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**FELINE BEHAVIOR HANDLING TIPS**

**BARRIER AGGRESSION**

Hissing, growling, or otherwise acting aggressively towards a stimulus while being held back by a barrier (ex. cage door).

If the cat is showing Barrier Aggression in their enclosure, ask a staff member to remove the cat from the enclosure for you OR:

* Quietly approach the enclosure.
  + If the cat is calm, toss them a treat through the bars. Continue to toss small treats into the enclosure while they remain calm.
  + If the cat is growling, hissing or swatting, step away and wait for them to calm down then approach again and repeat.
  + Do not attempt to open the enclosure until the cat is calm when approached.

**CAT AGGRESSIVE**

Known history of acting aggressively towards cats and may redirect onto a person if a cat is present. These cats should be housed away from other cats.

* Wash your hands thoroughly before interacting with these cats to reduce the scent of other cats you have interacted with.
* Be aware of your surroundings when handling the cat and stop handling if another cat is within sight.

**DOG AGGRESSIVE/  
DOG REACTIVE**

Known history of acting aggressively towards dogs and may redirect onto a person if a dog is present.

* Be aware of your surroundings when handling the cat and stop handling if a dog is present (ex. walking down the hall within eyesight).

**DEPRESSED**

Cats can become depressed due to a variety of reasons. Being separated from their family and home can cause depression in addition to stress and illness. Signs of depression include loss of appetite, lack of interest in interacting with people, a lack of energy, change in body language (such as a tucked tail) and poor grooming habits. Feliway sprays, collars or diffusers may be used to help alleviate stress.

* Pay attention to all posted signs and handling instructions.
* Pay close attention to body language and do not handle cats if they exhibit signs of stress while being handled.
* If the cat seems to enjoy the interaction, spend extra time with them.
* If the cat begins eating during your interaction, stay with them until they finish their food.

**FERAL CAT**

The cat is not properly socialized with humans. It may have lived outside its whole life, may have been stray for a long period of time or may have lived in a home (such as a hoarding situation) where it did not get adequate attention and socialization. Feral Cats are generally very stressed out and nervous in a shelter environment and may be prone to biting. It is important that these cats are given a place to hide in their enclosure. Feral Cats will be marked Staff Only or Fur Squad.

* Pay attention to all posted signs and any indication that the cat is Staff Only or Fur Squad only.
* Only volunteers who have passed their Fur Squad training may interact with these cats.
* Fur Squad volunteers must follow the Fur Squad handling guidelines when working to socialize these cats.

**FLIGHT RISK**

The cat is prone to run away from- rather than toward- people if frightened. They also tend to startle more easily than the average cat. Flight-risk cats may have been under-socialized.

* Take care not to startle the cat. Open and close enclosure doors softly.
* Use caution when enclosure doors are open so they do not bolt out of their cage/enclosure.
* Move slowly, talk quietly, and do not face the cat head-on.
* Make sure the cat is secured in a carrier or box when moving them from one room to another.

**If the cat becomes loose:**

* Tell a staff member immediately.

**HANDLING PLAN**

The Behavior staff have created a special handling plan for the cat to overcome a behavior issue. The handling plan can be found hanging on their enclosure or in their paperwork pouch.

* Follow the instructions on the handling plan closely.

**INAPPROPRIATE PLAY**

The cat is prone to mouth or swat at people while playing. They may use their mouth to grab at pant legs, arms or hands. If the behavior is not curbed it may lead to a bite or scratch.

* Use appropriate toys (such as wands) when interacting with cats. Do not encourage cats to play with your fingers or hands.
* If the cat becomes inappropriate during play, pause the play session and ignore them.
* If they continue to be inappropriate, end the play session and return the cat to their enclosure.
* If you do not think you can safely return the cat to their enclosure, ask for help from the staff.

**If you are bitten:**

* Immediately report all bite incidents to the manager-on-duty and complete an incident report. The cat will need to go through a mandatory quarantine.

**LITTER BOX AVOIDANCE**

The cat has a history of urinating or defecating outside of the litter box. These cats are generally given a larger enclosure and may be assigned a special type of litter or litter box. LBA may be due to a medical condition or stress. Feliway spray, diffusers or collars may be used to help alleviate stress.

* Follow posted signs to make sure the cat is given the proper litter box and litter type.
* Scoop the litter box after each use and record notes on the LBA log.
* Report any accidents outside of the litter box to a staff member so it can be recorded.

**OVERAROUSAL**

The cat is prone to becoming too excited. A state of over-arousal can be caused by cat nip, by frustration (ex. cat looking out the window at a bird) or during play. Signs of over-arousal are dilated pupils, staring at stimuli or fur rippling down the back. Cats who are over-aroused may bite.

* Make sure the cat does not have access to cat nip or toys with cat nip in them.
* Keep petting sessions short. Some of these cats prefer hands-off interactions such as playing with wand toys and laser pointers.
* Keep a close eye on the cat to look for signs of over-arousal. End the interaction if signs are noticed.
* If you do not think you can safely return the cat to their enclosure, ask a staff member for assistance.

**If you are bitten:**

* Immediately report all bite incidents to the manager-on-duty and complete an incident report. The cat will need to go through a mandatory quarantine.

**OVER-GROOMING**

The cat is prone to over-grooming (licking/barbering). Over-grooming may be caused by a skin issue, pain, or stress. Feliway sprays, diffusers or collars may be used to help alleviate stress. The cat may also be moved to a larger enclosure. If the cat is over-grooming due to a skin issue or pain, they may be on a special diet or be on a prescription medication.

* Follow any posted signs regarding care instructions (ex. special diets, use of Feliway products, etc.)
* Try to reduce stress by talking quietly and avoiding loud noises such as cage doors clanging.

**OVERSTIMULATION**

The cat is prone to becoming agitated or aggressive while being handled. Some cats become overstimulated by long petting sessions. Signs of overstimulation are a low growl, dilated pupils, flattened ears, thrashing tail, fur rippling down the back or getting up and moving away from you. Cats who are overstimulated may bite.

* Keep petting sessions short. Instead, engage with these cats using hands-off interactions such as playing with wand toys and laser pointers.
* Keep a close eye on the cat to look for signs of over-stimulation. End the interaction if signs are noticed.
* If you do not think you can safely return the cat to their enclosure, ask a staff member for assistance.

**If you are bitten:**

* Immediately report all bite incidents to the manager-on-duty and complete an incident report. The cat will need to go through a mandatory quarantine.

**SHY CAT**

Shy or fearful cats may be under-socialized or have difficulty adjusting to new environments. These cats require extra patience to help them feel comfortable. Shy cats should be given a place to hide in their enclosure. Shy cats may bite if they feel nervous or threatened. These cats may be marked Staff Only or Fur Squad only.

* Pay attention to all posted signs and any indication that the cat is Staff Only or Fur Squad only.
* Only volunteers who have passed their Fur Squad training may interact with these cats if they are marked Fur Squad.
* Fur Squad volunteers must follow the Fur Squad handling guidelines when working to socialize these cats.
* Go slow and talk in a quiet voice when interacting with these cats.
* Use extra care not to make loud noise when opening and closing enclosure doors.
* Be careful! Shy cats may be a risk for biting if they are scared. Only pet them if they initiate the interaction by coming to you.

**SPRAYING/MARKING**

The cat has a history of spraying/marking on vertical surfaces. Spraying/marking is a form of communication for cats and is not the same as litter box avoidance. Marking is sometimes used to establish territory. Cats with a history of marking should be moved to an enclosure away from other animals. Feliway diffusers, sprays or collars may be used to help alleviate stress.

* Follow all posted signs regarding interactions with these cats.

**TOUCH SENSITIVE**

This cat is sensitive to being touched in certain areas. They may not like having their paws touched or may be sensitive to touch on a certain part of their body due to a medical condition.

* Make sure to read all posted signs for relevant information such as known medical conditions.
* Avoid touching the cat in the sensitive areas.
* Use extra care when picking up the cat.
* Look and listen for warning signs such as growling, hissing, flattened ears.