

How to Enhance Your Pet's Environment

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Our pets sometimes exhibit “normal” behaviors that we find objectionable. For example, cats may scratch furniture or eat plants because there is nothing else to scratch or eat. In these cases, providing a scratching post/mat or cat grass/nip may do the trick. However, not all behavior issues are straightforward and easily resolved. Many behavioral problems, such as canine separation anxiety (that may manifest as destructive behavior when owners are away), can be complex and require comprehensive treatment plans, including medication. Any behavioral issue should be thoroughly discussed with and diagnosed by your veterinarian—especially aggressive behavior—before implementing the following suggestions.



SIGNS YOUR PET MAY BE EXPERIENCING STRESS

Cats	Dogs
Scratching household items	Destructive behaviors (eg, chewing household items)
Obsessive licking and/or hair chewing	Self-mutilation and/or obsessive chewing
Aggression toward people or other pets	Aggressive toward people or other pets
Inappropriate urination/defecation	Unexplained lapse in house-training
Night-time vocalization	Separation anxiety

SUGGESTIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT

Cats	Dogs
Climbing, perching, resting, & hiding: Create specific spots on bookshelves and windowsills and/or provide commercial cat towers.	Exercise: Amount and type is determined by breed, age, and physical condition, from leash walks to physical rehabilitation.
Feeding: Provide opportunities to forage by using feeder toys, multiple bowls throughout the home, and hiding treats in different areas.	Human interaction: While human interaction consists of daily routines, such as feeding, expand interaction with obedience/agility classes or games, such as fetch.
Olfactory stimulation: Use catnip (whether in toys or as a “catnip garden”) and pheromone diffusers.	Interaction with other dogs: Increase socialization by organizing “doggie” play dates and visits to dog parks.
Scratching behaviors: Provide acceptable outlets, such as scratching posts, for this natural behavior.	Olfactory stimulation: Provide novel scents around the home (ie, spices, herbs, synthetic animal scents).
Toys: Cats prefer toys that are light and can be picked up and easily moved.	Toys: Focus on supplying commercial toys that provide a mental challenge or treat puzzle.

HELPFUL LINKS FOR MORE IDEAS

Cats	Dogs
catsinternational.org/articles/fun_for_cats/index.html	aussiedog.com.au/ (dog toys)
catsplay.com/dailycat.php3?cat=mind&scat=mind_training	indoorpet.osu.edu
fabcats.org/behaviour	kongcompany.com/ (dog toys)
indoorpet.osu.edu	usdaa.com/ (dog agility)

This form can be downloaded and printed for use in your practice at todaysveterinarypractice.com (see Resources).