

Communicating With Your Cat

Petsmart launches online guide to help pet owners understand what their cats and dogs are saying.

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Dr. Suzanne Hetts says that cats purr when they are happy but also when they are in pain or ill. Purring. It means your cat is happy, right? Maybe not.

Many pet owners incorrectly interpret their pets' behavior, according to a recent Petsmart survey. The survey, which asked 1,000 pet owners questions on common animal behaviors, revealed that the majority of participants incorrectly interpret their pets' actions, such as tail wagging, purring and yawning.

For example, 96 percent of survey participants said they believed that purring means that a cat is content. However, according to animal behaviorist Dr. Suzanne Hetts, cats are known to also purr when they are ill or in pain.

To help pet owners better understand such common pet behaviors, Hetts has teamed up with Petsmart to develop an online guide called "If Your Pets Could Talk," which presents pet owners with typical behaviors that their cat or dog may exhibit and provides them with information on how to better interpret and respond to those behaviors.

"Most pet parents today assign human interpretations to their pets' behaviors," Hetts said. "Animals 'speak' in a different language, and by understanding what their pets are really saying, pet parents can help their pets to be happy and healthy."

Hetts worked with Dr. Robyn Jaynes, Petsmart's veterinary and pet care expert, in developing "If Your Pets Could Talk." The guide offers a variety of tools, including quizzes, videos and exercises, for testing and building pet owners' knowledge on common animal behaviors.