**Scratching Behaviour in Cats**

Cats have a natural need to scratch and the act of scratching serves many purposes, such as:

* Stretching-they need to dig their nails into something sturdy
* It reduces stress
* It is a way for the cat to express excitement
* It is a visual marker on an object to stake their territory, as well as a scent marker (cats have scent glands on the pads of their feet)
* The cat can remove the dead part of the nail so that a sharper nail can come out.

While the scratching itself is not the problem. The problem comes if the cat does not have a suitable scratching option and/or has become conditioned to scratching an inappropriate object in the home (e.g. furniture, walls or carpeting.

Advice

* Make sure the cat has a quality scratching post. It should be at least 3 feet tall and sturdy so that it doesn't wobble when the cat scratches it. It should be made of a type of rope called sisal. If cost is a consideration , you can use some sturdy cardboard or wood.
* Put the post where the cat likes to scratch, e.g. if the cat likes to scratch the couch, put the post right beside the couch. Some cats like to scratch horizontally but most scratch vertically. If the cat does prefer horizontal scratching place the post on its side or you can purchase a corrugated cardboard scratching pad.
* You can encourage the cat to use the scratching post by: rubbing catnip on the post, engaging the cat in interactive play right near the post (cats will scratch it while playing).
* Deter the cat from scratching where you do not want them to scratch. Some ways to do this include: wrapping furniture with a tight-fitting sheet, double sided sticky tape, thick plastic cover such as a shower curtain. Once the cat is using the post routinely, you can remove the deterrent.
* Do NOT place the cat's paws on the post. This may frighten the cat or scare them from using the post.
* Cut the cat's nails once/month.