

THE BEHAVIOR CLINIC

Animal Behavior of Northeast Ohio, LLC

Elizabeth S.M. Feltes, DVM
24478 NoBottom Road
Olmsted Township, Ohio 44138
Phone: 440.334.8534
Fax: 216.453.3921
dr.feltes@yahoo.com

Feline Scratching Behavior

By Elizabeth S.M. Feltes, DVM

- Scratching is a natural behavior that includes stretching of the front limbs, sharpening of the claws, marking with scent from glands between the pads and a visual mark for communication.
- It is therefore unrealistic to try and banish this complex behavior. Even declawed cats will often perform scratching behavior minus leaving the visual mark. Supporting our pets in this natural behavior in a way that is acceptable to their human cohabitants is a great solution.
- Determine if your cat usually scratches on vertical or horizontal objects. Some will have a preference and discovering this will help us provide them with scratching posts of the correct design.
- Try to determine what your pet likes to scratch on and tailor the posts to these preferences. Favorites include carpet, compressed cardboard, sisal, bark or wood.
- Cats tend to mark territory where it changes meaning to them. By placing these posts in those areas will increase the likelihood of their use. Suggestions include near doorways, windows, or between areas that house litterbox and food or resting areas.
- Bait the posts with catnip and reward their use with treats to increase scratching in appropriate areas.
- Decrease use of inappropriate scratching sites by preventing access to them. This can be done by closing doors, covering with tinfoil or placing plastic runners that are turned upside down on the site.
- Changing the meaning of the inappropriately scratched area can also decrease its use. Play, feed or placing a litterbox there.
- Feliway spray may be sprayed on previous scratch sites in conjunction with the above recommendations. This is to encourage scent-marking with the cheek glands instead of visual marking with the claws.