

Why Has My Cat Become Mean?

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, offers some reasons for the change in behavior.

By Jeanne Adlon

Posted: Jan. 23, 2009, 3 a.m. EST

Q: My cat has always been very sweet to me and others. Lately though, he has become been nasty to other people. Any thoughts on why?

A: There could be all sorts of reasons for this type of behavior. The first thing I would suggest is to visit your vet. If you cat is OK physically, than you may want to query a feline behaviorist.

Meanwhile, I can share a story that shows just how sensitive our feline friends can be to changes in their routine. I used to cat sit for a very sweet kitty named Roscoe. His owner was a student and spent most of her day home with Roscoe, so they developed a cozy routine. Roscoe was always friendly to me when I would care for him until, all of a sudden, there was a huge change in his personality.

One visit I opened the door to find a true Halloween cat complete with growls and hisses. I could not believe it was the same calm, loving Roscoe. I literally had to dodge around him, in fear of getting bitten, to tend to his food and litter. On my way out, I managed to coax him into the bedroom where I left the door open a crack. This was so I could make my escape out the front door without a wild cat snarling behind me, and he could get his paw into the crack in the bedroom door to get out

After I left I started to worry if Roscoe had been able to nudge the bedroom door open. I turned around, went back to the building, climbed the stairs and quietly put the key in the front door. I needn't have worried, I was "greeted" by a hissing Roscoe right at the front door. I quickly closed it before he got out and I got bitten!

When I told his owner about the behavior, she was stunned. Roscoe was just as nice as always with her. However, I learned that her home routine had changed dramatically. She now had a boyfriend and was spending lots of time at his house. We could not say for sure if this caused Roscoe's anti-social outbursts, but it is good to remember to give special thought to our kitties throughout major changes in our lives.