which a feral

usually is. He or she could even be five months old if not too large and there would be no rush to have them meet outside the crate or cage. In my experience, it has worked, but if you're nervous, don't jump into it.

The triangle syndrome: Three's a crowd!

Question from sherylcatmom: I'm so glad you're here! My husband and I have four cats we love very much. In the order we got them, there's Bailey (Bengal, age 7) and Jewel (Persian, age 16) whom we took from the same relinquishing owner; Teazer (Bengal, age 7), a retired stud; and Sammy the Serpent, age 3, a shelter cat who appears to be mostly Russian blue.

Jewel is an only cat as far as she's concerned. Bailey and Teazer are devoted to each other. Bailey (the uber-cat) is dominant, vocal, demanding, and complex. Teazer is kitten-like, meek, easily startled, and easily confused. Teazer loves everyone. Both Bailey and Teazer are highly active.

Sammy the Serpent is about 18 pounds of long, lithe muscle always ready to spring. He is extremely possessive of my husband and me. Sammy is intelligent, sensitive, affectionate, loving, ferocious, and wild. He challenges Bailey for the top-cat spot, but Bailey won't allow it despite being smaller, older, and front-declawed by his former owner.

Sammy loves Teazer (as does everyone; Teazer's a perpetually sweet kitten). Sammy seems to like Bailey and tries to lick his face sometimes (which Bailey tolerates for about 3 licks), but also starts fights with him. Bailey also starts fights with Sammy. When either cat is frustrated for any reason, such as I'm not feeding them fast enough or they want to be walked on their leashes, they redirect their aggression toward each other.

The big problem: Sammy spray-marks. He was already neutered when we got him at about seven months old. He started spraying at about a year. We give him 5 mg of Prozac a day, which keep him from being a perpetual fountain of pee. Instead, he just marks his favorite spots, where we finally hung pee pads. He's now been doing this almost two years. We started giving Sammy No Spray by Bottled Blessings about two weeks ago but haven't noticed a difference.

By the way, Bailey also started spraying two years ago when Sammy did. But after a few months on Prozac, Bailey stopped. He no longer takes Prozac and no longer sprays. I'd love to hear your ideas.

Response from Carole Wilbourn: I'll assume that Jewel is spayed and the three males are neutered so high hormone levels are not contributing to this friction. I'm happy that your senior cat Jewel is oblivious to this turmoil.

I would refer to this disharmony as "the triangle syndrome." One cat always seems to be left out and this creates the annoying behavior. Unhappy cats can cause unhappy people and vice versa. Incompatibility is also another minus. Bailey and Sammy are not well matched – as you've already indicated. You might wean Sammy off of Prozac and try another anti-anxiety drug, such as Buspar, or it may be that there is no total quick fix drug-wise.

The introduction of a kitten may be a diversion for Sammy and even out this triangle. A very playful kitten that preferred cats to people, cat-oriented, would make it easier for the kitten to bond first with Sammy. Choose a kitten of his coloring to speed up the acceptance. (Refer to my answer to the question from sujaha.) Perhaps a female kitten would be a lucky addition.

Good luck! You've been most tolerant.

Will my four cats accept a dog?

Question from bogiedew: I have four cats and am thinking of getting a dog. Not a puppy, an adult dog. None of my cats have been exposed to a dog. If I decide to get one, I want to bring him home first to see how he acts toward cats.

What are the signs I should look for in my cats to tell me getting a dog is not a good idea? My cats are very spoiled and I do not want to disrupt their lives or alter their home life. Any advice?

Response from Carole Wilbourn: So wise of you to consider your cats' relationship with a dog before you adopt one. Because your cats are not dog-savvy, you could see how they react to a cat-friendly or mellow dog before you even search for an adoptee.

The easiest way to do this would be to get them used to the sound of a barking dog. You could record the bark and play it back to them. During this time, stroke and interact with your cats so they form a tolerant association with the sound. Repeat this for a few days until they hardly even notice it. At this time, you will know it's integrated into their being.

Then, arrange for a friend or neighbor to visit with their dog, preferably a low-key temperament type. You don't want a type "A" dogsonality, which would push your cats over the edge.

Don't interact with the dog, but concentrate on your cats. If you buddy up to the dog, they won't! Let them call the shots. It may take a few visits to form a clear impression.

A cat-friendly dog can usually be found at a shelter or rescue group. There are many adoptees that have lived with cats and cohabitate lovingly with them.

If you decide to take the plunge, my book, *The Total Cat*, will give you information on my introduction and other pointers. Proceed slowly and cautiously – good cat characteristics!

Is psychogenic alopecia contagious?

Question from Alex: I have a three-year-old, domestic shorthair female that I took in from the streets of NYC when she was about six months old. I am pretty sure she is/was feral. We found one another when she was just past the age of being able to be properly socialized with humans. She was very aggressive and angry with me at first, but has since calmed down and is fairly normal, though she'll never be a lap-cat.

Over the past year, she has developed what the vet thinks are allergies – scratching hot

spots on her neck. She is very stressed by doctor visits and there is little they can do for her. Rather than taking her for allergy tests and steroids once a month, we have been trying different foods, giving fatty acid supplements and putting pure aloe on her hot spots. It seems to help some, but not enough.

Is there anything you have heard of that may link the difficulty of this disorder to stress or some environmental issue? She lives a peaceful life with me and her friend, an altered male that found us one day. They get along just fine and she began to have these symptoms prior to his arrival, so I don't think he's the issue. I'm at my wits' end and I just want her to be happy and feel good. Any advice at all? Thanks so much!

Response from Carole Wilbourn: Your poor, dear cat! Sounds like she has a case of psychogenic alopecia. When she becomes anxious, she scratches her neck. It's her stress target. She's reacting to residual angst that's triggered by just about anything that threatens her. This sensitivity would also be related to her diet. (One of my most dramatic cases appears on my site – thecattherapist.com – under testimonials.) Extra fatty acids and aloe have been fine strides in addressing her problem. I'm sure you've had her spayed. If not, make haste because a high homonal level is often a major culprit.

Try the following tips:

- Benedryl can be used to soothe the itch.
- Brush her daily to enhance her circulation and peace of mind.
- Make a recording of your voice talking to her with soft, calming music in the background. You can also mention her companion during the recording. Play this recording continuously to relax her body. The more relaxed her body, the less vulnerable her neck will be. My book, *The Total Cat*, has a chapter on music therapy. I discovered it was therapeutic to my patients in the 80s.
- Refer to my answers to the other questions in this forum that deal with inter-cat relations.
- You could try her on the homeopathic remedy *lac felinum* (30c, 1 pellet daily) for one week. It's made by Boiron and is available at drugstores that sell homeopathic remedies and at Whiskers in Manhattan. The second remedy that might be helpful is *arsenicum album* (6c, 1 pellet twice daily for two weeks). An anti-anxiety drug is another consideration.

You have a lot to do to care for her and you've been most caring.

Bully-free bedtime bliss

Question from Aurore: I recently adopted a new kitty to play with one of my other kitties. Griffin (age 8, black male) is a somewhat aggressive player. He harassed Ariel (age 5, gray white female who belongs to my roommate) and Kiki (age 11 1/2 black male) quite a bit more than they wanted, so I adopted Shea (age around 3 1/2, black male) from a local shelter (plus, he was just so cute that I couldn't resist).

Shea loves to play and he and Griffin play quite a bit, so he has relieved most of the burden from Ariel and Kiki. There are a couple of problems though. Shea's a biter. He can be all sleepy, purry and cuddly in my lap and then he will start licking my hand and then attack. The licking always comes first so I know to withdraw my hand, but he sometimes lunges for it or my arm if I hide my hand completely. He does this to Griffin, too, but Griffin doesn't seem to mind.

We are also experiencing some bedtime difficulties. If Griffin rolls too close to Kiki (6 to 12 inches), Kiki slaps him. I was pretty much able to deal with that by trying to make sure Griffin didn't get too close. Throwing Shea into the mix has made things more difficult. If Shea gets too close (1 to 2 feet), Kiki throws a complete hissy fit and eventually leaves the bed. Shea, of course, won't back off once Kiki gets his attention. Shea also tries to slap Griffin. He can't roll away because Kiki is waiting to slap on the other side. I think Shea wants to play with Griffin because he tries licking him first.

I know Kiki will never be buddies with Shea. He's not best buds with Griffin after eight years, but they get along most of the time. (Kiki does get along pretty well with Ariel.) I really would like for them to co-exist peacefully. What can I do to calm everyone down? I've tried Feliway but that hasn't really helped. Also, to my knowledge, Shea has never pounced on Kiki, but he does like to get close (he wants to lick him, too, which I am sure is a precursor to a throw-down). Everyone is fixed.

Response from Carole Wilbourn: It was a fine move to adopt Shea to hang out with Griffin. They've made some worthy inroads. When Shea becomes out-of-line with you, throw a toy to distract him or let out a sharp, fierce "no" to startle him. Put your whole being into this "no," but don't yell. Remember, your objective is to startle, not demoralize. You must be emphatic so Shea gets your message.

There are a couple of bedtime options. When Shea becomes unruly or oversteps his bed boundaries, carry or escort him to another room so he can wind down in his own sleep space. Make it a treat instead of a treatment. Tell him he can have his own space until he's in the mood for communal sleeping. Another choice would be to entice Ariel to sleep with your roommate.

During the day, you can try occasional catnip sessions and some soft music to work out and relax your guys. Daily brushing would also help to relax them, and add some brewers' yeast to their food – 1/4 teaspoon for each cat. Also, a healthy diet is a plus and you could look into some homeopathic remedies for Shea and Kiki to start. Good luck.

Is radiation therapy the solution?

Question from Danny: I have a male cat who's 14 (almost 15); he has lived alone with me his whole life. He doesn't travel well, gets pretty stressed when he has to visit the vet, and absolutely hates being confined to a room, much less a cage. Though he loves people, he will immediately attack or become upset by any four-legged creatures that come near him.

My problem is that he's been diagnosed with hyperthyroidism. I have him on daily pills to regulate his thyroid for the time being, but – from what I understand – the best option for him is a one-time radiation treatment. This would require him to be kept at whatever

facility that winds up performing the procedure (in a cage, presumably) for at least two weeks, until the radiation level becomes safe for him to come home.

I'm really concerned about how he'll do mentally during this time. He gets so lonely when I go out of town and he's never spent the night away from home without me. Is there any possibility that he could become dangerously upset or depressed during his confinement, or that he may end up permanently scarred (mentally speaking) from doing this?

Response from Carole Wilbourn: Yes, with the double stress of solitary confinement and the procedure, his psyche is at risk. He is a geriatric cat with a sensitive catsonality, so unless he could be given something that was a sure thing to relax him, I would be wary. It's a hard call because radiation treatment is usually very successful.

I do know of many cats that do well on medication. If this is the case with your cat, perhaps you should stay the course. I know you will make the best decision.

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