



EAST CHATSWOOD CAT CLINIC
329 Penshurst St. Willoughby 2068

NOVEMBER 2007

The CAT Clinic Catalyst



It's all about Cats

Ph: 9417 6613

www.catclinic.com.au

NEWS 'n' VIEWS

The Cat Clinic is constantly looking for better ways to provide service to you and your cats so we've appointed our own Hospital Administrator, Peta Bailey.

As we have farewelled some of our lovely staff members there will also be new reception staff and Kristin Sharrock has taken over responsibilities as Office Manager.

In revamping the administrative side of the Cat Clinic it may mean that sometimes there will be an extra step to solving cat issues however the end result will be your cat getting even better care as all the new arrangements mean that Dr Kim can leave the admin to the experts and focus more on Cat Based Activities – excellent!

Dr. Kim's Activities

Dr Kim's trip to Italy and presentation at the Behaviour Conference was a great success and she particularly enjoyed the culture (and the Affogato for breakfast!). While overseas she was also a guest on PetWorld Radio with Steve Dale in Chicago, one of the USA's foremost journalists who focusses on pets.

However as any cat will tell you, it turns out it is always best to sleep in your own bed. Dr Kim really enjoyed coming home!

Recently Dr Kim has also appeared on two TV programs, Saturday Disney and Sunrise with Mel and Kochie. Talking about kittens and cats of course! You can see excerpts being played at the Cat Clinic and on the website.

WEB news

Dr Kim's 'Petcast' on Steve Dale's Pet Central Radio show
www.stevedalepetworld.com/content/view/263/

How old is your cat?
www.catage.com/reg/regselectcat.aspx This is pretty good - run by the Purina Food Folk but fun and informative!

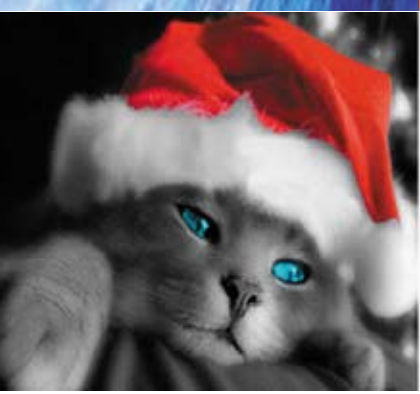
Check the Sunrise Website for a precis of Dr Kim's visit with Mona http://seven.com.au/sunrise/fact_071012_cat

www.winnfelinehealth.org and www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/ are great for general cat advice - that is if Dr Kim Hasn't answered your questions already!

The Cat Clinic's Website has gone through a transformation over the last few months, and there are a few more incarnations in train. Check it out (and send your friends along!) to www.catclinic.com.au

Want to know more about Kitten play?

SEE THE REVERSE SIDE FOR MORE INFORMATION...



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And of course come and check out our fun, foolish and practical Christmas 'stuff' for cats and cat lovers. You'll be surprised what's available.

PLAY

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why do they do it? Playing is a very important part of physical and mental development of all animals and whole books and serious study are devoted to the topic. So what is play?

There is nothing cuter than watching kittens play, but why do they do it? It looks like a waste of energy! Is it only kittens that play and is there an age when play stops and all activity has a serious intent?

So what are the rules?

Essentially, play gives the participants permission to make errors without penalty. The best illustration is the lion cub who chews the male lion's tail and gets away with a soft bat around the head instead of a lethal 'don't bother me' blow! Play is all about voluntarily inhibiting the strength of muscular activity so no one gets hurt. The rules are intricate and involve signals from both parties about the willingness to play at that time and the roughness of the play. It is a skill best acquired by playing with a peer with similar abilities but

anyone can play! In fact, researchers have found that even when food resources are unreliable or restricted, as they are for farm cats for example, adults will still spend some of their time playing both with kittens and other adults. Maybe it is for the exercise, but maybe it is just for fun! Play is not energy 'expensive' – even kittens only use 9 percent of their daily calorie tally playing.

What does this mean for your 'tiger beside the hearth' – your own purrrfect pet cat? Actually, it is very significant for both of you. Kittens have to learn the rules of play and if you are the only moving object in the house, then 'Tag, you're it!' As the playmate you had better teach and learn the rules fast or get another kitten to play tag at the top of the pelmets at midnight! Learning play-rules is particularly important as we humans have been selecting for cats who remain kitten-like for a lot more of their life and since there is no need to hunt anything harder than the fridge to get the food, all that hunting instinct is transformed into play.

TYPES OF PLAY

There are several types of play. Play is always relevant to future activities essential to species survival so it comes down to food and water acquisition, escape and social interaction including sexual, affiliative (friendly) and agonistic (aggressive) behaviours. There are also basic instinctive behaviours especially related to early survival – thus straight after birth kittens and mum both know to get the babies clean and attached to a nipple for milk to arrive. There is no time to learn this behaviour because too many babies would starve, so it pretty much goes like clockwork from the outset. Of course, foals and calves can also get up and run at this same stage – but then they have been inside mum for a lot longer as well!

What is Special about Playing?

It requires a certain amount of brain development, particularly in the co-ordination section of the brain (the Purkinje cells of the Cerebellum) for there to be any directed movement (as opposed to reflex movement such as the 'knee jerk'). Early play activities in kittens basically involves figuring out how to bat objects around and pounce on them – the skill being acquired is learning to hunt small rodents. This is called 'Object Play' and is essentially an individual activity. Cats eventually develop an individual hunting style, but the killing 'neck bite' is instinctive and anybody watching even a four week old kitten pouncing on a toy mouse will see that they are focused and already know where to grab it - just like their mum!

As the brain continues developing, more complex skills are developed. At about 12 – 14 weeks old, inert objects become much less interesting as the kitten starts to learn about 'Social Play'. This is the time when kittens are learning to interact with others of their own species in both friendly and unfriendly encounters. It's even better when the hunting pounce skills are practiced on a moving object – the other play participant! A kitten is genetically programmed to pounce 30 times a day as this is the average number of pounces it requires to catch a full day of rodent meals!

The Human - Kitten play rules are:

No Hand-Hunt. Do not wave your hand and wriggle your fingers (or even objects resembling them) in front of your kitten to entice them to play. Remember, what kittens learn to play with now they will hunt in the future and a cat bite can easily put you in hospital. Even kittens can bite down to bone and when they grow to be a stirred up adult who views a hand as a legitimate target, an angry or frightened chomp could be the outcome. And the chomp may not be on your hand! As Dr Karen Overall, a world authority on dog and cat behaviour says, why would you wave flesh in front of a carnivore? And no 'Clawful Bear Hug and Kick'. This 'game' of attaching ones feline self to the arm or leg of a human and biting, clawing and kicking is a social aggression activity and part of learning to fight an adversary. Common sense says the adversary should never be something in your household that bleeds. Substitute a long sock filled with foam.

Do play 'distraction'. Toys on wire or knotted ropes dragged

The Biggest Rule is – Enjoy your cat's individual purrrsonality and temper your play to theirs.

across the floor are great games and your cat can happily be allowed to kick and maul them as they are replaceable! Bouncy toys on wire, bungee cords or fishing lines are great. Not every cat wants to play with a big toy the size of a rat though so keep the toys mouse-sized, especially for young cats. The Cat Clinic stocks a broad range of 'cat tested' toys to make your selection easy!. Hunting simulation with treat balls with food inside are fun too. Boxes with holes and objects inside rate highly. Be inventive! Hide food in different places – even under a plastic cup is more interesting than food in a bowl.

And best of all – teach your cat tricks. Not just boring old 'sit stay' but 'jump up here or over this' and 'run along a narrow board'. Stimulate your cat and yourself. You'll be amazed!

Remember also that not all cats are lapcats. Sometimes, like a teenager, just having the cat in the room with you means they love you! In fact, the official distance is 0.5 metres – closer than that and your cat is truly loving you in true feline fashion!

If you want to receive these newsletters and other items of interest by email, please send your cat's name and your name in an email to catclinic@catclinic.com.au. All seminar and other information goes out electronically first!

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Easy parking – Rear lane W22 access off Victoria Avenue and OPEN 7 DAYS

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