

## Even Old Cats Need To Play

**Keep your cat's mind stimulated to avoid the onset of cognitive dysfunction disorder.**

*By Deborah Straw*

Franky has sleep problems, often stares into space at nothing and, some days, doesn't want to eat or go to the bathroom. Other days, he howls at the walls.

Franky is 21 years old, which seems young to show symptoms of dementia, until you learn that Franky is a cat. His age in relation to human years is close to 100. Franky is a well-loved, indoor cat living in northern Vermont. As he ages, Franky's owner gives him exactly what he wants to eat — increasingly, cooked chicken in tiny pieces and real bacon. His owner also re-arranged furniture to make the house more accessible.

Lucy developed similar symptoms. She lived with Rita Reynolds, founder of Howling Success, an animal sanctuary in Virginia. For more than 25 years, Reynolds, author of "Blessing the Bridge: What Animals Teach Us About Death, Dying and Beyond," has tended cats, dogs, donkeys and the occasional duck. At about 13 years old, Lucy began an unusual habit.

"She would run back and forth across the floor of our upper level and howl," Reynolds said. "This strange behavior worsened. Although she no longer had enough sight to find her way around, she sure could howl! She died this past fall at 16, definitely an old lady."

**\*\*For the full article, check out the September 2007 issue of CAT FANCY.\*\***