



Understanding the Talkative Cat

The first step with any behavioral issue is to take your cat to the veterinarian for a full evaluation. Cats are very stoic animals and will hide illness and injury. Sometimes our only clue that something is physically wrong is a behavioral symptom. Many behavioral modification programs can begin in conjunction with or shortly after your trip to the veterinarian.

Cats are capable of making a variety of sounds. Interpreting the meaning behind those sounds could take some time and investigation on your part. Domestic cats have evolved the meow specifically to communicate with humans but they use many other vocalizations as well.

Medical Reasons

If your cat suddenly begins to vocalize make sure you take your cat to your veterinarian. Cats will hide illness and injury until they are seriously ill. Similarly, if your cat is typically very vocal and suddenly gets quiet, it may be an indication of a serious illness. Elderly cats will begin vocalizing as a symptom of dementia.

Breed or Personality

Certain breeds are known for being more vocal than others. Siamese, Abyssinian and other Oriental breeds are generally more talkative while Persian and Himalayan breeds tend to be less vocal. If your cats vocalizations are bothersome to you make sure you are only giving her attention when she is quiet and that you are ignoring her when she is crying.

Attention Seeking Behavior

Cats will “talk” to humans in various ways. Some meow, others trill or chirp but their messages are often the same.... Give me attention! Most owners enjoy a little bit of pleasant conversation from their cats. People may talk back, pick up the cat, give her a pet, sooth her or feed her when she meows. To discourage this attention seeking behavior, simply ignore the cat when she is vocalizing and pour on the attention and affection when she is quiet. It is not enough to ignore the behavior you do not like you must praise her and give her treats for the behavior you do want so she learns how to behave to get the things she wants or needs. As the behavior is being ignored some cats will increase their efforts and meow longer or louder for a short period of time before quitting the behavior entirely. If you give attention to the cat when this louder meowing happens you will only train her to meow louder!

Vocalizing to go outside

If your cat was previously an outdoor cat it may be a difficult transition to staying indoors. Spaying or neutering your cat will get rid of the hormonal urges to seek a mate and will generally result in a calmer cat. Add cat trees, cat shelves, bookshelves and hiding spots throughout your home to give your cat a broader vertical territory. Hide treats and food items in different places so the cat can discover them during the day. Crumpled up paper and empty toilet paper rolls are excellent places to hide treats as well. Provide a window seat and consider adding a bird feeder or butterfly plants to attract wildlife to your yard. Finally, schedule play sessions with your cat at least twice a day, morning and evening are often good times. Play with your cat for 15 to 30 minutes before meal time and add a play session before bed if your cat is crying at night. Give your cat plenty of attention and entertainment!

Loneliness and Grief

After the death of a beloved person or animal in your cat's life it is not unusual for there to be a period in which the cat wanders through the home vocalizing. This is a normal step in the grieving process. It is very important that you support her through her grief. Keep her routine as normal as possible, provide an item that smells like her loved one, give her alone time but also be sure you are giving her plenty of affection and play time. If you are concerned that she is not getting past her loss consult your veterinarian or a behavior counselor. Some cats will have a similar reaction to a new owner or a new home.

If after trying these suggestions you are still experiencing undesirable behaviors in your cat, SUBMIT QUESTIONS by clicking the link under Ask A Trainer on the Behavior and Training page of the Wayside Waifs website: www.waysidewaifs.org.

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