

Ask the vets+++

Have you got a question?

Send your questions to:

Ask The Vets, The Cat magazine, National Cat Centre,
Chelwood Gate, Haywards Heath, RH17 7TT or email
editorial@cats.org.uk

We hold regular live Q&A sessions on our Facebook page. Here are some of the most recent questions posed and the answers given about a whole array of topics.



Q I have three sibling cats and have in the last three years taken on two strays, so now have a total of five cats. At first they seemed to get along ok but we now have a sprayer or sprayers. How do we find out which is the sprayer? We are at our wits' end to know how to deal with this!

A Sorry to hear that you've got cats spraying in the house. The first thing to do is to identify the sprayer/s. You can either set up a camera to spot who's doing it, or you can chat to your vet about getting some fluorescein to put in capsules. This will make the spray glow under UV light. It needs to be given to the cat that is LEAST likely to spray, and working through the group systemically (leaving a few days between changing cats) to the next one least likely to spray, until you find out who's doing it.

These cats will then need to be health-checked including a urine sample to rule out medical reasons for the behaviour. For more information about dealing with spraying check out our leaflet *Managing your cat's behaviour*.

Q Every few months, both my outdoor cats get gooeey eyes. Is it possible to treat them myself with some over-the-counter type of remedy? At the moment, I wipe them with a cloth and warm water.

A If you notice any signs of squinting, redness, soreness, excessive discharge or green/yellow discharge from the eyes or are concerned at all, then this must be checked over by a vet. For normal brownish minimal levels of goo you can wipe it away with a damp tissue. It is important to keep the eyes clean as bacteria and viruses can live in the goo and the goo can irritate the skin it sits on.

Q I have a two-year-old rescue cat who was born prematurely and hand-reared, she is a bit small (3kg) and can't miaow or purr normally but seems very well generally. I have trained her to sit, 'beg' and 'shake' (tap my hand to get a treat), and am trying to train her not to be afraid of the vacuum cleaner. She wasn't afraid of it, but then there was an incident and now she runs away. Any advice?

A Wow, what a clever kitty! She sounds lovely! Sadly, many cats are afraid of the vacuum cleaner. As long as she doesn't have any medical problems, then I would suggest trying a very gradual desensitisation programme. Start with the sound of a vacuum cleaner on your phone played really, really quietly so you can barely hear it and make sure your phone is well away from your cat but that you can see her behaviour. She should be calm and not bothered by it. If she is

upset by it, then you'd need to use even more baby steps. Play the sound for a few seconds and then stop, and reward her with a small treat for calm behaviour. For more advice on the rest of a desensitisation programme, contact a qualified behaviourist who can guide you through the process tailored just for her (www.apbc.org.uk).

Q My cat goes nuts every time I get home, he calls from the other side of the door and when he finally gets to sit on me, he gets very in my face and demands things by rubbing round my glasses and face. He was picked up as an 18-week-old kitten and I wonder if he either has separation anxiety, or he has genuinely picked me as his own personal slave, sorry, human?

A It's nice that your cat gives you such a greeting when you come home. To find out if it could be separation anxiety, I would suggest setting up several cameras around the home to see what your cat does when you go out. If he is very restless or looking out of the windows for you for ages, or crying then it's possible. If you're concerned, contact your vet for a health check for your cat and then ask for a referral to a qualified behaviourist (www.apbc.org.uk). You could also try introducing your cat to feeding enrichment so that he spends his time 'hunting' for his food. Start off with something simple, like an egg box.

Q How much water should a cat drink each day? We adopted our female cat last month from Cats Protection, she has wet food for all her meals and is quite a hungry girl! We think she's a year-and-a-half old and she's an indoor cat. Do you have any tips to encourage her to drink more or will she just take it when she needs it? Her water is always left out.

A Cats are notoriously fussy when it comes to drinking water. As she is on wet food, it is likely she is getting much of her water intake from her diet. You can encourage her to drink more water by separating her water bowl from her food bowl and using a wide, ceramic or plastic bowl which cats prefer. International Cat Care has some good tips here <http://icatcare.org/advice/how-guides/how-encourage-your-cat-drink>

Q I have a rescue cat with a vague history and I'm baffled as she doesn't seem to like being stroked! Any ideas?

A Have you mentioned this to your vet? There could be a medical problem that causes your cat to not want to be

touched. Behaviourally, being stroked is something that cats learn to like during the kitten socialisation period of two to seven weeks of age. All cats are individuals so some cats may seem to tolerate or in some cases, even appear to like be touched in some of these areas. In general cats like quite brief, low intensity interactions that are quite frequent. When cats greet each other in the same social group, it tends to be a brief head rub. Unfortunately, humans are the opposite! Our interactions are generally less frequent, but high intensity and prolonged. This is often another source of confusion.

Q I have a five-year-old black boy cat and he has white flaky bits in this fur like dandruff. His back is always twitching and he has scabs on his back as it joins the tail. Why is this?

A If your cat is uncomfortable and has scabs on his back I would recommend that you take him to your vet for a check-up. Do you routinely treat him for fleas? Scabs on the back are often a sign of skin allergy, particularly a flea allergy. Dandruff may be a result of a cat not grooming effectively or generalised skin disease. Supplements containing omega 3 and 6 oils may help reduce the amount of dandruff. Please take a look at our leaflet for further information on skin conditions: Itchy cats and skin disorders.

Q I have a stray tom who I think has adopted us which is lovely. He needs to be neutered but I don't want to upset him. What do you think?

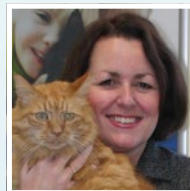
A Firstly it will be important that you check he is a stray by advertising locally for any owners who may come forward – take him to a vet to check for a microchip, advertise in local shops, social media etc. Do contact your local Cats Protection branch too on www.cats.org.uk/find-us

If no-one comes forward and you would like to give him a home after two weeks of looking for an owner, it certainly won't upset him to get him neutered. You can find out more in our *Neutering* leaflet.

Would you like to ask one of Cats Protection's feline experts a question about your cat? Don't miss the next live Facebook Q&A sessions: behaviour on 22 December, 12 January, 23 February, 6 April; and vet questions on 26 January, 9 March and 23 April. All Q&As are held on Cats Protection's national Facebook page at www.facebook.com/catsprotection from 2-3pm. See you there!

*Our veterinary and essential guides are available online at www.cats.org.uk/cat-care/care-leaflets or by post by calling our Helpline on 03000 12 12 12.

THE EXPERTS



Maggie Roberts BVM&S MRCVS

After qualifying at Edinburgh University in 1986, Maggie went on to work primarily in private practice. Maggie first worked for CP as Veterinary Officer from 1997-99;

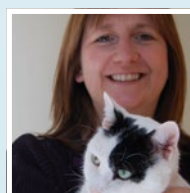
her interest in feline medicine brought her back to the charity as Director of Veterinary Services in 2006. She has two cats, Frankie and Ronnie.



Vanessa Howie BVetMed MRCVS

Vanessa graduated from the Royal Veterinary College in 2000 and worked in private and charity practices before joining CP in November 2006. She was the first Field Veterinary

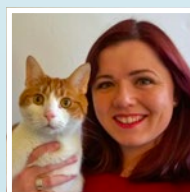
Officer for the charity and now supports the current Field Vets in their role. Vanessa has two CP cats, Tilly and Mabel.



Lisa Morrow BMLSc DVM MSc (Vet Epi) MRCVS

Lisa graduated from the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph, Canada in 2000. Lisa first worked with CP as an Adoption

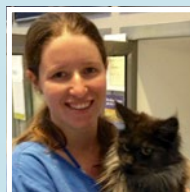
Centre Vet at Derby Adoption Centre and was CP Head of Veterinary Services from 2003-2005. Lisa rejoined CP in 2009 as Field Veterinary Officer in the northern region of the UK. She has a black cat, Kiwi.



Sarah Elliot BVetMed MRCVS

Sarah graduated from the Royal Veterinary College London in 2007. After an initial two years in small animal practice in Nottingham, Sarah headed to New Zealand to continue

veterinary practice abroad. Upon her return home Sarah took up a position as a PDSA vet in North London. Sarah was very happy to combine a love of cats and charity work as a Cats Protection Field Veterinary Officer.



Emily Billings BVSc MSc MRCVS

Emily graduated from the University of Liverpool in 2007 and went on to work in a private veterinary practice until joining CP as the National Cat Centre

Veterinary Officer. She has one CP cat called Wolfy.

Our veterinary surgeons have provided the advice on these pages, but for specific cases and health concerns it is important that you consult your own vet who will be able to look at your cat's history and do a clinical examination.