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**The Mysterious Cat – Cats Are Not Small Dogs
Feline Behavior, Social Interaction and Diet**

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1. The origins of the domestic cat are lost in the mists of time but their presence in history is well documented in the hieroglyphic displays of ancient Egypt. It appears that it is the Hebrew journey to Egypt which is connected with the rise of the cat as a domestic creature. Due to Hebrew prisoner, Joseph ben Jacob's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, he is elevated to the second position of authority in Egypt. His task is to gather and store food during the seven fat years of good harvest. He employs cats to keep the grain from being devoured by mice and rats so it will be available to feed Egypt during the following seven lean years of famine. Joseph is successful and the cat becomes an object of worship in Egypt for their role in saving the people.
2. Any of us who love cats know that they are not gods, for their lives are far too short, but we know that they are a divine gift to us as they fill our lives with joy and laughter. We also perceive that they are not small dogs, for their habits and behaviors are far different from our canine friends.
3. Anatomically, cats are designed as predators.
 - a. They have well developed fang teeth for gripping prey.
 - b. Unlike their canine friends, they have retractable claws, 5 on their front feet for secure gripping, and flexible spines to move with stealth upon a victim and then obtain sudden great bursts of speed without the hindrance of claws.
 - c. Their eyesight is acute, with eyes placed to obtain three dimensional images, and highly developed pupillary light reflexes to see well in low light. This allows them to judge distances and speeds well. Their prey has eyes that are set on either side of the head so they see in both directions without turning their head. They can spot movement well and flee, but they judge distances poorly.
 - d. Their hearing is well developed, with large, upright scoops of ears to catch and direct sound.
 - e. Their sense of smell is unfathomable. A dog can smell a person who is 50 feet under water. A cat's nose is 10 times more sensitive.

4. Behaviorally, cats are unique.
 - a. Cats are highly intelligent. They use sounds and body language to communicate.
 - b. They are very clean animals.
 - c. They are for the most part nocturnal. They hunt at night.
 - d. They develop loose associations with other cats. They often hunt alone but return to small groups for social interaction and safety. Cats have different personalities. Some are more social. Others are tougher. A cat that is a challenge to a group is run off. They will not hang around where they are not welcome.
 - e. Their play mimics and trains hunting behaviors. These play behaviors develop early. They use their paws to bat and grasp one another. They learn how to use their claws and teeth appropriately because their playmate will let them know when the bite or scratch is too hard.
 - f. They must be trained to turn their play behavior into the skill to hunt, kill and eat prey. This is why many domestic cats will play with a mouse but if they accidentally kill it they present the whole to you.
 - g. Their thirst often triggers hunting behaviors rather than a search for water.
 - h. They eat the muscle flesh of their prey, but leave large amounts of their victim uneaten, as we all can attest from the mouse heads and guts we find from the mouse that has been caught.
 - i. They like to inhabit perches for safety and view.
5. If we look at these complex characteristics, we see that cats are not well suited for human interaction. We must understand their motivations and communication style in order for them to allow us to belong to their group. They will accommodate our idiosyncrasies if it is worth their while. They can also object to other feline members who are forced upon them if they do not like them.
6. Unless we are nocturnal, we will have to make daytime attractive to our cats. By providing food in the daytime, it will become worth it to be alert during this time, but this is a far more risky time for a cat to eat, as they are more exposed to danger of attack. Food must be in a safe place, or better yet, they must hunt and find their food in safe places. Multiple hiding spots for food helps to satisfy their hunting instinct. Their food must be fresh; they do not eat stored food. They eat protein in the wild (a mouse is 47% protein). They have preferences for soft versus crunchy food, but much of this is learned behavior. We find it more convenient to put out dry food, as it does not spoil over time. They will accommodate and become used to this, but unless trained to this, cats like moist and meaty food that is high in protein and moisture.

7. Dry food does not have much moisture so cats will have to learn to get fluids by drinking. The source of water must be safe, tasty and fresh. Training your cat to a water fountain with filtered or flavored water (tuna or clam juice flavored water) will encourage drinking as long as the source is in a safe place to spend a few minutes drinking.
8. Toilet areas must be clean and free of dust. They must be located in a safe area as this is a very unsafe time in a cat's day. The cat enjoys covering their eliminations which is a clue for you to evaluate the success of the liter area established. They do not enjoy sharing their toilet. Once a litter routine is established, change is suspicious.
9. Using your hands in correction is a play behavior, not a correction. Vocalization tells a cat when he is out of line. Chasing and pouncing games are the preferred activity so do this at a distance. Your hands and feet are not a playmate, so "yollow" as if offended when they are chosen. But have plenty of play things around. And when it is time to quit, "ignorance" rather than aggression communicates that it is time to quit.
10. High perches are safe and entertaining. If they are warm it is even better. If things are too quiet and still, life is much more "scary". During the summer there is much to entertain their active mind, but as winter comes on and the kids are back in school, the wind is howling and the birds are gone, the mail being delivered can be frightening.
11. Interactions with other cats can turn problematic. A stray in the yard (which is your indoor cat's territory) is a threat. Two bully cats, or a very dominant and a very shy cat many not get along, but if given enough space may coexist.
12. They come to us knowing that they must be groomed, but we must daily fulfill the place of mom quickly or we will not be welcomed to groom them.
13. Cats apply a pheromone to the things they rub against which is a claiming behavior. This object, cat or person belongs. We can mimic this with pheromone spray. Message is welcome and warm laps are a treat.
14. Once you belong to a cat, you are theirs for life. Be ready to get a great start with a little understanding of who they are and what they need. They are giving up a lot to join your household but will learn to treasure it if they are able to understand.