

**SACRAMENTO CAT HOSPITAL
4115 MANZANITA AVE
CARMICHAEL, CA 95608**

KITTEN BEHAVIOR

Congratulations on the latest addition to your family! As your kitten grows older it is important to begin training in appropriate scratching behaviors, play behaviors, and elimination habits.

A. Clawing Behavior

Scratching is a normal feline behavior. They do this to mark their territory and shed their nails. You need to find something for your cat to scratch that he or she enjoys and that you find acceptable. Your cat may prefer a horizontal or vertical surface. They may also like different types of coverings (ie: carpet, wood, rope, or upholstery). If your cat loves your chair or couch, you can make your own scratching post with fabric from the store that matches. The scratching post or posts should be kept in areas where the family and pet spend time. If your cat should scratch in an inappropriate place you need to correct this behavior quickly. You can throw a pillow in the cat's direction (not hitting the cat directly), shake a can filled with coins, use a squirt bottle with water, or an air horn to stop the inappropriate scratching. Also you can make the inappropriate scratching areas unattractive (ie: cover the sides of the couch with foil or try "Boundry Spray"). Finally, start trimming your kitten's nails early and often which will also get them used to having their paws handled.

B. Play Aggression

Kitten play is very cute to watch and fun to interact with, but it is important for it not to become inappropriate. Inappropriate kitten play can lead to future aggressive behavior. Always reward good behavior with praise, love, attention, appropriate play and kitty treats. Never play aggressively with your kitten or cat by using your hands or feet. Do not teach your kitten to follow your hand and pounce on it. This type of play will teach your kitten that your hands or feet are a toy, which as the kitten grows can become aggressive behavior. Using a device designed to dissuade your kitten from its inappropriate behavior (ie: water gun, air horn, coins in a can to shake, or blowing on their nose) as the kitten first begins to show the signs of aggressive play will stop the behavior. Do not discipline your cat with aggression (ie: tap on the nose, or spanking). Appropriate play is using a string or toy for the kitten to chase and pounce. Please put all toys away when not supervised, kittens chew and swallow anything they put in their mouths, which then may have to be surgically removed. Appropriate kitten play can lead to a rich and fulfilling relationship with your cat for years to come.

C. Feline Elimination Habits

Feline elimination disorders are the most common behavioral complaint about cats. The key to preventing these are good habits started early. Start with a litter of your choice and if there are no accidents stick to that type. Cats form preferences for a specific type of litter as kittens. Consequently changing the litter type may affect how well your cat uses the litter box. In our experience cats seem to prefer plain clay (non-scented) litter, or non-scented scoopable. Cats are very clean animals and will avoid a dirty litter box. It is important to throw out all the litter and wash the box with mild dish soap and rinse well, at least once a week. Do not use any harsh chemicals or Lysol products to clean the box. Also do not add baking soda or air fresheners to the litter box or scented products to the environment as this may offend your cat. The location of the litter box is also important to consider. The area you choose should be fairly quiet and as free from traffic as possible. High traffic areas would include next to a washer or dryer or where a dog can approach. The litter box should always be kept in the same place. Moving the litter box can be confusing to the cat, which can result in urination in inappropriate places. Let your Veterinarian know if your cat stops using the box for urine or stool, this can signal a medical problem. Good elimination habits are the key to a happy and healthy coexistence between you and your cat.