Cat Grooming Part 2

Part Two, what makes cats different? There's a couple of physiological differences. Cats are a totally different species then dogs, right? We're not grooming a dog in a cat costume.

First of all, skin is not attached to muscle. For lack of a better word, they wear a skin suit. It's why scruffing isn't necessarily the best thing to do. If you hold the cat up by the scruff, all the organs can compress causing organ damage.

Cats have what is called an altered glucuronidation pathway to the livers. It’s a fancy term for meaning they lack many of the enzymes that both dogs and people have. It means they can't metabolize certain substances. Instead of metabolizing it out of their bodies, it's stored in their livers and kidneys, where it builds up over time. And in time, can cause organ failure. It may not be the first time you use something that has something in there that the cats can't metabolize, it might be the fifth or sixth or seventh time you've used it that now causes the problem. What cats have the most problem is essential oils and botanicals.

Cats are also more susceptible to both heatstroke and hypothermia than the average healthy dog. They have the same risk as either an immune compromised, an elderly dog, puppy, or a nursing or pregnant bitch.

**Also, what makes them different is their state of mind**. First, they can smell hormones on us. It's not that cats read us very well, they smell us very well. How does the cat know you can groom them or not? It’s because they can smell the hormone responsible for fear on you. If you’re afraid to groom them and they know it, they've already have the upper hand.

They're also less domesticated than dogs. They're more aware of their surroundings. And because they are more aware of their surroundings, they tend to be on guard more so than dogs do.

In order to groom cats, we really need to understand their body language and their anatomy. You need to read the cat as a whole If you're able to read their body language you'll be able to react to to their moods quickly. It's going to help you know when it's okay to approach and when it's time to back off. But remember, these are not dogs. So the signs that dogs show that there's a problem or that they're happy or whatever, can be a little bit different from that from cats.

Let's start off with the ears. Ear positions have different meanings. There are 32 muscles in each year, which kind of allows independent movement and directional hearing. It's why they can look at you and listen to like the can opener in the other room. It helps the cat balance itself in a freefall. That fluid that's in the semicircular canals shifts and the cat can rotate until it equalizes so that the cat can land on its feet.

We have a couple of ear sets here. The first in which the ears are flat against the head, and again, you want to read the cat as a whole. There's going to be other things that going along besides the ears. But this is a cat is agitated. The middle picture is that the cat is relaxed. The ears are upright in their natural position. The last picture shows directional hearing. One ear is forward and the other ear is to the side. This cat is looking at you and listening something that's off to the side. A couple more pictures. The top gray cat is demonstrating cautiously friendly, but little uneasy. The ears are not upright and relaxed. They're slightly down. He's paying attention, not sure what's going on. The ears on the middle cat are flat against the head. This is an aggressive cat that is aggressive. There are other things that are going on here we will discuss those. Let’s bring in the tail now. Okay. If you look at the bottom picture, the ears are to the side and the tail is moving back and forth. So now we're adding something else to the mix besides the ears.

The tail is made up of nerve muscle and vertebrae. As this picture indicates the tail is actually continuation of the spine. Its main function is to help the cat maintain balance. You’ve probably seen this chart online. Different tale sets have different meanings. The lower the tail set, usually indicates that this cat is unsure of and might go into aggression. Any cat that is unsure, whether it's because of fear, or aggression is kind of still a biting risk.

The tail I would be most concerned about is the wagging tail. Keep in mind, ear set will give you clues as well. That whipping tale going back and forth, as if a dog is wagging their tail. Okay, that's a whole other different behavior in cats and disease and dogs. Let’s look at some more pictures.

The top picture the cat tail is upright. Alright, it's in its natural position for the cat. The ears are forward. It's a relaxed looking cat. The cat in the middle, the tail set is coming down a little bit. It's not at the bottom. It's not tucked in between his legs. This cat is a little unsure of what the environment is. We'll also notice that the ears in this picture the ears are a little bit to the side. The last picture is a happy to see you puffy tail. There is nothing else indicative of this cat to indicate any other problems. The ears are forward. He's not vocalizing right now to compare puffs tail to simply a tail that is just I'm happy to see you is that the hairs here are not separated. The cat that was angry in the chart with a puffed tail. The hairs on the tail would be distinct.

Let's move on to the whiskers. These are sensory organs. It helps cats see in the dark as well as navigate their world. They can use their whiskers to either appear smaller or appear larger. The whiskers being a sensory organ, so that when they're touching something consistently, such as the full face masks for cats, you can put that cat in overwhelm. Because something is constantly touching his sensory organ on this cat. Look at the little kitty here, you see how his whiskers are puffed out. He's trying to make himself larger.

Let's take a couple scenarios real quick. You have two cats here. The black Cat is making himself as small as possible. His tail is tucked underneath him. Whereas the brown cat is making himself as big as possible. The black cat whiskers might be against the face. The ears are flat down anything to make him look smaller. But the brown cat is trying to make himself larger. His tail is down, his fur is extended a little bit. He could see the whiskers are forward and his ears are out to the side. Whether a cat is appearing fearful as the black cat, or aggressive as the brown cat is, either one is a bite risk. Just because the cat is submissive does not mean it's not a bite risk.

So let's look at cat one. Cat two. All right. So you have to we have to look at the way cats see us and how cats interpret our presence. Cat number one is above the cat. Standing upright, ears flat against the head, whiskers are extended out. Whereas the cat number two is lower. To me, this looks like a groomer and cat on a grooming table. By virtue of grooming a cat, we are adopting an aggressive position. This cat is already on the defensive. You don’t want this scenario when grooming a cat.

Cats like to be up a little higher, it gives them comfort. In cage banks, they would be up on level three. Or the table as high up as you can comfortably groom.

I use towels liberally. I like to set up a border around them. Provides security to them.

Cats communicate through their body language. Looking at this cat, he is very relaxed cat, the whiskers are normal, ears are upright and facing forward. And let’s go to the opposite spectrum. This cat is aggressive. But this cat is very relaxed. But cat #1 can become cat #2 in short order.

Unlike cocker spaniels, cats don't pee and poop on us. Urine spraying is a sign that the cat is upset with something in his environment. Is it a reason to stop the grooming? Not in itself. But it's giving you a clue that this cat is stressed. I would stop the groom on a cat that poops.

Are other stressors that may happen before this cat comes into the grooming facility. My intake is going to include a couple questions because I would like to know what their stress level is beforehand. Did they just move to a new home? Are there other animals in the house? As are other new animals in the house? Is there new furniture? A new pet, a new baby. Kids coming home from college, kids going away to college? Younger kids going away to summer camp or coming back from summer camp. Anything outside the norm may stress them out?

Another response to stress is scratching, such as furniture and drapes, because pheromones are released from their pads. This is why I use a lot of towels. I mean, everywhere. I provide something soft for them to scratch. And when they scratch they're releasing some of their stress.

Let's look at some of the physical signs of feeling stress. We're going to cover dilated pupils, drooling, some impulsive, licking, shallow breathing and panting, vocalization and trembling. We'll get into all of these. Let's start off with dilated eyes, aka big eyes. This is a normal stress response, but it's something that should be observed. Look at the first cat. It has dilated eyes. It's a little stressed. And a cat in this situation. We're going to watch. Go down to the middle one. The cat now has a fixed stare. The fixed stare is a more serious stress response. You want to stop grooming at this point and give this cat a chance to recover. Cats can get to the point of no return. They can get to a point where they cannot come back from and can have a heart attack. Pay attention to the signs of stress.

Another sign of stress here you could see is this cat drooling. Cat’s don’t drool, it’s not normal for them. Drooling can either be a sign of toxicity, meaning if you just bathe the cat and the cat starts to drool, it is having a serious reaction to the product you just used on them or it is extreme duress. You need to stop grooming at this point.

**Compulsive licking.** We always laugh at a cat's giving themselves All right. You could see the little barbs on the tongue. It helps to remove hair, but compulsive licking is also a way for cat to de stress themselves. Bears watching.

**Shallow breathing or panting** Cats are not dogs and they don't pant. Shallow breathing is an extreme stress response. You need to stop what you're doing, and give this cat an opportunity to relax. Alright. If you're a shop groomer, you may be able to come back to this cat, but this may a groom that over for a mobile groomer.

**Vocalization**. Some cats are simply very talkative. And that's normal for that. Soft meowing is usually not a problem. Growling suggests that the cat is about to about to mount a flight response. Warning you that they've kind of had enough. Screeching or yelling means the cat is under extreme duress.

Urinating and defecating. It is not normal behavior for a cat to urinate or defecate. When they do that, it is a sign of stress. Particularly if they poop. Give this cat an opportunity to chill and get back to it later. You may not be able to. You have to keep watching all of those signs of stress and duress. As a professional, make that determination on whether or not you continue with the groom or that the groom is over.

Behavioral responses to stress include flight, fight, or freeze. Okay. The first level of response for many cats is to freeze actually and be very still. This gives the cat time to assess the situation they find themselves in and to check out their flight options. It's not undesirable behavior for grooming. Okay. The cat in freeze mode can sometimes be very successfully groomed, especially if you move quickly. They pretend it's not happening. You pretend you're not doing anything. If the cat perceives the threat to be direct and serious, the second response is to flee. It’s why I recommend having an open carrier nearby.

You It is important for you to remember that fleeing is the second response before they fight. Lock it down and have that open carrier handy. Cats are more likely to engage in aggressive, the fight response far more quickly than most dogs. The more they fear, the stronger the fight in them. Although there are some exceptions most behavioral responses can be managed by reducing the threat that the cat perceives. And with that, we will stop here and we'll go on to the next module which is part 3.