

On Cats

by Barbara Janelle

Cats present an interesting addition to the set of animals that I work on regularly. Until recently, my TTEAM practice consisted of horses with an occasional cat, dog, goat and rabbit. As more feline behavior problems come my way, I am reaching another level of understanding in TTEAM work.

The Case of the Frightened Cat

In working on my own short-haired cats over the past several years, I used TTEAM touch to achieve some wonderful results. Some years ago, I rescued Fudge from a miserable existence in the wild. People terrified him and he would run and hide whenever anyone came into the house. My annual talk about animals to my son Danny's class was approaching. I planned to take Fudge and our other cat, Wimsey, but told the teacher that Fudge would probably hide while Wimsey held court.

Three days before the talk, I sat Fudge on my lap and worked all over his body with clouded leopard circles. He loved it and turned and rolled so I could reach every part of him. The next day, three guests came to stay for a few days. Fudge met them at the door, escorted them into the living room and hopped from lap to lap for attention.

On the day of the talk to Danny's class, I took Fudge and Wimsey out of their carriers and watched as both cats approached and greeted the children. I told the children about TTEAM work and showed them how to do cloud leopard circles. Fudge lay blissfully on my lap while 12 children did clouded leopard circles on him. The teacher asked, "Where is the cat who is frightened of people?" I replied, "This is the one!"

TTEAM Work and Arthritis

Some years later as Wimsey was getting older and showing signs of arthritis, I used TTEAM touch to make her more comfortable and mobile. She began having difficulty climbing stairs. I could barely believe the difference in her after the first TTEAM session. I used clouded leopard circles again, focusing on her hind quarters. I also used tarantulas pulling the plow along both sides of the spine, head to hind paw. When I finished, she jumped down, ran over to the stairs. Up she raced to the second floor and back down again. The effects of the session lasted over a month.

For years, every time she got a bit hesitant in her movement, I would work on her body. The effects of a ten minute TTEAM session lasted from two to six weeks. She was active and climbing stairs until the week that she died of old age and

kidney failure.

Long-haired Cats

However, my real education in using TTEAM on cats only started a few months ago. I began working on a host of long-haired cats with behavior problems. They ranged from unfriendly Himalayans to downright aggressive long-haired cats of uncertain lineage. I tried my usual TTEAM cloud leopard circles and failed miserably to win their compliance. They bit, scratched and screamed! Moments of quiet only came with ear work and a form of tarantulas.

In desperation, I called TTEAM Practitioner Marnie Reader and her partner, Dr. Tom Beckett D.V.M. Tommy built my confidence immediately by saying, "No, you're not torturing the cats. Long-haired cats are difficult." Marnie made me laugh with her story of using a long-handled broom to do TTEAM circles on a ferocious long-haired cat. She didn't have her wands with her that day and found a way to be innovative!

Marnie identified the shoulder area as a difficult place to work on many cats. Most cats are also sensitive around the sacral-lumbar region of the spine and on the belly. We talked about gently holding a cat for work with a towel, and agreed that gloves were useful protection. Gloves cut down on sensitivity though. They reduce our ability to adjust pressure and touch in response to skin and breathing changes. After talking with Marnie and Tommy, I returned to my work on the cats with more confidence and willingness to experiment.

Cloud-leopard touch tends to pull long hair and can be very irritating. I began using a touch I call "walking tarantula." The thumb walks as well as the fingers. Eventually the heel of the hand can drag on the coat. All my long-haired clients accepted this immediately and came back for more. I could get to all parts of the body easily with this walking touch - trunk, tail, hindquarters, legs.

I compared cat's long hair with human hair and experimented on my own head for ways to comfortably bring a new awareness to my scalp. The gentle hair pulling that we use on humans did not please cats. However, they loved the dog touch. This was the breakthrough! Grasping the coat close to the skin and making a circle with hair, skin and my hand brought cats to a state of listening and relaxation quickly.

Shortly after these breakthroughs, a wonderful flame-point Himalayan came into our home for ten days. We fostered him while a new home was found. He taught me how sensitive many long-haired cats are. Grooming is essential and it must be done with the softest of tools and light, teasing strokes. If I was rough, he'd complain and try to get away. The

difference in skin sensitivity between this cat and my short-haired pair astounded me.

Taming the Shrew

Another lesson in touch came from the new addition to our family, a black short-haired male named Magic. Magic came to us at ten weeks of age. He immediately attacked our wonderful Houdini, a black and white neutered male. Magic would ride Houdini's head while HooDoo went racing and screaming around the house. Magic also bit and scratched vigorously anyone and anything.

In addition, Magic's tail from root to about half its length was completely rigid - cast iron. He had a very peculiar gait with his hindquarters - sort of a lateral movement which suggested a weakness in the spine and hindquarters. The vet did not see any problem with this, but I noticed that Magic could not jump onto low tables and chairs. He was a little hellion and very difficult to handle.

After he started attacking us with teeth and claws I decided to do some intensive TTEAM work on him. I sat him in my lap and tried to stroke all parts of his body. He became very aggressive when I touched the top of his shoulders, his hips, hindquarters, belly, and pads of all four feet. I put on my gloves and worked on him with cloud leopard circles for five minutes. I massaged his mouth and gums and moved and rotated his tail. The work was repeated the next day. By the third day, he could be petted without provoking an attack.

His behavior toward humans improved considerably after these sessions. However, Houdini was still suffering from Magic's attentions. HooDoo's screams and flight response were getting more pronounced. I asked a friend, Jackie Halip, to help me do some TTEAM work on the cats together. We sat them on the floor within five feet of each other and used cloud leopard circles on their bodies. We worked their ears, mouths, tails and hindquarters, and then released them. Five minutes later they were in the kitchen quietly sitting within two feet of each other. Friends who saw Houdini the next week commented on how self-possessed he seemed and not at all upset by Magic.

Magic's kittenish behavior continued but without ferocity. In play, he would occasionally hook on with a claw or tooth but would quickly release to a softened hand and word. His attention span for work was short in kittenhood, so I didn't do much more with him until he was nine months old. One day, I sat him on my lap and began to work on his ears. He loved having the hollows around the base of the ears rubbed. He purred to tiny circles on the ears and gentle pulling strokes. I worked his ears for about ten minutes and he melted in my hands. The next day, I used cloud leopard

circles over most of his body and abalone circles on his belly. He rolled onto his back while I rotated his hips and worked my fingers between the pads on the front feet. The next day, he leaped onto my bureau for the very first time. He's been leaping on shelves and tables ever since. Is this a blessing?!

Magic is ten months old now. He comes to me several times a day for touch work. He loves the walking tarantula on his back, sides and hindquarters. He rolls over for abalone on his belly. And likes having his ears worked most of all. He is a true gentleman now with everyone and sits quietly while guests stroke him. I am delighted with the "taming of this shrew!"

Litterbox Problems

I would like to return briefly to the story of our Himalayan guest and the lessons he taught me about feline behavior. His former owner was going to have him put down when a local organization, Animalert, offered to try to find a new home for him. He had been peeing on the furniture and rugs regularly. I asked the owner about kitty litter arrangements. There was one covered (dog-house style) box for two cats in a dark corner of the basement. While I was there, the basement door was closed so the cats couldn't get to the kitty litter. In addition, the cat's name was a foreign word with an obscene meaning and a sound very close to "peeing."

I offered to foster him until another home could be found, and immediately changed his name when he entered my home. Teddy Bear was provided with two large open kitty litter pans and access to them at all times. I made a point of speaking to him in positive ways about how beautiful and wonderful he was. He used his litter box and was a model guest. He is doing very well in his very loving new home now.

Owners have asked for my advise on litter problems several times. I find that litter arrangements are often the key to solving this problem. Covered litter boxes trap odors, no matter how frequently they are cleaned. Cats are fastidious. They don't like going into a smelly bathroom any more than we do. Open, well ventilated, easily accessible litter boxes are important. Free access to the litter box is also important.

In addition, the owner's regard of the cat has a major affect on its behavior. We send mental images as we speak and look at animals and they pick them up quickly. A big part of changing behavior an animal's behavior is changing the owner's attitude. Increasing an owner's understanding of an animal is a step on the path to understanding self. This is one of the gift's that an animal with a behavior problem can

bring to a human.

My life with cats continues. I am more willing to take time and use soft approaches now. Observation and reading are leading to more understanding. Cats have a strong sense of self and place. I recognize the honor they bestow on humans with their presence.