

Simple Solution: Spay and Neuter ASAP

A kitten's heat cycles can trigger aggressive behavior in another cat.

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Q. We have two 3½-year-old female cats from the same litter. Recently, two new kittens adopted us. A month later, our alpha cat died. The kittens were with the other cat for about two weeks and then one of the kittens came into heat. The cat started going after the female kitten. The kitten went out of heat and my stressed cat finally relaxed.

When the kitten went into heat again, our cat became extremely mean. The other day my husband was with the cat and kittens (including the kitten in heat) all day and the cat did nothing to the kitten, until I came home.

Is the cat acting this way because she is now the alpha cat and doesn't know where her sissy went? Is it because the kitten is in heat? Is she jealous of me?

A. You actually have much insight into what is going on and the answer is probably "all of the above." Behavioral problems like this often have a complicated etiology. First, get the kittens spayed as soon as possible. Your older cat is clearly attempting to assume the alpha position and having a female in heat in the same household triggers her aggressive behavior. The longer you allow this to persist, the more likely the behavior will become ingrained, and you may not be able to reverse it.

In addition, you seem to be a trigger for this behavior. To stop the behavior in your presence, create a situation where the kittens are not in the same space as you and the other cat. Provide places where the kittens can hide from your older cat. Perhaps you can call your husband before arriving home so he can separate the cats before you enter the house. Use a behavior-modification application, either on your hands or on the kittens to help calm your older cat. However, the ultimate resolution is to fix all your pets as soon as possible.