**Glen Mills Veterinary Hospital**

**1785 Wilmington Pike**

**Glen Mills, PA 19342**

**Tel: (610) 558-0100 Fax: (610) 558-0102**

**Training Cats**

Cats may appear difficult to train but they are certainly capable of learning. The goal is to find out what motivates your cat and use it to convince it that it is in their best interest to comply with your requests. General guidelines to becoming a good teacher and encouraging your cat to be a good student include:

\* Train several times per day if possible and keep individual training sessions SHORT. A few repetitions per session are appropriate. Always try to end when your cat is still interested in interacting, rather than waiting until it is bored or has given up.

\* Work with food motivated cats before meals when they may be hungry. Work with play motivated cats at times when they would usually be playing.

\* Remember that all goals of training stem from positive reinforcement. Negative interactions with cats promote anxiety, aggression, inappropriate urination and other worse behaviors. Hitting, swatting, holding a cat's mouth closed and throwing things at a cat are all provocative behaviors that should be avoided at all times. The only outcome of such training is a cat that is more concerned, defensive and/or aggressive about its surroundings and people.

\* Please call with questions, concerns and updates throughout your training.

LET’S GET STARTED

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* Interrupter Sound and the Come Cue\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

GOAL: Create a noise or verbal command that a cat will easily recognize.  Upon recognition, the cat should come to you or focus on you before its next action. This helps to do the following:

\* Interrupt bad behaviors, i.e. cat fights

\* Promote positive interactions between  you and your cat

\* Redirect your cat's attention towards something positive before an expected anxious event

TRAINING:

1) Choose a novel sound that your cat rarely hears.  It should be distinct, though not frightening.  Examples include: small jar of cat treats, an electric can opener, a pitch pipe, a bell, a plastic container with a bell in it, a plastic container with a few pennies in it. You may use your voice and the command "come" instead of the novel noise however the aforementioned items are more powerful training tools.

2) Determine what treats your cat is most motivated for. Cats have affinities for various textures, flavors, heated versus non-heated foods, etc.

3) Start the training session at a non-stressful time with no obvious distractions around, i.e. other pets, people, and loud noises.  Do not use the cue or sound in high stress situations until your cat responds 9 out of 10 times in training during non-stressful times. Training during challenging scenarios too early sets cats up to fail. They may become poorly trained and lastly, it may weaken the cue.

3) Start with the cat close to you in the room. Make the sound and immediately follow it up with a treat. Do this many times before you move to the next step and be consistent. Every time the sound goes off, a tasty reward should be given. Use tiny pieces of treats to avoid over-feeding your cat.

4) Once your cat is good at step #3, try making the sound when your cat is farther from you. Try also when it is less engaged with you. Once you are good at this, you may try testing your cat from other rooms in the house.

5) Lastly, you may add a verbal cue by saying your cat's name and "come" before making the sound. After repeated success you may try using your voice without the noise. Reward your cat for each correct response.

\* For the highly motivated folks who would like to train their cats to do other tricks and commands such as SIT, COME, STAY, BEG, and GIVE PAW, please know that it is definitely possible. For more information refer to "Clicker Training for Cats", available on www.clickertraining.com, Doris Dingle's "Crafty Cat Activity Book" or "Show Biz Tricks for Cats" by Anne Gordon.

\* Feeling frustrated? Don't worry. Training can be challenging but we’re here to help. Contact us for an appointment to discuss behavioral training. Good Luck!