

## Heat Cycles May Cause Aggression

**A feline behavior expert suggests a thorough medical examination to rule out health issues leading to aggression.**

*Pam Johnson-Bennett*

Q: Does an unaltered female get aggressive if she isn't bred? Our female cat, Gigi, has always gotten along well with our male cat, Buggy, but lately she has been sweet and loving to him one minute, then chasing and attacking him the next. The veterinarian who spayed Gigi said that sometimes some tissue can be left that can cause the cat to have heat cycles. Could this be happening with our cat? Would it explain the aggression?

Feline behaviorist Pam Johnson-Bennett, author of *Think Like a Cat*, says:  
Yikes, what an ordeal you have been going through. I can only imagine how confused and stressed out you must be.

Although redirected aggression is always a possibility, I'm leaning toward this being a medical problem instead. I think Gigi needs a good examination. She may be going into heat but she may also be in pain. If she is in heat, it can create confusion in the relationship because she doesn't act like herself and that can upset Buggy. It's not unusual for multicat household dynamic to change when one kitty is in heat. Cats are creatures of habit and a major change in personality can be upsetting. If Buggy is acting differently toward her it could cause her to become aggressive in response to him. I do think she needs to be seen by the veterinarian so you can rule out any underlying medical concerns.

Then, regardless of the initial cause, I think the reintroduction needs to be more gradual. Although they may cry when they are apart, if Buggy is slinking around and acting submissive, then that is only going to create more tension between the two of them. I think Gigi needs to be separated in one room and let Buggy have the run of the house for a while. Then, when Buggy is acting like himself again you can begin a very gradual reintroduction. Having Gigi live in another home temporarily would only create more stress and turn this into a bigger trauma.

I recommend getting a Feliway diffuser and set that up in the main part of the house for Buggy.

Best,  
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IAABC-Certified Animal Behavior Consultant

- More Expert Advice -