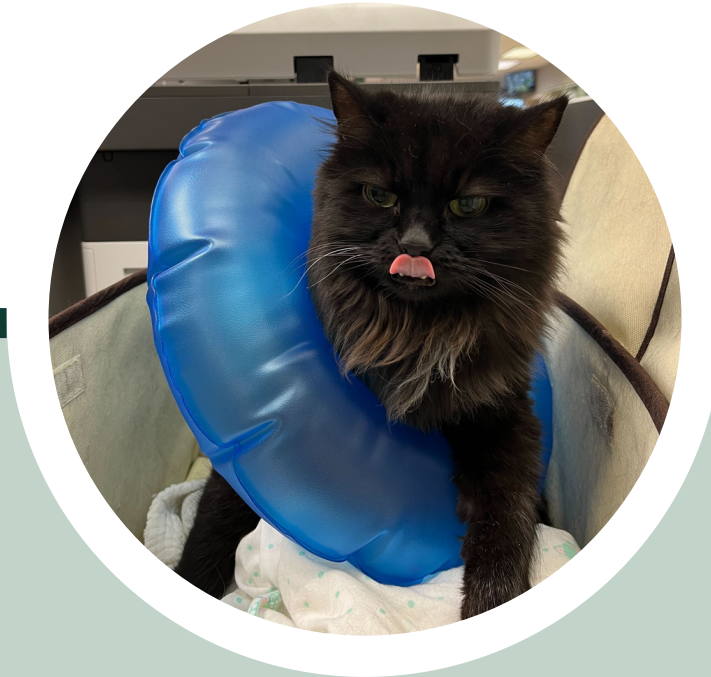


TIPS ON CAT TRAINING



Training cats with positive reinforcement techniques can be as easy (or as difficult) as training dogs. The techniques are very similar. Cats tend to move at a slower pace and, especially in the beginning, may require extremely short sessions (30 seconds to a minute). If your cat loses interest after a short time, make the sessions shorter in the future so that the session ends with the cat still engaged.

Like dogs, it is very important to determine what motivates your cat. If it's food, then you can load the marker word with the type of food your cat prefers. Some food items to try are tuna, chicken, baby food, yogurt, soft cheese, wet cat food, or soft commercial cat treats (usually broken into smaller pieces). Treats should be as small as you can handle. If your cat is not motivated by food, you can load the clicker using a wand toy. To do this, say the marker word and immediately start waving the wand toy. Play for a few seconds and then stop the movement of the toy. Repeat this as many times as necessary for your cat to make the connection. You may try working with your cat prior to meals so that she is a little hungry when the session starts.

Food delivery in cats can be significantly different than that in dogs. It is not recommended to hand the cat a treat out of your hand. Cats do not have good vision up close, and many are not particularly dexterous with their mouths. Handing a cat a food reward can lead to you getting nipped by accident. Cats also take a longer time to chew and eat the food reward, so you may only get a few repetitions in the first sessions. If you are feeding a treat that is more liquid, then you can offer the treat on a spoon and allow the cat to have a few licks before removing the spoon. For a solid food reward, you can throw it on the ground. In the beginning, it may take cats some time to locate it, but they get better at finding the treat over time. It may help to have a bowl nearby so that you mark and then reward in the bowl.

As with dogs, it is helpful to put all other animals in the house in a separate area while you are training initially. This allows you to focus on the cat you are working with and allows the cat to concentrate better on the new activity. Gradually work up to more distracting environments until your cat is able to respond in the presence of other cats. Do not increase the level of difficulty until you believe your cat will do the behavior at the previous level of difficulty. If you try to use it in a difficulty level that is too high for your cat, you are setting the cat up for failure, which slows down the learning process.



Trick training can teach cats appropriate human interaction and increases enrichment. You can get trick titles with your cat at www.domorewithyourdog.com if you are interested. For target training, you may want to use two fingers extended rather than your entire palm. Cats can be very sensitive to pressure from your body, so if your cat is moving away from your extended fingers, check and make sure that you're not trying to "meet" your cat's movement and accidentally bopping him on the nose.