The Animal House

Dr. Barbara J. Dunn

Family Pet Clinic, Ardmore

 Last week I presented thoughts about “litterology”, making your cat’s potty plan a successful one. I want to follow up with some suggestions for making the entire home a “cat friendly” environment. All cats have some very basic needs. Accommodating those needs helps ensure your cat’s overall good health and happiness.

 Provide your cat a space away from the fray, a place she can call her very own. A soft bed, food and water, a litter box, a scratching/climbing post, some toys, and even a window to look out of, make her room a cat friendly and comfortable space.

 Keep the litter box(es) away from noisy appliances or high traffic locations. A cat does not like to be startled, or have someone “sneak up” on her when she is using the litter box. Scoop out the box a minimum of once daily.

 Provide her something appropriate to scratch on. Different cats prefer different surfaces for scratching, i.e. carpet, burlap etc. Test some different surfaces and let the cat decide. Place the scratching post somewhere along the cat’s most traveled pathway, and not hidden away somewhere she never really visits. Praise her profusely when she uses it.

 Places to climb and windows to look out of will keep the indoor cat entertained. Food puzzles are my favorite type of toy for entertaining the active and inactive cats. They are even more fun when hidden in different spots throughout the house. Play with your cat. There is a plethora of fun toys available, allowing cat owners to really enjoy interaction with their feline family members.

 Cats prefer to feel “in control” of their daily routine and surroundings. Therefore, many do not adjust well to change. If you must make a change in her surroundings, do so in a very gradual manner. This will allow ample time for her to readjust and allow you to be secure in your decision about any change being made.

 The most important information I can pass along is this: cats do not respond to force. However, they really do respond to praise. Refrain from yelling at your cat or throwing things at her when she behaves in a way you do not approve. It is better for you to create a distraction, like a mild hand clap or hissing noise. Harsh reprimands are likely to cause your cat to be afraid of her surroundings, and lead to all types of behavioral problems.

 Be sure you and you cat see your veterinarian regularly. And until next time…thanks for Caring!!