

# Owner Perceptions of the Treatment of Feline Behavior Problems

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**Most respondents (97.8%) reported that their cat had at least one behavior problem.**

## In the Literature

Grigg EK, Kogan LR, van Haaften K, Kolus C. Cat owners' perceptions of psychoactive medications, supplements and pheromones for the treatment of feline behavior problems. *J Feline Med Surg*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098612X18807783>

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## FROM THE PAGE ...

In this survey, researchers queried cat owners about the prevalence and type of behavior problems in their cat. Owner knowledge of and attitudes toward the treatment of behavior problems were also investigated.

Of the 448 responses, 1092 behavior problems were reported. Most respondents (97.8%) reported that their cat had at least one behavior problem. The most common problems in order of prevalence were anxiety or fear (eg, of stranger, carrier, or travel), destructive behavior (eg, scratching furniture), house soiling (ie, urination and/or defecation outside the litter box), excessive vocalization, aggression toward humans and/or animals, and excessive/repetitive grooming resulting in hair loss and/or injury.

Most respondents (93.5%) believed anxiety/emotional problems could result in behavior problems in cats, but nearly half (49.8%) were unaware of the availability of psychotherapeutic medications for the treatment of behavior issues in cats. Responses to being asked if they would consider giving psychoactive medications or supplements to their cat were mixed; 57.4% replied with *maybe*, 21.4% with *yes*, and 21.2% with *no*. The primary reported barriers to medical treatment were concerns about negative side effects (73.3%), excessive sedation (63.9%), and potential for

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addiction (39.9%). Important factors respondents noted would impact their decision to medicate included proven effectiveness (89.7%), ease of administration (84.8%), veterinarian recommendation (81.5%), and cost (77%). In addition, only 3.3% of owners indicated that their veterinarian recommended they seek behavioral help for their cat. These data suggest that there are missed opportunities by veterinarians to positively affect the well-being of cats.

## ... TO YOUR PATIENTS

Key pearls to put into practice:

- 1** Veterinarians should understand that behavior problems in cats are pervasive and most frequently involve fear-based behaviors, destructive scratching, and house soiling.
- 2** Behavior issues affect the quality of life of cats and their owners and should be clinically addressed like any other medical condition. Owners should be asked if they have concerns about their cat's behavior. A preappointment screening sheet may help identify areas of concern. Because the behavior problems identified in the present study are common, appropriate literature should be available for owner education to enhance veterinary team efficiency (see *Suggested Reading*).
- 3** Common barriers to treatment and compliance should be acknowledged. All owner concerns should be addressed by clearly discussing efficacy and side effects associated with prescribed treatments. A veterinarian's recommendations can be influential and positively impact an owner's decision to treat. Owners should be referred to a veterinary behaviorist if their veterinarian does not have the time or is disinclined toward or uncomfortable giving behavioral recommendations (see *Suggested Reading*).

### Suggested Reading

American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. American College of Veterinary Behaviorists website. <https://www.dacvb.org>. Accessed April 5, 2019.

CATalyst Council. CATalyst Council website. <http://catalystcouncil.org>. Accessed April 5, 2019.

American Association of Feline Practitioners. American Association of Feline Practitioners website. <https://catvets.com>. Accessed April 5, 2019.

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NADA 141-457, Approved by FDA

US Patent: 6,673,929

US Patent: 9,700,591

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