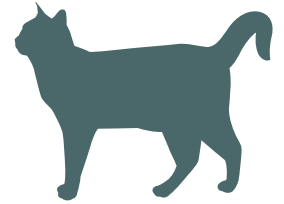


ANXIETY, FEAR AND PHOBIAS IN CATS



Like us, cats can suffer from anxiety. To an extent, anxiety is a normal and necessary part of their lives and gives them the ability to anticipate and avoid problems. Fear is the normal automatic response that prepares the cat to either freeze, flee or fight, depending on the threat. Phobias are an abnormal, excessive and instant response to fear, even when there is nothing to be fearful of.

Responding to threats is vital to a cat's survival but if your cat is exhibiting fearful behaviour in normal situations, it may require help.

If you recognise a problem, it's important to visit your vet and talk to them about your cat's behaviour. Small problems can escalate to more serious anxiety disorders or phobias, which become more challenging and take more time to treat.

Signs a cat may be feeling anxious include:

- avoiding eye contact
- staying low when moving
- moving away
- urinating outside their litter tray
- excessive meowing.



Cats can become aggressive, particularly if the cat feels trapped or can no longer cope with the intensity of the anxiety. The cat will respond with its claws and teeth and can cause significant injuries to its family, other humans, pets or wildlife.

The earlier you seek advice from your vet, the better.

Your vet can assess your cat and its environment and develop a program to help you and your cat manage its anxiety. This includes an environmental management plan aimed at avoiding situations that are likely to cause anxiety, fears or phobias and teaching the cat to relax and cope better. Medication and/or pheromones may also be prescribed to help your cat.

Preventing fears and phobias is an important part of caring for our pets and cats in particular prefer a stable and predictable environment in order to feel safe.