

Hunting Postures of Cats

No more wondering what's going on in your cats head; with knowledge of these hunting postures you'll be able to spot behavior with a glance.

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Posted: October 7, 2009, 3 a.m. EDT

You've seen kitty furiously swish her tail back and forth. You've watched as your feline's fur stood up on end. You've observed the crouching, the stalking and the lunging. All along, you haven't been able to place your furry friend's behavior, but it's all becoming clear now. Your loving cat has been showing off her hunting postures for you. No more trying to figure out what's going on with kitty; you're now armed with the information that will give you a one-way ticket into the inner-working's of your feline's genius, and explain exactly what she means when she pounces, springs or lunges.

Head lowered, slinking close to the ground, tail twitching furiously back and forth: One of the most obvious hunting postures is that displayed when your feline lowers her head, slinks close to the ground and begins twitching her tail furiously back and forth. During this time, your cats' tummy will be very close to the ground, her chin will be mere inches from the floor, and her tail will be held in a position where it lashes to and fro at a rapid speed. Her entire body is completely symmetrical at this time.

Lunging, pouncing, springing: Cats in the wild must fend for themselves, and rely on natural instincts to know how, when and what needs to be done to secure their next meal. While household felines know that their owners will shower them with treats at various times throughout the day, they are still the bearers of hunting instincts, and use them when necessary, even when at play. A cat who lunges, pounces or springs may be attacking a bug scrambling about the kitchen floor, or a stuffed toy. Lunging, pouncing or springing is typically preceded by stalking.

Stalking: When stalking prey, a cat is often at her cutest. She will set her sights on the object that has piqued her interest, begin wiggling her hindquarters – which are often raised slightly above the rest of her body – and then lunge, pounce or spring at the object at hand.

Unsheathing the claws: A cat who is relaxed will keep her claws sheathed. When a cat feels threatened, is at play, ready to hunt, or tenses her muscles, they will become unsheathed. Unsheathing of the claws typically indicates that a cat is ready for action. She will protract them from their covering and have them ready should she feel the need to attack. Unsheathing of the claws usually takes place when a cat lunges, pounces or springs upon prey.

Flattened ears: Flattened ears are often seen as a sign of aggressiveness, when, in reality, flattened ears are an indication that your cat is feeling frightened and may need to attack. When hunting, a cat will flatten her ears against her head instinctually to protect them during a fight, or when attacking prey.

Piloerection: Cats are pretty consistent with their bodies, especially their fur. In general, their fur lies flat against their skin. When a cat is frightened, feeling defensive, getting ready to attack prey or fight, her fur will take on a piloerection. A piloerection is quite easy to spot, as it simply means that the fur stands on end. **Ears held upright in attention:** It is not odd for a cat's ears to be seen standing up straight; but when they are held upright in attention and don't twitch, it's an indication that kitty has heard something intriguing. Often the sound cannot be heard by human ears, but the posture of your cat will tip you off. Her ears will stand straight up and point forward. In the wild, cats often attack prey once they have held this position for some time. **Crouching:** Following stalking yet before lunging, pouncing or springing, a feline will crouch. Your cat will stalk her prey for some time, then crouch down, her body resting quietly as she contemplates her next move. Once she sees that the time is right, she strikes by lunging, pouncing or springing to catch her prey.

Now that you're aware of the inner workings of your sweet little feline's mind, the hunt is on!

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