



Unwanted Cat Scratching

11.18.2018

General Information

Scratching is a normal cat behavior. In fact, all cats have a desire and need to scratch. They must be taught what objects or surfaces are appropriate to scratch. Inappropriate scratching or destructive behaviors can be a big problem for cat owners, causing harm to the human-animal bond. By knowing the causes and being able to address the problem, cat owners can strengthen their bond with their feline companions!

Causes

Several factors may be involved in causing your kitty's inappropriate scratching behaviors. Keep in mind that scratching is a normal cat behavior. Cats scratch to remove the dead outer layer of their claws, mark their territory, stretch their bodies, play, and release energy. It is unrealistic to try to eliminate all cat scratching behaviors. Instead, work with your cat's natural behaviors and redirect your cat to acceptable scratching surfaces.

Addressing the Problem

Solutions include tracking your cat's behavioral history, treating medical problems when needed, making environmental changes, and reshaping the cat's behavior. Try these tips to help with inappropriate scratching and destructive behavior:

- Determine what surfaces your cat prefers (carpet, corrugated cardboard, sisal rope, etc.) and your cat's design preferences (location, horizontal or vertical objects, etc.)
- Provide a variety of scratching surfaces (corrugated cardboard box, rope-wrapped posts, and a carpeted scratch post)
- Rub some catnip on the scratching surface or attach toys to it - this may attract your cat to this area
- Cover inappropriate areas for scratching with something unappealing, such as double sided sticky tape, aluminum foil, a sheet of sandpaper, plastic carpet runner with pointy side up, etc.)
- Remove any deterrents gradually once your cat is scratching only in appropriate locations
- Do not punish your cat for inappropriate scratching
- Use "booby-traps" to discourage your cat from scratching inappropriately (a loud sound, canned air, tossing a pillow nearby, or using a motion detector that sounds a tone or emits a burst of air)
- Never use force or pain to train your cat!
- Trim your cat's nails regularly
- Use toys and cat food puzzles to mentally stimulate and entertain your cat to properly release energy
- Use caps made for cat claws to prevent unwanted scratching
- Use behavioral modification supplements such as synthetic cat pheromones, if needed
- Spay or neuter your cat to correct territorial behaviors, such as inappropriate scratching