



Jasper County Animal Rescue League and Humane Society
5411 Liberty Avenue Newton, IA 50208
641-792-5407, www.jcarl.org jcarl@iowatelecom.net

Vocalizing in Cats

Why does my cat vocalize?

Cats communicate with us and other animals in many ways. Vocalizing is just one of these ways. Cats make different sounds to mean different things. Many people are familiar with the hissing noise a cat will sometimes make. We also understand that this particular sound means the cat is upset or frightened and to keep our distance. Listed below are some of the things cats may be trying to communicate with us.

- ! Medical – Cats will sometimes cry out if picked up or handled when they are in pain. Cats may also cry while urinating or defecating if in pain. If your cat has begun to vocalize in either of these two situations then you need to take him to your veterinarian. Any sudden change in your cat's behavior may be an indication of a medical problem and a trip to the vet should be your first response.
- ! Breed – Some oriental breed types are very vocal cats, like Siamese. If your cat has a long pointed face, exaggerated ears and a long lanky body then he may be of oriental heritage. The best approach is to ignore him when he is vocal and give him attention while he is quiet. This may help discourage some of his vocal nature.
- ! Attention Getting – Many cats learn to get what they want by vocalizing. When a cat meows, we usually respond in some form to the cat by talking back, picking him up, petting or feeding the cat. As long as we continue to reward the vocal behavior by giving the cat attention, the cat will continue to meow. Even negative gestures like yelling or picking him up and locking him out of an area are attention to the cat and will encourage the vocalizing behavior. To discourage the vocal behavior, simply ignore the cat when he talks and reward him with attention when he is quiet.
- ! Wants to go outside – NHS discourages letting cats outside without constant human supervision. If your cat has previously been let outdoors and your trying to discourage this behavior, here are some suggestions:
 - Schedule several interactive play sessions through out the day to keep your cat busy and start him in a new routine.
 - Provide your cat with easy access to a window so he can watch outdoor activities.
 - Spay or neuter the cat to prevent them from wanting to find a mate.
 - Hide toys and treats around the house for him to explore and find.
 - Use aversives by the door. Double sided sticky tape or a strong smelling citrus odor may prevent the cat from hanging around the door meowing or trying to dart out.

- ! Grief – Sometimes after the loss or absence of another animal or person, a cat may vocalize. During this grieving process try to keep the cat's routine as normal as possible. Give him a little extra love and attention. With time this problem will solve itself.

- ! Transition – A cat may express anxiety through vocalizing during a move, addition of a human or animal family member, or any environmental change. Again it is important to keep the routine as normal as possible and avoid yelling or punishing the cat. Remember any change in life is stressful for our pets and us.