

## A Calming Scent

**Scent marking not only helps your cat claim her territory, but also calms her when she recognizes the familiar scent.**

*Linda A. Odum*

It is heartwarming when your cat rubs her face on the furniture, a doorway, or even you. But did you know that this action holds more meaning than just affection for you and the cat's surroundings?

"Cats have facial glands that they use to mark their territory," says Debra Nickelson, DVM, a veterinarian and marketing manager for Veterinary Products Laboratories, a division of Central Life Sciences that markets a synthetic pheromone product.

"Cats' pheromones help improve their geographic orientation — which is what they perceive as their own space or their boundaries," Nickelson says. "It's a way for them to claim that particular area as their own. And they get pleasure out of rubbing their face against something."

Facial marking differs from urine and vertical marking (scratching furniture, doorways, etc.), which are considered defensive behaviors. "A cat that feels stressed in the environment will either hide, vertically mark with their paws or spray urine," Nickelson says.

Cats do not feel the urge to mark where there are facial pheromones present. When they sense they are in a familiar, safe environment, they will be less likely to engage in destructive behaviors, such as the ones associated with separation anxiety.

"Synthetic facial pheromones help them feel comfortable so they won't urine mark or vertically scratch — behaviors owners don't like," Nickelson says. Pheromone products also help calm a cat when crated, traveling or hospitalized.