COOL, CALM, COLLECTED PUSSYCATS

As I'm sure most of you know, pussycats are sensitive creatures. They can become stressed very easily, especially when there are any changes to their environment (new pets or even furniture) or they are brought into the clinic. There are many things you can do for your furry friend to help keep them as stress free as possible. I have listed below a few ways you can take to ensure your pussycats are cool, calm and collected for any possible stressors they may encounter.

1. **Feliway**
    - The first and easiest thing you can do is use the Feliway diffuser. This is a natural pheromone (that humans can't smell) that is produced through the glands on their faces (when they rub their chin on you or objects around the house) when they are feeling calm and want to communicate that to other cats in the area. It sends signals to their brains to calm them down helping relieve stress and anxiety. There is also a version available for multicat households to ensure your babies are getting along.
    - It is available in either a diffuser or spray
        - The diffuser covers about 65square metres (typically a large Livingroom) in your home and typically one bottle lasts 1 month and just plugs into a wall outlet
            - The best place to use it is in the room your cat spends most of their time. Be sure to plug the diffuser in a spot with good airflow (but not near a window where the pheromone will go outside) and no furniture is blocking it.
        - The spray is best used for new objects in the house/spraying in your cats carrier for travel
2. **Zylkene**
    - If Feliway isn't quite enough to calm your pussycat, there is an oral supplement you can give them to help keep them relaxed. Zylkene is a calming supplement that contains a natural ingredient derived from a protein in milk called casein (no this is not a protein shake for your cat I promise). It has clinically proven calming properties to help relax cats and kittens. The science behind it is similar to breastfeeding babies being relaxed after feeding. It only comes in capsule formulations, but is easy to put on top of their food and can be given daily!

3. **Gabapentin**
    - Now if both Feliway and Zylkene aren't enough to keep your pussycat chilled, Gabapentin may be worth trying. This is the 'chill pill' us vets love to talk about giving your cats before they come to the clinic for a consultation or procedure. It is a prescription medication used to relieve anxiety associated with veterinary procedures, travel, and other fear-generating situations.
    - There is a side-effect of sedation and possible incoordination, but they are temporary and resolve in a few hours. Due to these side effects, this is typically only used for short term stressors and is not suitable for long term use for anxiety in cats.

4. **Clomicalm**
    - This is a prescription tri-cyclic anti-depressant medication that a vet may prescribe for your cat if the above options are not suitable for your cat.
    - It is typically used as a long-term (possibly life-long) anti-anxiety medication for those cats that aren't responding to the options above

But how do you know if your cat is stressed?

Cats are also great at hiding when they are stressed and their signs can be subtle. So, if you are unsure if your pussycat would benefit from the above options, I have described some signs your cat may be showing if they are stressed or anxious below:

1. Abnormal urinating/defecating
    a) Peeing/pooing outside the litter tray
2. Excessive vocalisation
3. Overgrooming
    a) Grooming can become a coping mechanism for stress leading to overgrooming or even hair loss
4. Escaping
5. Weight gain or loss
6. Change in behaviour such as increased aggression or hiding behaviours

But remember, every pussycat is different and what may be a stressor to one cat, may be fine for another.

If you have any questions about the above, please feel free to give us a call or book in a consultation to chat with us about your cat. **9358 2566** (VetHQ Darlinghurst) or **9326 1255** (VetHQ Double Bay).

Take care,
Dr Bri