

# APRIL IS BEHAVIOR MONTH

## BY: LEAH BRAUN AND ANIA WOZNIAK

Here is a spotlight on a few common behavior issues Pet Parents share, and the products we offer to alleviate the stress that goes along with those issues. Cats and dogs alike can perplex their owners with behavior problems such as scratching on furniture, eliminating in unwanted areas, destroying household items etc. Here are some of the products we offer at Newtown Vet (and others offered at the local pet store) created to help with just those issues.

We will begin with our furry feline friends. One of the biggest questions raised by pet parents is "My cat just won't stop scratching the furniture, my legs, the doors etc." We offer some innovative products to keep kitties' claws busy and keep their parents' belongings in one piece. Cat trees for instance can give cats something to safely exercise their claws on. They come in all shapes, sizes, colors and textures and are ideal for a cat to stretch out and scratch to his heart's content. Many other products such as cardboard scratchers, scratch mats, hangable scratchers, even scratch pads that attach to corners in the home are available to provide felines with more options for their scratching pleasure. Some of these products can even have catnip added to them in order to really create a wonderful scratching experience and entice the cat to continue the behavior on the mat or tree instead of on the furniture. Another answer to the scratching issue is a product called Soft Paws. Soft Paws are vinyl nail covers that fit over a cat's claws. They can last from 4 to 6 weeks and are easily applied at home or at the veterinarian's office. This allows cats to enjoy the feeling of scratching without actually puncturing anything. Lastly one of the best ways to curb destructive behavior is offering the cat many type of toys to keep him busy. Cats love to play. Offering a number of toys of different sizes, shapes, and textures will give a cat many more options to let out all that kitty energy.



Another issue some pet parents face is their kitty's reluctance to use the litter box. There can be many reasons for a cat to not want to use the litter box. First and foremost is that there may be a health problem involved. So, the first action to take with any inappropriate elimination is to seek out the advice of a veterinarian to rule out the health causes first. Once those are ruled out, behavior concerns such as anxiety, litter box aversion etc. can be dealt with. One product offered is called Feliway. Feliway is a pheromone that is said to control urine spraying, calm multicat households, reduces fighting as well as anxiety stress, fear and anger, soothes ill or geriatric cats, and can even deter scratching of furniture. It comes in the form of a spray that can be applied to most household items and fabrics or as a diffuser that is plugged into the wall. Another great product to aid in litter box training and re-training is a special type of litter called Cat Attract. Cat Attract is blended with a natural herb attractant, herbal scent, ideal texture and particle size. It is hard clumping, 99% dust free and good for mechanical boxes as well. Other litter box training ideas include simple things such as trying different types of litter. Try different textures such as clay vs. Yesterday's News or scented vs. non-scented. Placing a few litter boxes in different areas of the house is also an idea. Litter boxes of all shapes and sizes should be offered to give cats a wide variety of choices to find a comfortable place to do their business.



**Cat Attract**  
Litter Additive

Now on to some of the issues that dog owners face. One of the larger problems noted is pulling while walking on the leash. Not only is this troublesome for the owner but it is also dangerous for the pup if the proper type of collar is not used. The Gentle Leader brand offers a couple innovative collars to help pet parents who has dogs that just won't learn to walk with a traditional leash and neck collar set up. The Gentle Leader Head Collar for instance fits over the head and sits high on the neck and loose on the nose. This creates a guiding motion when the leash is directed and is much safer on the trachea of the dog than a choke collar, pinch collar, or even a traditional collar. The Head Collar is inspired by harnesses used on horses for many years and is good for all sizes of dog. The other harness offered by Gentle Leader is their Easy Walk Harness. The easy walk harness sits around the shoulders and chest and the leash attaches in the front rather than on the back of the dog. This deters the "opposition reflex" or the urge for dogs to pull more against pressure as with traditional harnesses. The Easy Walk redirects the point of control giving the pet parent more leverage.



Another issue most dog owners will bring up is that their dog is destructive, hyper active, overly anxious etc. Quite similar to Feliway for cats is a product called D.A.P. which stand for Dog Appeasing Pheromones. This comes in a diffuser and will release pheromones that are said to comfort dogs of all ages. D.A.P is good to use for dogs that are anxious, new to the household, or when something in the household is new to them. Again as with cats the biggest answer to destructive or hyperactive behavior is exercise and adequate playtime. Many destructive behaviors in dogs come from boredom or lack of exercise. The proper amount of toys of all shapes, sizes, and purpose should be provided to give dogs a good variety of ways to release their energy in a manner that both the pup and the parent can agree on. A long walk and a good amount of playtime with some fun toys will provide a dog with satisfaction and a parent with some quality time with their pooch.



There are many other great behavior products out there for cats and dogs alike. A little research and properly asked questions can go a long way with figuring out the cause for and answer to most of our pet's behavior issues. If a pet parent is ever in doubt the first place to ask should always be their veterinarian. Together we can create more and more innovative concepts to continue to grow and bond with our furry friends.