

Play Problems

Understanding play from a behavior perspective is important in dealing with problems.

Posted: Thu Jan 30 00:00:00 PST 2003

You must understand cat play from a behavior perspective to prevent or deal with problems that can arise when cats in a multicat household try to play with one another. Depending on each cat's early experiences, each one may prefer different play patterns, and have different ways of initiating, responding to and terminating play.

Carefully observe each cat's play patterns. Recognizing a pattern of increasingly aggressive play or of one cat always being the more initiating or threatening partner may indicate the potential for problems. If one cat is not interested in social play and another is, it is difficult for owners to act as a substitute feline partner for social play without risking unwanted play-motivated aggression problems.

The more playful cat can be distracted with opportunities for other types of play, but this may not decrease her motivation for social play. If the less playful cat tolerates a short bout of social play, the more playful cat can be distracted into other activities before the play becomes annoying. Over time, the more solitary cat may become more sociable and gradually tolerate longer bouts of social play.