



Vet Question and Answer Session





Multicat Households

How to Maintain Harmony

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Multicat Households

Uk figures

- Almost one in four households (24%) own a cat
- 66% of households own one cat
- 34% own two or more cats

Cats Protection CATS report 2025



Social Behaviour in Cats

- Social behaviour is variable.
- Not obligately social
- Feral cats – colonies free ranging around food resources. Usually related individuals. Closest social relationships usually between cats of similar age.
- Sex differences in social behaviour. Intact males generally leave the colony when sexually mature and range over large areas.
- Neutered males show more social behaviour than intact or neutered females.

Barry and Crowell-Davis 1999, Cafazzo, Bonanni and Natoli 2019,



Social Behaviours

- Greeting Behaviours
- Head butt / rubbing
- Allosleeping
- Allogrooming
- Play – make sure its mutual and reciprocal.



Signs of Tension

- Hiding away
- Overeating
- Chasing
- Stalking
- Fleeing
- Tail twitching,
- Hissing.
- Staring
- Blocking
- Vocalisation – Hissing and wailing/screaming
- Lashing out with claws
- Fighting - rare

Wrestling more often Play but ensure both cats want this.

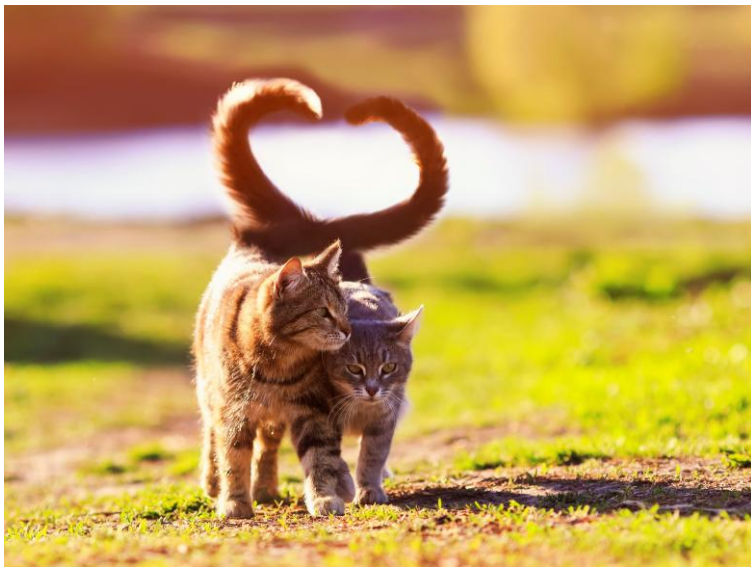
73.3% of Multi-cat homes observed some conflict signs,
Conflict signs were more frequent the more cats there were in the household.



Elzerman, DePorter and Jean-François Collin 2019

Ethogram of Feline Social Interactions

Recently an ethogram has been developed looking specifically at Feline Social Interactions



Development of the Ethogram of Feline Social Interactions (EFSI) to study intraspecific interactions between cats in multicat households

Van Belle, Kmecová, Moons, Frank, Tuytens and Mills

Applied Animal Behaviour Science

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Why is this important?



Social conflict can result in

- Physical injuries
- Chronic Stress which can result in both physical and behavioural changes
 - Urinary Tract disease
 - GI disease
 - Indoor Toileting
 - Redirected Aggression
 - Lots more!

What can we do?

Preparation

- Is adding another cat the right choice? – many cats would be very happy as an only cat.
- Chose litter mate kittens
- Neutered males may be more tolerant?

Introductions

- Gradual
- Initially separate areas
- Scent swap



Maintaining Harmony in a multicat home

Cats do not like to share or wait!

Access to resources is key to success

Resources

All important resources need to be provided in multiples

(This means 1 per cat / social group plus 1)

- Litter trays
- Water
- Scratch posts
- Hidey Holes
- Beds
- Toys
- Cat trees



Food

Cats are solitary hunters and eaters. Eating is essential for survival so many cats will eat next to another cat, but this does not mean they would choose this.

High value foods should be given in separate locations – consider visual barriers / microchip feeders etc

Can leave small bowls of dry food in multiple locations

Cats designed to eat small meals frequently – some cats will overeat to prevent other cats accessing the food



Location, Location, Location



Placing food bowls / litter trays away from corners / walls allows the cat to position themselves to see any approaching threat.

Three litter trays side by side are just one big litter tray

Many cats feel safe if they can get high and watch without drawing attention to themselves. Tall cats trees, boxes on wardrobes etc

Make sure every location has at least 2 entrance / exit points. Being trapped is very stressful.

Sharing the space

Ideally each cat / social group will have their own space

Remember cats use space in 3 dimensions

Try to ensure multiple access points to all areas (can be on different levels)



Thank you for listening!

Any questions?

