



## **Module 21: Feline Actions**

- About catnip and presents
- About belly up and Halloween cat
- About grooming
- About catnaps

In this module you will learn about the following feline actions:

- About catnip and presents
- About belly up and Halloween cat
- About grooming
- About catnaps
- About food burying and toy dunking
- About grieving

**Feline Actions - 4m56s**

## 21.1 Introduction

**Your cat has several actions he/she may show to you.**

These actions are part of their typical behaviour. Not all cats will display the same behaviour. It depends on their instincts as well as their relationship with you.

## 21.2 Catnip and Presents

**Catnip is definitely one of the best cat treats you could give your cat if you enjoy watching them 'go crazy and then zonk out'.**

Catnip is a plant that grows in the wild and discovered to be an intense herbal plant for cats.

Your cat can roll, twist, play and rub against the catnip object, even drooling when there is catnip within reach. Catnip is a Mint plant that has a powerful effect on cats that are sensitive to it. Your sedentary cat can come alive with catnip.

Most cats will smell it and enjoy the resulting neurological condition - they will become extremely happy due to the pheromones catnip is thought to mimic. There are receptors found in the brain of a cat that react to pheromones that make your cat start to roll around, twist and play.

When catnip is eaten by cats it can have the opposite effect and make your cat mellow. It works differently for various cats. Some cats will actually meow or growl due to catnip, while others will be very hyperactive, run around, be aggressive, and be protective of their toys. This unusual behaviour only lasts for 10 minutes or less before your cat is ready for a long nap.

One study states that about 50 per cent of cats are not sensitive to catnip and show no reactions. It also takes until a kitten reaches three to six months old before they will start to react to catnip.

Presents are an entirely different thing, and we do not mean the toys and catnip you provide for your cat. Presents are actually something your cat can bring to you. Presents can be anything from an article of clothing to a dead animal. Your cat has instincts to hunt, and if left outside they will catch mice, rabbits, birds, and other small animals.

When they bring you a present of this type they are looking for you to reward them. It is a sign of affection, trust and mutual respect, that they bring you this kind of present. Cats who bring food are offering to share it with you as they would within their cat pack.

Not all cats are outdoors and able to bring these types of presents.

Many domesticated cats will forget this behaviour if they are never allowed outside. However, some will still keep it and show it in different ways. For example, your cat may bring you a favourite toy. They may be asking to play with you, but most often it is a way to ask for affection and to be rewarded for bringing you a "mouse", even though it is just a toy mouse.

Other cats will take presents to a whole new level. These cats will bring you presents for when you get home or if they have been away from you for a long time. For example, a cat sleeping upstairs for several hours may bring a present downstairs to where you are. This is affection and also

comfort. When your cat begins to bring you presents that are left at the front door, or as far as they could bring them from a certain location, it means they missed you and want to get affection from you. It can be a reassuring behaviour; such as "if I bring you a present you won't abandon me, right?" The behaviour can actually develop if their household situation changes. For instance, if you were living in a three person household but moved out with just you and your cat, your cat may start to bring presents, of all sizes.

Cats have been known to bring rings, articles of clothing, excessively large stuffed animals, or something you treasure. For instance, if you have an item that has been with you through childhood into adulthood this may be the main target for presents.

## 21.3 Belly Up and Halloween Cat



**Belly up behaviour is twofold. Your cat may be willing to go belly up as a way to get a tummy rub.**

It feels good and they often show their appreciation by purring, kneading the air and remaining in this position.

However, it can also be a false move.

Your cat may be revealing its belly in play mode.

They are waiting for you to be lured in before the attack. The behaviour has become one of play, but it was also to give an opponent cat a false sense of submission. In this method the cat will spring an attack. You will know when the behaviour is about attack and when it is about a tummy rub because your cat is usually purring and flopped over right in front to expose their belly for a tummy rub. The Halloween cat pose is all about a threat.

The pose may appear when a loud noise occurs that your cat is unfamiliar with. Sometimes their tail just puffs up, but when it is something extremely threatening then the Halloween pose will occur. You learned previously what this looks like, but now you need to understand a bit more about it because sometimes it can happen when your cat is in play mode.

Your cat may not feel threatened at all but want to be threatening in play. Your cat will arch its back, raise its tail and get on its tip toes, but the body will be in jack-knife position. This means the head is closer to the tail, in a half moon style pose. Your cat might move sideways instead of going full front towards the object of play. The idea is to appear larger than they are but to then pounce in play. You will know the difference between fear and play because the hair on your cat will remain lowered in play mode, versus threatened mode.

## 21.4 Grooming

**Cats groom a lot. Studies reveal cats will groom about 50 per cent of their waking time.**

Grooming is a learned behaviour from kitten-hood. A mother cat will show her kitten how to groom. Any adult cat can fill this role later in kitten life too. Most cats will start to groom by the age of two weeks. They will be fully washing themselves by the time they are weaned.

Cats do not groom to look good. They actually groom for skin health. When grooming, your cat stimulates sebum which is an oily secretion from the base of their hair. They are spreading sebum over the rest of their body to make their fur waterproof as well as shiny. It also removes the loose hair and can help prevent matted hair. Any dirt, fleas and other parasites are removed during the procedure. Cat's tongues are also covered in tiny, bristle-like projections that help stimulate blood flow.

Grooming is an important determiner for your cat's health. An unsightly appearance can be a signal that your cat is feeling unwell. Some older cats may also change how they groom because they are arthritic and not so flexible.

Emotional or physical stress and illness can also lead to changes in grooming, whether there is more grooming or less going on. Often, when there is an issue physically or mentally with your cat, they will continue to lick an area until it is bald, and then keep on going, making it raw.

Cats typically use grooming techniques to cool off. Washing their skin with saliva allows it to cool down when the saliva evaporates. Cat saliva contains several enzymes that promote infection treatment and healing. They are known to act as a natural antibiotic and also create a barrier that prevents predators from detecting their scent.

Your cat will use its paws to groom areas such as the face, head and ears. They will then use their mouths to clean their paws, along with their teeth to remove dirt. Their tongues will be used for all other parts, including their tails, back, sides, and their rear section. Claws from the rear feet are used to scratch the ears and dig out dirt inside, as well as to scratch areas that may itch or need extra grooming.

If you see your cat excessively grooming a specific area, or scratching one spot more often, or rubbing an area raw, you need to take them to a vet.

Cats can also mutually groom each other. Grooming in a mutual situation is about getting to areas that your cat may have a hard time reaching, plus to express their friendship or mothering instincts. You will see a cat with good mothering instincts groom kittens that are not their own. Often they will walk over with that express purpose. It is all about comfort, love and companionship.

Sometimes there is a situation called displacement grooming. This type of grooming is where your cat will groom itself when feeling scared, tense, or uncertain of how to react to a certain situation. This behaviour means they are grooming instead of dealing with the situation because grooming calms them down. You may see this behaviour when they are threatened by another animal, whereby they suddenly, frantically start grooming instead of running away.

## 21.5 Catnaps



**Catnaps are short naps your cat will take throughout the day and night.**

You should be aware that your cat will be more active at night. This is a genetic throwback to living in the wild. Cats will hunt during the night in most cases. Throughout the day and night, they will still nap.

Often your cat will nap for up to an hour before they wake fully, start grooming and play. Sometimes you may see your cat nap for 20 minutes, wake up, groom, play, eat, and then nap for another 10 to 20 minutes. Catnaps will last as long as your cat is content to sleep, but they can also be shorter if a noise interrupts them or they feel a need to groom or eat.

## 21.6 Food Burying and Toy Dunking



**Food burying is a common behaviour in certain cats.**

Not all cats will have this same behaviour and it is not something to worry about, unless your cat has stopped eating their food altogether. Your cat may be sending you a message that they are tired of the food you are giving them or that there is a problem with it, but this is generally combined with their lack of touching it at all.

In most cases a cat is burying the food from instinct.

They are trying to preserve their food in a safe place. They are not ready to eat it and want to prevent other predators from finding it. As the behaviour is harmless you do not have to stop your cat, unless it seems obsessive. You may need to give your cat smaller portions, switch to fresh food, or remove the food bowl.

Toy dunking is a behaviour you may see your cat perform. It is not for every cat. In fact, most cats

will just play with a toy, leave it around, and go back and play later. It is rare for most cats to store their toys in a safe place to get them later. However, that is one theory behind toy dunking. Your cat may take its favourite toy and dunk it in the water. They may leave it there as a safe place to store it; after all, food and water is safe to them.

The other reason may be to clean a favourite toy that they feel is dirty. Some cats may dunk the toy because they enjoy playing in the water. It is a game. They drop it in and then fish it out. A final theory could be that cats know how much their own kind literally hate water; therefore, they will be less inclined to enter the water and retrieve a toy that doesn't have any sentimental value to them.

## 21.7 Grieving



**Cats can definitely grieve the loss of another cat as well as a person in their household.**

If someone does not come back, or dies at home, your cat will grieve. They will be depressed and lethargic, and often talk a lot more than they used to. Sometimes they will seek more attention, and other cats will seek less.

Typically, they will not move from a favourite spot they shared with the person or cat they are grieving. For example, if a cat or a person died at home, they will tend to be in the spot the person or cat died. You have to show more affection to a cat when there is a loss and help them to get over it. A long-time partner that is missing can be detrimental if your cat stops eating, grooming or becomes too lethargic. You may need to seek help.

### **Four signs that show your cat is grieving:**

1. **Changes in appetite** - Many cats may refuse to eat when they mourn the loss of another pet or human. If this lasts for more than a day, please contact the vet.
2. **Change in energy levels** -Cats may become extremely lethargic or extremely playful in a bid to work off their grief. Try to play gently with a lethargic animal and try to divert a hyper cat with some productive play.
3. **Changes in vocalisation** - A formerly silent cat may chatter more and a talkative feline may become silent. They also frequently call out to their lost companions at odd times of the day or night.

4. **Changes in attention-seeking behaviour** -A grieving cat may become much moodier than before. He may insist on accompanying you to the bathroom and kitchen and may want to sleep with you.

## 21.8 Naughty Tortoiseshells

**It is thought due to research and observation that tortoiseshell cats tend to be naughty and feisty cats.**

Some research indicates that those with white are less temperamental than the brindled tortoiseshells. It really has nothing to do with colour but more of the genetic markers your cat may have. Even a black cat or a black and white cat can be extremely temperamental. If you care for your cat, show them affection, provide enough love to meet their needs, your cat will be less temperamental. It can also depend on what you feed them. Some food can actually wind up your cat and bring on their aggression because they try to protect it. It is all about how they live, their natural instincts and genetic markers.

### Summary

You have learned in this chapter about feline actions such as catnip reactions, bringing you presents, and the ins and outs of grooming.

You should understand about belly up and Halloween poses, with regards to when they happen and why.

You also learned about your cat's penchant for sleeping, whether it is for long periods of time or short little naps in between grooming, eating and playing.

By now you should understand why your cat buries its food, dunks its toys, and grieves for the loss of family members.

There are other feline actions that are thought to be related to specific breeds of cat, such as temperamental behaviour, but it can be related more to genetics than colour or breed.

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