

# FELINE SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

# DOMESTICATION

- ANCESTOR *FELIS LIBYCA* (AFRICAN WILDCAT)
- 4000 YEARS AGO
- CATS DOMESTICATED THEMSELVES?

# FELINE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

- FACULTATIVELY SOCIAL
- BEHAVIORAL FLEXIBILITY
- DEGREE OF SOCIALITY DEPENDS MAINLY ON DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES

# ORGANIZATION OF COLONY

- 10-30 CATS
- MATRILINEAL
- OVERLAPPING  
TERRITORIES  
DURING BREEDING  
SEASONS

# GROUP-LIVING CATS

## STRUCTURED SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

- PREFERRED ASSOCIATIONS
- ALLOGROOMING AND ALLORUBBING
- COOPERATIVE REARING OF KITTENS
- INDIVIDUAL RECOGNITION
- DOMINANCE RELATIONSHIPS

# PREFERRED ASSOCIATES

- CAN BE
  - FEMALE-FEMALE PAIRS
  - MALE-MALE PAIRS
  - MALE-FEMALE PAIRS

# ALLOGROOMING



# ALLORUBBING

- OCCURS MORE WHEN CATS RETURN TO COLONY AFTER BEING GONE, PRESUMABLY HUNTING



# FRIENDLY GREETING

- ALLRUBBING IS USUALLY PRECEDED BY TAIL-UP APPROACH BY AT LEAST ONE CAT, AND IS MOST LIKELY IF BOTH CATS APPROACH TAIL-UP

# SIGNALING ASSERTIVENESS

- HIND LIMBS EXTENDED AND STIFF
- EARS UP AND ROTATED Laterally
- TAIL ARCHED AWAY FROM HOCKS
- HEAD WAG
- APPROACH

# SUBMISSION AND FEAR

- CROUCHING
- EARS DOWN/BACK
- LATERAL APPROACH
- TAIL TUCKED
- ROLLING
- HEAD DOWN
- AVOIDANCE

# INTER-CAT AGGRESSION PROBLEMS

# MINIMUM DATABASE

- CBC
- URINALYSIS
- CHEMISTRY PANEL
- FECAL
- TOTAL THYROXINE (T4)
- ARTERIAL BLOOD PRESSURE

# INTRASPECIES AGGRESSION

- INTRODUCTION OF NEW CAT
- STATUS-RELATED AGGRESSION
- RESOURCE DEFENSE
- FEAR-INDUCED
- REDIRECTED AGGRESSION
- PLAY AGGRESSION

# INTRODUCTION OF NEW CAT

- CAT SOCIETIES ARE INSULAR
- STRANGERS ARE NOT  
READILY ACCEPTED

# TIME TOGETHER

- FOR PAIRS OF CATS, THE LONGER THEY HAVE BEEN TOGETHER, THE LESS OVERT AGGRESSION OCCURS
  - BARRY AND CROWELL-DAVIS, 1999



# ASSOCIATION

- RELATIVES AND CATS THAT GIVEN CAT IS MORE FAMILIAR WITH ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE PREFERRED ASSOCIATES (“FRIENDS”) THAN NON-RELATIVES
  - CURTIS, KNOWLES AND CROWELL-DAVIS, 2002

# INTRODUCTION OF NEW CAT

- WHEN NEW CAT IS BROUGHT INTO HOUSE, DO NOT SIMPLY PUT IT IN SAME ROOM WITH OTHER CATS AND HOPE THINGS WILL WORK OUT

# INTER-CAT AGGRESSION FOLLOWING INTRODUCTION OF NEW CAT

LEVINE ET AL., APPL ANIM BEHAV SCI 2005; 90:325-336

- 50% OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORTED FIGHTING
- 50% OF HOUSEHOLDS INTRODUCED CATS BY ABRUPTLY PUTTING THEM TOGETHER
- 22% REPORTED IMMEDIATE ACCEPTANCE OF NEW CAT
- 40% REPORTED ACCEPTANCE IN FIRST MONTH
- ALLOWING CAT OUTDOORS ASSOCIATED WITH FIGHTING

# FEAR AGGRESSION

- CAT HISSES AND GROWLS AT OTHER CATS WHEN THEY COME NEAR
- SHOWS SIGNS OF FEAR
  - EARS BACK, CROUCHING

# CLASSICAL CONDITIONING

UCS (SOMETHING SCARY) → UCR (FEAR AGGRESSION)

UCS + NS (BUDDY) → UCR (FEAR AGGRESSION)

NS (BUDDY) BECOMES CS → CR (FEAR AGGRESSION)

# PLAY AGGRESSION

- BOUTS OF WRESTLING PLAY ESCALATE

# INTRASPECIES PLAY AGGRESSION

- NORMAL BEHAVIOR?
  - IS EITHER CAT BEING INJURED?
  - DOES ONE CAT END OR ATTEMPT TO END PLAY BOUT WHEN INTENSITY OF PLAY ESCALATES?
  - DOES OTHER CAT ALLOW TERMINATION OF PLAY THAT IS ESCALATING IN INTENSITY, OR DOES IT CONTINUE ESCALATION FROM PLAY TO FIGHTING?

# PLAY AGGRESSION-TREATMENT

- WHAT IF PLAY DOES ESCALATE INTO FIGHTING?
  - KEEP SEPARATE WHEN NOT BEING SUPERVISED
  - ALLOW PLAY WHEN SUPERVISED, BUT DISRUPT PLAY WHEN ESCALATION BEGINS
  - DO NOT WAIT FOR ESCALATION TO REACH POINT OF ACTUAL FIGHTING



# STATUS-RELATED AGGRESSION

- CATS HAVE PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP
  - NOT “NEW CAT” ISSUE
- AGGRESSOR CHASES, GROWLS, AND ATTACKS OTHER CAT
- SHOWS ASSERTIVE POSTURES
  - EARS UP AND ROTATED TO SIDE
- MAY TOTALLY CONTROL RESOURCES

# STATUS-RELATED AGGRESSION

- MAY BE INITIATED BY IDENTIFIABLE DISRUPTIVE EVENT
  - ILLNESS OF ONE CAT
  - DISPLACED AGGRESSION
  - NEW CAT ADDED TO HOUSEHOLD DISRUPTS EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS

# TREATMENT PLAN

- ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATIONS
- BEHAVIORAL MODIFICATIONS
- PHARMACOLOGICAL THERAPY

# STATUS-RELATED AGGRESSION TREATMENT

- KEEP CATS THAT ARE IN CONFLICT SEPARATE  
WHEN NOT BEING SUPERVISED

# REINTRODUCTION

- SEPARATE BY BARRIER
  - DOOR TIED AND BLOCKED SO OPENS ABOUT 1 INCH
  - STACKED CHILD GATES
  - SCREEN
- DO NOT FORCE INTERACTIONS
- ALLOW CATS TO FREELY APPROACH OR LEAVE BARRIER

# GRADUAL INTRODUCTIONS

- HUMAN HANDLERS
  - ONE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR EACH CAT
  - TAKE CATS TO DISTANCE NECESSARY FOR RELAXATION AND FOCUS ON TREATS AND PLAY
  - OVER SEVERAL TO MANY DAYS, GRADUALLY MOVE CATS CLOSER TO EACH OTHER

# SCENT SWAPPING

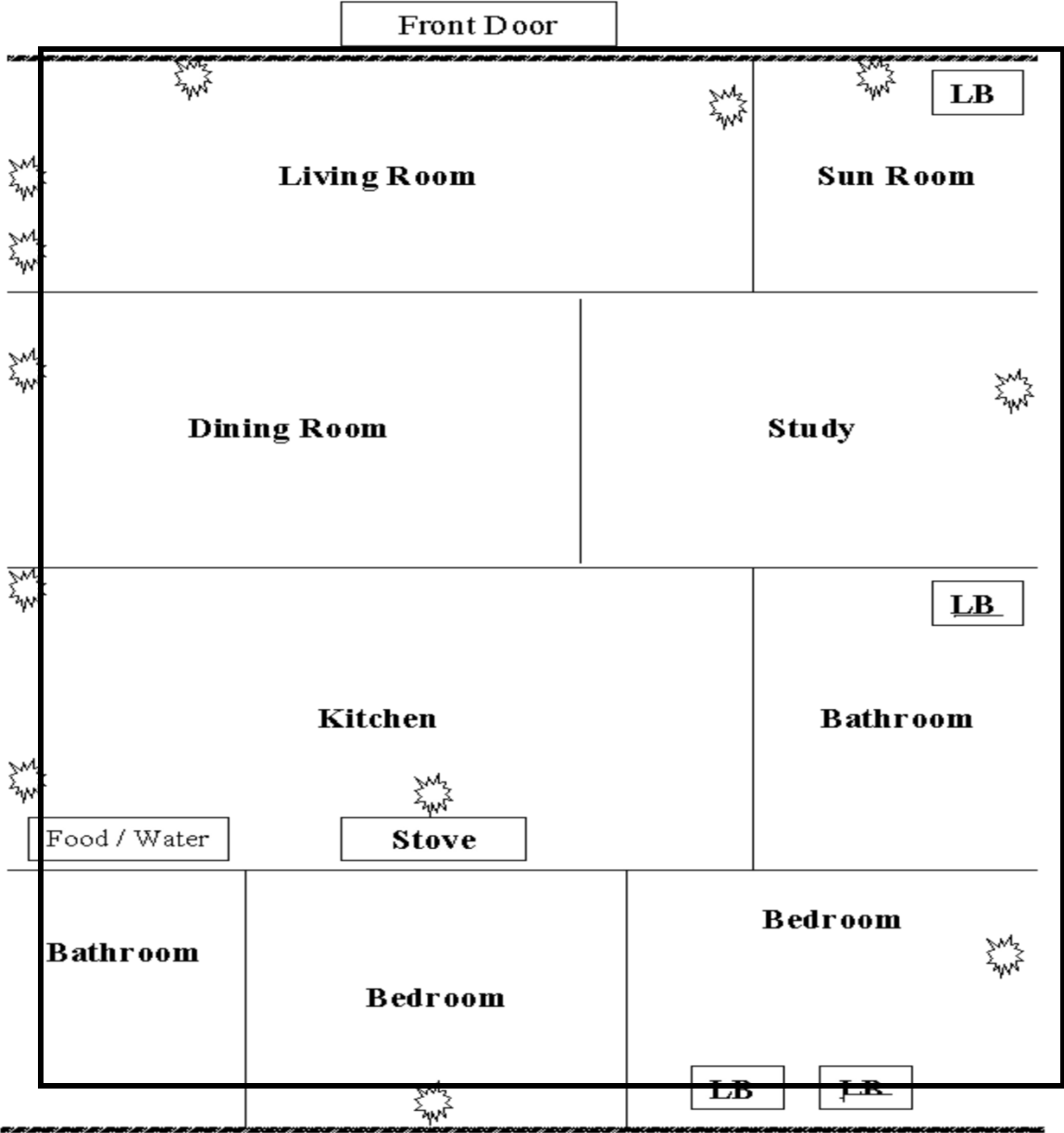
- USE HAND TOWEL OR SOFT TOY
- RUB FACIAL AND PERI-ORAL AREA OF CAT
  - MAKE IT PLEASANT EXPERIENCE
- USE SAME TOWEL ON ALL CATS
- EXCHANGE BEDDING

# MINIMIZE CONFLICTS AT PREFERRED RESOURCES

- DISPERSE LITTER BOXES IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT HOUSE
- PROVIDE TWO ESCAPE ROUTES FOR ALL LITTER BOXES WHEN POSSIBLE
- REMOVE HOODS TO LITTER BOXES OR CUT AN EXIT OPENING IN HOOD



**Floor plan of house**



# TREATMENT OF ANXIETY

- SELECTIVE SEROTONIN REUPTAKE INHIBITORS
- TRICYCLIC ANTIDEPRESSANTS
- GABAPENTIN
- PHEROMONES
- NUTRICEUTICALS