Understanding the Body Language Puzzle

Putting the pieces together to achieve happier cats and owners

Karen Fazio, CDBC
Body language provides us with observable information in which to determine:

- If the cat needs to see a vet
- The pet’s emotional state, comfort level
- When it may be time to call a certified professional
Space sharing

- Preferred associates (friends).
- Acceptance.
- Love.
Preferred associates
Aggression or Frustration?

Per ED, VERY aggressive.

Extreme caution when changing litter (block passageway when scooping if possible)

No playrooms!
Frustration.

- Medical issues have been ruled out.
- Biting
- Stalk and attack
- Scratching
- Provide orient/stalk/kill games
- Mental stimulation Kongs, food puzzles, high areas
Who’s territory?
His territory.

- Grey cat has several associates. White cat is one of them.
- He takes lead, stands in doorway.
- She stands back.
- Both are comfortable with each other.
- Neutral whiskers, ears alert, eyes soft.
Our cats *do* love us

Research in cat colony* behavior yields evidence of members welcoming returning members of the colony with allorubbing.

Yes, your cat is showing love when they are rubbing your leg. Not just marking behavior.

*Multicat Households.
Dr. Christopher Pachel, DVM, DACVB, CABC*
Vulnerability is trust.

Baring its rear toward an individual is evidence of trust and love. Displaying vulnerability
Cats prefer to be stroked, scratched in areas they can’t reach on their own.

If they can reach it, don’t touch it.

Under chin, between ears, base of tail.

Preferred associates often groom each other in these areas.
Fear or something else?

This cat is taking on a defensive posture. Direct eye contact, low hanging tail, but with tip curled upward.

Likely, this photo was taken in the cat’s territory.
Meal-sharing

- Never a good idea.
- Cat’s prefer to eat in isolation.
- May share with a preferred associate. All others … unwelcome.
- Every cat in this photo is stressed. event.
Whisker talk

- Pulled back or down (fear, shy, timid)
- Forward (Interested, excited)
- Straight or slightly to side (Neutrality, friendly)
I want to hold your hand

- Tails touching, intertwined.
- Has your cat ever wrapped its tail around your neck, arm when laying next to you?
- Obviously preferred associates.
Thank you!

Questions and Answer segment

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