



Helping cats that are aggressive...

Background

Out of the domesticated animals, cats are one of the few who maintain their links with the wild.

They are still capable (in theory for some!!) of catching and killing their own prey.

For this reason, some cats fit uneasily into our world and they can quickly become stressed and aggressive, especially if they have difficulty understanding their surroundings.

In general cats have evolved as solitary creatures. They don't need the help or company of others to survive.

This can mean that they don't really have a clue how to react to situations that cause them stress.

In a wild situation, if a cat has a problem with another, one option is to simply hit out at the other cat and run away.

This seems to be the strategy adopted by some cats with their owners.

A misunderstanding

Very often this is seen as simply a sign of aggression but in fact it is usually a sign of extreme anxiety.

The cat feels extremely frightened of something and lashes out in self defence before running away.

The very last thing a cat that behaves like this needs is disciplining or telling off in any way whatsoever.

You need to remember that this is usually a last resort strategy and as such means that any punishment can only make things worse.

The best way to overcome this problem is firstly to try and find a reason for the aggression.

Common causes are other cats, dogs or others in the house that they don't get on with.

Finding a reason

You will have to observe the cat to see how they interact with others as they don't usually attack the cause of their anxiety. On the contrary they prefer to stay away from the problem.

If you can find the cause, you may find that rearranging things so that the cat has a safe territory of their own, sufficient to reduce the anxiety.

If the cat attacks after sitting on your lap for a while then you need to remove them before their anxiety builds up and they hit out.

Look for signs, such as a twitching tale, a change in their purring and an increased awareness of their surroundings.

Many cats with this problem will wake up anxious and attack as they come out of their sleep.

If this happens then the best thing is to ensure that they have a safe place to sleep and don't let them sleep on you.

Changing the interaction

It is better that you give them a stroke and turn them away, than waiting for the anxiety to build and then react to it.

Keep interaction short but do it often to build up the cat's confidence in being around you.

When they do attack stay calm, say nothing and try to laugh it off. Remember that this situation is caused by anxiety, if you contribute to that anxiety, you can only make things worse.

Remember that in some cases, the fact that you get upset and anxious when the cat lashes out, can be the reason they get anxious, in the first place.