



A publication of The Cat Shack, Inc.

# Cat Shack Inquirer



Spring 2009

## Beating the Odds

By Lori Moyer-Wolfe



Luck, fate, or maybe a little of both saved little Princess Jasmin. One September day in 2008, Cat Shack Board member Denise Heimbach went to speak with a farmer in Gilbertsville about feeding a feral colony. During the conversation, the farmer mentioned there was a litter of six week old kittens in a storage area and one wasn't well. This little silver tabby couldn't walk, but she did scurry around on her side by flopping and dragging herself. The farmer had wanted to "put her down", but Denise convinced the farmer to allow her to find homes for all the kittens. She gathered them up and immediately went to Perkiomen Animal Hospital to have the kitten checked.

After multiple tests, the kitten was diagnosed with Cerebellar Hypoplasia, which occurs when the mother cat is exposed to distemper during the last stage of her pregnancy. The part of the kitten's brain that controls balance was either damaged or had not formed correctly. The vet said the kitten would have a normal life expectancy, but would have to have assistance the rest of her life.

This is when my family took in this precious kitten now named Princess Jasmin. My daughter Emily named her commenting "a handicapped kitten deserves a royal name". We cried the first time we saw her try to walk because she kept hitting her head on the floor. I work as a physical rehabilitation nurse, and every day my husband Dan and I did range of motion exercises with her. We also did daily visual exercises with her to stimulate new neuron pathways in her brain.

All of PJ's legs work, but she had a hard time controlling them. After deciding to teach PJ the proper leg motions of walking, I made a few crude prototypes of a harness walker out of Tinkertoys. With the help of our neighbors Pete and Chris Bertalan, we came up with a functional design and added aluminum rods and wheel casters to make it steady. We only put her in the harness for ten minutes a few times a day as she HATED being in it! But we prevailed and each week she made more progress until we were able to stop using the harness.



PJ in her harness made of Tinkertoys.

PJ can now walk all around the house, but still falls over a few times a day if she is tired or looks up while trying to walk. Once in a while, she will growl at the other cats when she eats, but this is what helped her survive six weeks in a feral colony! She uses is a low front litter box that makes it easier for her to get in and out. She can't climb up furniture or do stairs, but she comes over and grabs your leg when she wants to be picked up. This is the ONLY help she wants or requires. PJ loves to be held by anyone who gives her head scratches. She is a survivor and an inspiration to all of us at The Cat Shack! 🐾

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### UPCOMING EVENTS!

#### HOLISTIC EXPO

May 16 🐾 10 a.m.-7 p.m. &  
May 17 🐾 10 a.m.-6 p.m.  
Ag Hall in Allentown

#### EMMAUS FARMER'S MARKET

May 24 🐾 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Main Street  
Emmaus

#### QUAKERTOWN VET CLINIC PET FAIR

June 6th (rain date June 7)  
10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
The Quakertown Vet Clinic

E-mail  
→ Me ←

### JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

Having only two newsletters a year makes it hard to keep you up to date on all the GREAT Cat Shack happenings throughout the year. Please send your name\* and email\* address to [catshack@ptd.net](mailto:catshack@ptd.net) to receive our new monthly e-newsletter and updates.

\*Addresses are for Cat Shack use only and will not be sold or used for any other purpose.

# ASK ALBERT



My dear readers, I have been humbled (slightly) by the sheer quantity of questions that you have been sending me. My mailbox, inbox and Facebook page are being overwhelmed with requests to use my superior intellect to help my fellow felines with all sorts of problems. Therefore, I will forego my typical column of focusing on a single issue and get to answering as much of my mailbag as possible.

**Should I allow my humans to foster kittens?**

No.

**But what if they don't listen to me and foster kittens anyway?**

Move out.

**Do you have any children?**

Sadly, I do not. Obviously, this world would be a much better place if my superior genes would be allowed to reproduce. But alas, I have no choice in this matter. I am a neutered male (there, I finally said it...after all these years and countless hours of therapy, I can finally admit it). Of course, I've never been fond of kittens anyway—little runts would probably just try to chase my tail and annoy me with requests like “feed me” or something trivial like that. This is for the best. I'd probably be a great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather by now and who needs to spend their golden years with hundreds of relatives anyway. I've decided to clone myself so the world will continue to reap the rewards of my brilliant mind.

**Do you prefer boxers or briefs?**

Frankly, I don't like any breed of dog. Disgusting, vile creatures. I've never heard of this “briefs” breed. Is that another of those human created hybrid breeds, like the labradoodle or snickerdoodle? Actually, I prefer any contact with a canine to be as “brief” as possible. Ha ha. I am good.

**Do you Twitter?**

Why yes. I twitter each time a human or dog in my house does something stupid – which means my paws are sore from typing non-stop. Here's my last entry: “Watching the guy in the house step in my strategically placed vomit. I'm winning the war.”

**What's your honest opinion on cat rescuers? Are they truly kind-hearted people or are they out-of-control raging lunatics?**

That, my dear kittens, is one of the unknown mysteries of life. They appear to be both. I have started a non-profit organization, called the Human Shack, to try to rescue and rehabilitate cat rescuers. We will begin fostering these creatures (though I won't have any more in my house, I'm already at my wit's end) and try to study their peculiar behaviors. I don't hold much hope that we will figure them out but for our own sake, we must try. Please send donations, in care of Albert Cat, in the form of tuna. And only tuna.

**We love you Albert! Do you have any other projects you are working on?**

Thank you kind stranger. I love Albert as well. I have a number of projects underway. Stay on the lookout for a new blog where I hope to reach a much larger audience than this print media. Also, I'll be making my stage debut in our theater's group production of Steinbeck's, “Of Mice and Men”. Without the men.

Well, I am out of space. Stay strong – we will rule the world soon.

## ADOPTION UPDATES



**Suzie** was part of a litter of bottle babies rescued from certain death. After months of patient care from their foster mom Loraine and an guest appearance at a educational event for children, Suzie's future owners spotted her on Petfinder.com.

They knew she was the perfect fit for their family.

Although Suzie's adoption required an hour drive to take her to her new home, it was well worth the trip. Suzie is now renamed Daisy and has become a beautiful six-month old kitten, complete with a “sister” and two adoring owners.

**Polly's** owner suddenly passed away

in December. His daughter happened to be a volunteer with the Cat Shack and quickly took her and his other two cats, **Stinker** and **Ziggy** (one of the Ristmiller kittens rescued by the Cat Shack last June)



home with her. Polly found a great home with a young couple with four other cats and is doing well. The Ristmiller kitten, named Ziggy, found a new home with one of his sibling now named Winifred and Stinker has a new home with his original adopters daughter and now resides with Pumpkin, formally Meera, who was adopted from the Cat Shack about four years ago. A great a great happy ending for these three guys!

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# HOW TO SCRATCH OUT BAD LITTER BOX BEHAVIOR

## 8 tips that can help improve your cat's bathroom etiquette



When people think outside the box, it's a good thing. When cats think outside the box, it's not. The No. one

behavior problem reported in cats is doing No. 1 and No. 2 outside the confines of their litter box.

But your cat might not be simply rebelling. It might be trying to tell you in the clearest way it can that something is wrong.

Cats beat out your mother-in-law any day of the week when it comes to cleanliness. Their willingness and instinct to use a litter box even at an early age is one of the reasons they're so attractive as companions.

So when they stop using the litter box, it's because there's something they don't like about it.

Let's run through the list of possibilities:

- **You changed litters because the new one was on sale.**

Cats hate change. Once they're used to a certain type of litter, they don't want to try something new. It smells funny, it feels different beneath their paws or maybe it just doesn't kick as well. Cats tend to prefer clumping litter. Maybe the sandlike texture resonates with their heritage as desert animals. But whatever their favorite type is, they don't want you to change it, no matter how much money you're saving. If you really want to try a different brand, gradually mix it in with the regular litter over several weeks. The other thing to remember is that individual cats may have different preferences, usually because they were raised on different types of litter. If you have more than one cat, you may need to provide a box for each with the preferred litter.

- **You're using a scented litter.**

Cats have an exquisitely keen sense of smell. What may smell perfumed to us may be sensory overload for a cat, says feline behaviorist Alice Moon-Fanelli, a clinical assistant professor at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. Of course you want your house to smell nice, but it's going to smell a lot nicer if your cat likes its box.

- **You're not scooping the box often enough.**

You flush every time you use the toilet, so why wouldn't you scoop every time your cat uses the litter box? It doesn't want to step into a filthy litter box any more than you want to use a dirty toilet. "People think if they put four or five inches of litter in a box, they won't have to clean it that often, and that's asking for trouble," says John C. Wright, a professor of psychology who teaches applied animal behavior at Mercer University in Macon, Ga. "Most cats will tolerate a clump or two, but a bit more than that and they may decide to go right next to the box. Other cats seem to be clean freaks. If they've peed or another cat has urinated in the box, they won't enter the box at all."

- **You're not cleaning the box.**

Beyond scooping the box, you need to clean it regularly. Plastic retains odors, so even if you scoop the box daily, it's still going to get stinky after a while. Dump the litter and clean the box every week or two with warm water and a mild dishwashing detergent (no harsh-smelling chemicals.) Between cleanings, Moon-Fanelli recommends using Zero Odor litter spray, an odor neutralizer, every time you scoop. After a year, consider getting a new litter box.

- **Your cat doesn't like the location of the box.**

Cats have the same real-estate priorities as people: location, location, location. They don't want the litter box anywhere near where they eat, they want it in a quiet area and they don't want to be interrupted. Place it in a room away from the food bowl with easy access and few interruptions. Make sure it's where no dogs or people are running in and out, no dryer buzzers are going off. Ideally, put it in a place near an escape, such as a door or a tall cat tree, so if something does scare them, they can exit.

- **You don't have enough boxes.**

The rule of paw is one box for every cat, plus one extra. This ensures that bully cats don't guard a single box and prevent lower-ranking cats from using it. If you have a two-story house, place a box on each floor. This is essential for young kittens or aging cats who may not have the best physical control.

- **The box is too small or has a lid.**

Most cats prefer a large, open litter box. A typical litter box is fine for a kitten, but a 20-pound Maine Coon needs a larger box. Look for one that's one and a half times longer than the cat's body length. Many people prefer having a covered litter box, but cats like to be able to see if anything dangerous is approaching, like a dog or a bully cat. A lid blocks their view and inhibits their escape. It also concentrates the smell inside the box.

- **Cats can't tell us when they don't feel good, so they have to show us.**

If you're doing everything recommended above and your cat goes outside the litter box, don't assume it's being spiteful. It may have a painful bladder infection or some other problem that can be diagnosed by your veterinarian. If your cat has been declawed recently, it may be painful to dig in the litter. And if it's old and arthritic, it may be having difficulty climbing in and out of the box. Consider making a cutout so your cat can easily enter and exit the box.

*Kim Campbell Thornton is an award-winning author who has written many articles and more than a dozen books about dogs and cats. She belongs to the Dog Writers Association of America and is past president of the Cat Writers Association. 🐾*

**FUN FACT:** When a cat named Oscar was rescued by British sailors after the sinking of the German battleship Bismarck in WWII, his new crew renamed him Unsinkable Sam. Over the next year, he survived the sinking of two more ships, and was finally awarded a happy retirement at the old sailors' home in Belfast.



## CAT SHACK CORNER



**Volunteer update:** We are pleased to announce that Kristy Dietrich has agreed to serve on the Cat Shack's Board of Directors. Kristy's area of concentration will be advertising and media attention. She will be responsible for our weekly advertising, editing the newsletter, press releases and related activities. Thank you Kristy for your willingness to expand your volunteer activities on behalf of the cats!

Dan Wolfe has taken over the position of Cat Shack Manager of our PetSmart adoption center in Whitehall. Dan has been doing a wonderful job in communicating with the many volunteers that staff the center and making sure all the shifts are filled - not an easy task! Thank you Dan!

We would like to thank Angela Stewart for submitting an application to Build-A-Bear foundation. We are excited to announce that Cat Shack Inc. is the proud recipient of a generous grant from Build-A-Bear Workshop Bear Hugs Foundation for the purposes of conducting the spay or neuter of cats that would not otherwise be altered! With the help of this grant the Cat Shack will spay/neuter at least 20 cats that would otherwise continue to add to the cat overpopulation problem. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Build-A-Bear workshop for their support!

Other exciting volunteer activities include Brandy Kypreos' effort to add The Cat Shack as a Cause on Facebook. So far, this new site has generated \$95 in donations and is 230 members strong! Check it out at <http://apps.facebook.com/causes>. Danielle Edgerly has also recently added the Cat Shack as a Group on facebook! And last but not least, we want to thank all the volunteers that help make the Cat Shack's efforts possible.

## LOCAL SCHOOL CHOOSES CAT RESCUE

The Cat Shack was lucky enough to have the opportunity to present information about volunteering and cat rescue to a class of preschool children at Swain School in Allentown. The students were very excited to learn about how volunteers help cats in need and work to find them homes.

A rescued mother cat and her three tiny kittens came to the class for a visit. The children were also asked to help in the rescue efforts by selecting a picture of a real rescued kitten currently in the Cat Shack rescue. The children provided names for each of the kittens and in this way became honorary cat rescuers. Certificates were issued to each child with the child's and the kitten's picture attached.

More recently, we are very excited to say that the Cat Shack rescue was selected to be the recipient of a food and litter drive at the Swain School! To reinforce the virtue of compassion, Mrs. Akers' PK 4 class and their buddies in Mrs. Reger's 4th grade class did a joint project to show compassion for homeless and abused cats. The 4th graders researched 501(c)(3) non-profits and voted The Cat Shack as their choice.

Each child will be doing tasks at home to "earn" an item to donate to the Cat Shack. **Thank you to the Swain School for selecting our cats as the recipients of their generosity!**

*Donations of Canned Cat Food and scooping litter from the public are always appreciated by The Cat Shack. Donations can be left at the following locations: Perkiomen Animal Hospital in Palm, Macungie Animal Hospital in Macungie, PetSmart in Whitehall, Petvalu in East Greenville, Petvalu in Gilbertsville* 🐾



Poster design by Swain students.

## The Cat Shack Featured Pets:

### Xani and Lightning



Xani before



Lightning before



Xani after



Lightning after

**Xani** was found with a litter of kittens, badly injured with a hind leg that was uselessly dragging behind her. She has undergone extensive vet work to repair a badly dislocated and fractured leg. She is now completely healed and ready for a new home! She will always have a slight limp because of the damage to her rear leg, but this doesn't stop her from running and jumping. Although she survived outside in the city of Allentown for all of her young life prior to rescue, she has proven to be an excellent house cat with perfect litterbox manners. Even when she wore her stiff, heavy cast on her hind leg, she never missed the litterbox and always covered! She will make a great pet and will acclimate to other pets in the home as well. She is about 1 1/2 years old, tested neg for FeLV/FIV and is spayed and vaccinated!

**Lightning** was found stealing food and limping around on three legs this past winter. It was easy to follow the three-footed cat trail in the snow and after a successful capture, he was brought to a foster home and started his journey toward recovery. His rear paw had been crushed breaking many of the bones. His extensive vet care included splints and x-rays followed by many weekly visits to the vet. Now, after months of care, he has regained full use of his foot and races to the couch for his daily belly rubs. His litterbox habits are excellent and he shows no interest in scratching furniture. Belly rubs come first then he's off to play with a mouse on a line or anything else that moves. This handsome, happy and healthy cat is neutered, UTD on vaccinations and FeLV/ FIV negative and looking for his forever home! The Cat Shack received a small grant toward his vet care but costs were still high. 🐾



The Boss, from Liz and Reggie's first foster group

# VOLUNTEER PROFILE - THIS CAN BE YOU

Liz and Reggie have been volunteering for the Cat Shack for about 1 year. Before they retired, Liz worked as a quality control supervisor for a car part manufacturer and then in the pharmaceutical industry. Reggie was active in the military and the national reserves.

Liz and Reggie are just two of the tremendously valuable members of the Cat Shack team. You can be too! Please contact us if you are interested in volunteering. We need you! 🐾

Now that they are retired, they enjoy their family, friends and pets. Their pets include a seven year old dog named Jimmy and a cat named Gatita, also called Kitty. Jimmy was a gift from their daughter while Gatita was adopted as a skinny, scared cat from neighbor who could no longer keep her. They soon found out why the little cat was so thin, she had terrible dental issues and needed to have most of her teeth removed. These days, Gatita has doubled in weight and is a happy, lovable pet.

Liz and Reggie also find pleasure in doing what they can for others in need, human and animal. Liz does what she can to help neighbors by picking up weekly groceries or by dropping off prepared meals when one of their friends are ill. Liz and Reggie got involved with the Cat Shack rescue when they needed help finding homes for three rescued kittens and a feral mother. Although they became attached to the babies, Liz got involved with the adoption process and ultimately felt comfortable knowing that the prospective adopters were carefully selected. Over the last year, Liz has fostered cats, performed home visits, adoptions and volunteered at events for the Cat Shack. Liz tells us "Fostering and placing the kittens satisfied my urge to care for others in need. Seeing them placed in homes gives me tremendous satisfaction!"

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Our group would not be where we are today without the help of our volunteers. This is a very rewarding experience and a great way to help the kitties!

**ANSWER PHONES** - Answering The Cat Shack phone line, returning calls and delivering messages. This can be done from your home. Training/guidelines provided. Choose one or more days a week.

**APPLICATION PROCESSOR** - Contact potential adopter, call references, call vet for reference, and coordinate adoption with foster parent and potential adopter. This can be done from your home. Training/guidelines provided. This is as needed as applications come in.

**EVENT HELPERS** - Help man the booth at different events throughout the Valley. We participate in many events and this is a great way to raise money and meet potential adopters. No training required. You may choose which events and what hours fit your schedule.

**FOSTER HOMES** - With kitten season upon us, we are in desperate need of foster homes. Responsibilities include giving the kittens/cats a warm and loving home until adopted. Food, litter and vet care provided. All current pets must be UTD on shots and fixed.

## LOST IN TRANSLATION

*Taken from a Purina Rally to Rescue article with their permission*

Tough economic times often translate into families and individuals who can no longer afford to keep their pets. Dog and cat families are both affected, but when owners give up their cats, they are more likely to face uncertainty whether their cat will find a new home, say cat rescue experts. Cat rescues throughout the country have begun reaching out to families who have lost their jobs and are at risk of also losing their cats. Theresa Clifford, co-founder of The Cat Shack in northeast Pennsylvania, says, "When we offer food what we're really offering is hope that everything can work out. One woman with two cats who was having a difficult time affording basic care for herself burst into tears when we told her we could give her cat food."

Unforeseen circumstances change commitments that people make when they adopt their cats. "Our adoption application asks tough questions to try to determine whether potential owners are financially solvent and can care for a cat for the next 15 years," says Feline Friendz director Elizabeth Hamn of Omaha, Neb. "unfortunately, today's economy forces people to make tough decisions."

Such was the case when a young woman who had adopted a tiny homeless kitten from Feline Friendz three years ago came to the rescue for help feeding her cat. "She and the kitten had bonded immediately," recalls Hamn. "At the time the woman was a Web site designer and doing well, but more recently she had lost her job and could no longer afford cat food. We're providing the food and hoping the situation turns itself around."

### Veterinary Intervention

When an adopter contacted The Cat Shack to take back her beloved calico cat named "Zoe" because she could no longer afford the cat's veteri-

nary treatments, the cat rescue offered hope. "When I sent the e-mail to The Cat Shack asking them if I could return Zoe, I cried and cried," recalls Zoe's owner. "We were terrified that she would be bounced from home to home or euthanized, but we couldn't afford her veterinary care."

Clifford arranged for the rescue's veterinarian, who charges no examination fee and offers a 25 percent discount on her services, to evaluate Zoe. The veterinarian diagnosed bladder inflammation, and The Cat Shack provided special litter and medication to help with the urination anxiety that contributed to the cat's illness. Thanks to The Cat Shack's help, Zoe was able to stay in her home.

"Zoe is as happy as can be now," says the relieved owner. "This is definitely the outcome we wanted."

Another time The Cat Shack came to the aid of a single mother who had lost her job and was forced to move in with her mother, who was not thrilled about the prospect of her bringing her pregnant gray tabby cat named "Lexi."

"Just before we moved, Lexi escaped and became pregnant," the woman says. "I couldn't afford kittens, but I didn't want to take them to the local shelter."

The Cat Shack "arranged to have Lexi spayed and vaccinated and found homes for three of the six kittens," Clifford says. "We also gave the woman food for Lexi and the remaining kittens, which she is able to keep. Though her mother initially didn't want Lexi to move in and was even less thrilled about the kittens, she ended up falling in love with all the cats. "We plan to stay in touch with this woman and help her spay and neuter the remaining kittens when they are old enough." 🐾

(For full article visit [www.rallytorescue.com/resources.aspx](http://www.rallytorescue.com/resources.aspx))



# WAYS TO HELP

Our Mission: To help reduce the unnecessary euthanasia of adoptable cats, to reduce the cruelty to and neglect of cats and to educate the general public in cat related issues.

The Cat Shack, Inc. is a no-kill, non-profit, 501(c)3 tax-exempt cat rescue organization. We attempt to find permanent homes for stray and unwanted cats and kittens.

Prior to adoption, all cats are neutered/spayed and updated on required vaccines. All our cats are tested for Feline Leukemia (FeLV) and Feline Immuno Deficiency Virus (FIV).

***The Cat Shack serves to place three CATEGORIES of needy cats:***

- \* Friendly strays and kittens looking for safe, permanent homes
- \* Feral (wild) strays who are not suitable for inside homes and who seek safe, permanent barn homes where they can be employed as mousers. There is no adoption fee for barn cats though donations are appreciated.
- \* In an effort to help people place pets that they can no longer keep, we will post the cats picture/story and the owner's contact info. These cats are NOT being adopted through The Cat Shack and the adopter will deal directly with the owner. These cats will have an asterisk (\*) next to their names.

**THE CAT SHACK  
PO BOX 950  
TREXLERTOWN, PA 18087**

Mouser Mate: \$15.00     Pussy Cat Pal: \$25.00     Kitty Kat Kompanion: \$50.00

Cat Shack Champion: over \$50.00     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**I want to volunteer** (transport animals for & from surgery, do laundry used at adoption centers, process adoption applications, assist at PetSmart (Whitehall), conduct home visits, foster, assist at events, return phone calls to help line, and more!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

*Donations are tax deductible.*

**VISIT OUR ADOPTION CENTERS:**

PetSmart -2180 MacArthur Road, Whitehall  
Pet Valu - 622 Gravel Pike, East Greenville  
Pet Valu - 1050 East Philadelphia Avenue,  
Gilbertsville

The Cat Shack, Inc. would like to extend our gratitude for the continued support of the following:

**Lehigh Valley Animal Hospital  
Macungie Animal Hospital  
PetSmart - Whitehall  
PetValu - East Greenville & Gilbertsville  
Perkiomen Animal Hospital**



BEHAVIOR  
SERIES

## DESTRUCTIVE SCRATCHING

Though some people think a cat's scratching behavior is a reflection of her distaste for a couch's upholstery, a not-so-subtle hint to open the drapes, or a poorly conceived Zorro impersonation, the fact is that cats scratch objects in their environment for many perfectly normal reasons.

### Why Do Cats Scratch?

Cats scratch for many reasons, including:

- 🐾 To remove the dead outer layer of their claws.
- 🐾 To mark their territory by leaving both a visual mark and a scent - they have scent glands on their paws.
- 🐾 To stretch their bodies and flex their feet and claws.
- 🐾 To work off energy.

Because scratching is a normal behavior and one that cats are highly motivated to display, it's unrealistic to try to prevent them from scratching. Instead, the goal in resolving scratching problems is to redirect the scratching onto acceptable objects.

### Training Your Cat to Scratch Acceptable Objects

You must provide objects for scratching that are appealing, attractive, and convenient from your cat's point of view. Start by observing the physical features of the objects your cat is scratching. The answers to the following questions will help you understand your cat's scratching preferences:

- 🐾 Where are they located? Prominent objects, objects close to sleeping areas, and objects near the entrance to a room are often chosen.
- 🐾 What texture do they have—are they soft or coarse?
- 🐾 What shape do they have—are they horizontal or vertical?
- 🐾 How tall are they? At what height does your cat scratch?

Now, considering your cat's demonstrated preferences, substitute similar objects for her to scratch (rope-wrapped posts, corrugated cardboard, or even a log). Place the acceptable object(s) near the inappropriate object(s) that she's already using. Make sure the objects are stable and won't fall over or move around when she uses them.

Cover the inappropriate objects with something your cat will find unappealing, such as double-sided sticky tape, aluminum foil, sheets of sandpaper, or a plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up. Or you may give the objects an aversive odor by attaching cotton balls containing perfume, a muscle rub, or other safe yet unpleasant substances. Be careful with odors, though, because you don't want the nearby acceptable objects to also smell unpleasant.

When your cat is consistently using the appropriate object, it can be moved very gradually (no more than three inches each day) to a location more suitable to you. It's best, however, to keep the appropriate scratching objects as close to your cat's preferred scratching locations as possible.

Don't remove the unappealing coverings or odors from the inappropriate objects until your cat is consistently using the appropriate objects in their permanent locations for several weeks, or even a month. They should then be removed gradually, not all at once.

### Should I Punish My Cat for Scratching?

**NO!** Punishment is effective only if you catch your cat in the act of scratching unacceptable objects and have provided her with acceptable scratching objects. Punishment after the fact won't change the behavior, may cause her to be afraid of you or the environment, and may elicit defensive aggression. Used by itself, punishment won't resolve scratching problems because it doesn't teach your cat where to scratch instead. If you do catch your cat in the act of scratching inappropriate objects, punish her in a way that prevents her from associating the punishment with you.

Try making a loud noise (using a whistle, shaking a soda can filled with rocks, or slapping the wall) or using a water-filled squirt bottle. If you use other, more

interactive techniques, she'll learn to refrain from scratching in your presence but will continue to scratch when you're not around.

### How Do I Trim My Cat's Claws?

To help keep them sharp, cats keep their claws retracted until they're needed. As the claws grow too long and become curved, they can't be retracted completely. You should clip off the sharp tips of your cat's claws on her front feet every two weeks or so. Clipping your cat's claws will also help prevent them from becoming snagged in carpets and fabrics, not to mention your skin!

Before trimming your cat's claws, help her get accustomed to having her paws handled and squeezed. You can do this by gently petting her legs and paws while giving her a treat. This will help to make it a more pleasant experience.

Gradually increase the pressure so that petting becomes gentle squeezing, as you'll need to do this to extend the claw. Continue with the treats until your cat tolerates this kind of touching and restraint. It may take a little longer if she's not used to having her legs or paws handled.

Apply a small amount of pressure to her paw - with your thumb on top of her paw and your index finger underneath - until a claw is extended. You should be able to see the pink or "quick," which is a small blood vessel. Don't cut into this pink portion, as it will bleed and be painful for your cat. If you cut off just the sharp tip of the claw, the "hook," it will dull the claw and prevent extensive damage to household objects and to your skin.

There are several types of claw trimmers designed especially for pets. These are better than your own nail clipper because they won't crush the claw. Until you and your cat have become accustomed to the routine, one claw or foot a day is enough of a challenge. Don't push to do all of them at once, or you'll both have only negative memories of claw clippers!

### Should I Declaw My Cat?

Declawing is a procedure whereby a veterinarian amputates the end digit and claw of a cat's paws - similar in scope to cutting off a person's finger at the last joint. The Humane Society of the United States opposes declawing when done solely for the convenience of the owner. Scratching is a natural behavior for cats and can be directed to appropriate items. Declawing can also lead to litter box or aggression problems.



## Mardi Claws Update

Our 1st Mardi Claws event was very successful! Over 100 supporters and volunteers joined us for a night of fun, food, games, contests and a silent auction. Prizes were awarded for the most beads collected and best costume. We raised over \$800 dollars for The Cat Shack kitties. Thank you to all our supporters and sponsors for helping make this event great! We look forward to another great event next year.

**FUN FACT:** Cats were once so important in reducing the rodent population on ships that at least two countries added them to their ships' crews. Under Louis XIV, all French ships were ordered to carry two cats. And until 1975, British navy vessels were required to have a least one cat on board.

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