

# KATS' TALES

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Kingdom Animal Shelter  
1664 Memorial Drive  
P.O. Box 462, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819 (802) 741-7387  
www.kingdomanimalshelter.com

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## 8 TIPS FOR BRINGING A SHY CAT OUT OF HER SHELL by JaneA Kelley

A cat who seems afraid of her new home can be frustrating. Here are a few ways you can help her.

- 1. Give her a room of her own** Sure, this is classic New Cat 101, but it's especially important when you're dealing with a shy or fearful cat. One room gives her a reasonable amount of space to call her own but won't overwhelm her with too much newness all at once.
- 2. Use pheromones** One of the primary causes of anxiety in any new cat is the feeling like she's walking into a home that belongs to other cats. Shy cats feel this overwhelming sensation even more. Feline "happy cat" pheromones, whether in the form of a plug-in diffuser, spray, wipes, or collars, can go a long way to help relieve a cat's territorial anxiety.
- 3. Give positive reinforcement** Tell your shy kitty how brave she is when she comes out from hiding and allows herself to be petted. Do this often. The more you say it, the more you'll believe it, and the more you believe it, the more she'll believe it.
- 4. On the other hand, don't reinforce fearful behaviors** Don't pet her while she is hiding in the closet, for example. That reinforces the behavior you are trying to change. Just give her a sad look and tell her you can't pat her while she is in there. Eventually she might get the point.
- 5. Build her confidence** Play is a great way to build a shy kitty's confidence. Of course, it may take quite a while before she'll feel comfortable enough to engage in any interactive play. But don't give up; she'll come around eventually, especially if you're using a super tantalizing toy.
- 6. Test and expand her challenge lines** A challenge line is one past which you can't go before a cat has a negative reaction, whether that is attacking or hiding. If she's food-oriented, you might consider gradually moving her dish closer to another room, just to make her feel comfortable, expanding her horizon.
- 7. Make hiding spots inaccessible** Try wedging a piece of cardboard (or other safe impediment) in front of the closet or her hiding spot of choice. Once she realizes she can't go in there she may become more used to staying out in the open.
- 8. Ask your vet about anti-anxiety medication** Sometimes shy or fearful cats need a short course of psych meds to break out of a negative cycle. Hopefully the more time she spends with you, the less shy she'll be, and you'll both win!

Source: Catster.com; January 27, 2016; <http://www.catster.com>; retrieved 3/11/16)



Pearl is about 3 or 4 years old, a real "gem" you might say. She is still a bit shy but is beginning to seek out human interaction more frequently. She loves to be petted but we think she might be happier in a quiet, gentle home.

### \*UPCOMING EVENTS\*

- April (date to be determined)  
Benefit Buffet at the Danville Inn
- May 15 Quince (not Cinco) de Meow,  
North Church, St. Johnsbury
- Don't forget about the photo of  
your cat that you would like to  
enter into the 2017 KAS Cat Calendar contest. Entries will be taken  
in June.

## UNDERSTANDING FELINE LANGUAGE (conclusion)

*The Flehmen Response* Have you noticed times when your cat — perhaps while sniffing your shoe — lifts his head, opens his mouth slightly, curls back his lips and squints his eyes? He's not making a statement about how your shoe smells; he's gathering more information. Your cat's sense of smell is so essential to him that he actually has an extra olfactory organ that very few other creatures have: the Jacobson's organ. It's located on the roof of his mouth behind his front teeth and is connected to the nasal cavity. When your cat gets a whiff of something really fascinating, he opens his mouth and inhales so that the scent molecules flow over the Jacobson's organ. This intensifies the odor and provides more information about the object he's sniffing. What he does with that information, well, we'll never know. *A Key to Your Cat's Moods* Wondering if your cat is happy, meditating, or having a bad day? Here are some tips: **Content:** Sitting or lying down, eyes half-closed, pupils narrowed, tail mostly still, ears forward and purring—a really happy cat will often knead on a soft surface. **Playful:** Ears forward, tail up, whiskers forward and pupils somewhat dilated—playing is hunting behavior; your cat may stalk her prey (a toy, a housemate or you), then crouch down with her rear end slightly raised. A little wiggle of the butt, then...pounce! Your cat will grab her prey, bite it, wrestle it to the floor and kick it with her hind feet: Her toy is now dead. **Irritated or over-stimulated:** Pupils dilated, ears turned back and tail twitching or waving—your cat may growl or put his teeth on you as a warning to cease and desist. Intense play can quickly turn into overstimulation in some cats, resulting in biting and scratching. **Nervous or anxious:** Ears sideways or back, pupils dilated and tail low or tucked between legs—your cat may slink through the house close to the floor looking for somewhere to hide. He may turn his face to the wall to shut the world out. **Frightened or startled:** Think Halloween cat—ears back and flat against her head, whiskers back, back arched, fur standing on end and tail erect or low. She may yowl, growl, hiss and spit. **Defensive:** Crouched, ears flattened, whiskers back, tail between his legs or wrapped around his body, and pupils dilated—he may meow loudly, growl, hiss and spit. **Angry, aggressive:** Ears back, pupils very constricted, and her tail may be up or down with the fur standing on end—an aggressive cat will stare down another cat and growl or yowl until the other cat gives way. Cats don't really want to fight; they prefer standoffs, but this can progress to fighting if one of the cats doesn't back down.

(Source: The Humane Society of the United States; Cat Chat: Understanding Feline Language, February 27, 2015)

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**Did you know....When kittens are born their eyes are blue, and they can see only 1/6 of the light we can. Permanent eye color develops after 12 weeks.**

**OUR MISSION STATEMENT** The purpose of the Kingdom Animal Shelter is to facilitate the placement of stray and unwanted animals and pets in desirable homes; to establish and maintain an animal shelter and associated procedures that promote health, care and handling; and to prevent overpopulation and the prevention of cruelty to animals. The animals in our care, our guests, are never euthanized merely because we lack space or because the animal's stay with us has exceeded a predefined amount of time.

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