

## Game Over

**Strike out your cat's chance to develop cat bite abscesses.**

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Posted: Tue Sep 28 00:00:00 PDT 2004

Carl Pastor couldn't figure out where the foul smell was coming from. BeeJay, his 4-year-old longhaired cat, always took pride in her spotless appearance, grooming at every opportunity. Lately, however, BeeJay was very quiet, apathetic toward food and disinterested in going out in the yard. And she had mysteriously acquired an unpleasant odor. Determined to find the source of the odor, Pastor gave BeeJay a head-to-tail check. As he attempted to examine her rear end, BeeJay cried and ran off. "I retrieved her, to finish checking her out, and when I touched near her tail, she cried again, and my hand was covered with some really awful-smelling pus," he said.

Catch the CauseCatfight injuries are a common reason for veterinary visits. Although cats living together indoors occasionally fight, it rarely leads to serious injury. However, cats that encounter other cats outdoors are more likely to fight, usually over territory. When cats bite, their teeth cause puncture wounds. The bacteria in the cat's mouth is then injected into the skin. The wounds seal over quickly, trapping the bacteria under the skin. The bone marrow sends out white blood cells to help fight this infection. The white blood cells and bacteria accumulate to form a painful abscess (pocket of pus just beneath the skin). Abscesses are common in cats, because of the tough, elastic nature of feline skin, which readily seals over contaminated puncture wounds, allowing pus to accumulate beneath the skin. Mitchell Crystal, DVM, is a board-certified veterinary internist at North Florida Veterinary Specialists in Jacksonville, Fla. Crystal warned that trauma and infection are not the only concerns associated with cat-bite injuries. "Cat bites have the potential to transmit several life-threatening infectious diseases to other cats," he said. "Examples of these include the feline leukemia (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency (FIV) viruses, bartonellosis and rabies. Some of these, such as bartonellosis and rabies, have zoonotic potential they are transmissible to humans."

Call the Play An abscess diagnosis requires your cat's history and the physical-examination findings. Most abscesses occur on cats that go outdoors, like BeeJay. Intact males are at higher risk than females or neutered males, as they're more likely to roam and fight over territory.