

World Rabies Day Sept 28

The World Rabies Day initiative is a global rabies awareness campaign to spread the word about rabies prevention. Save the lives of your cats and dogs by keeping them current on their rabies vaccinations. Supervise them closely and have them examined by a veterinarian if they fight with other animals or you find wounds on them. Without current vaccination, if they are exposed to rabies, they might become rabid and expose other people and animals. Call your veterinarian or local Animal Control to find out when a clinic will be scheduled in your area.

AVMA launches podcast for pet owners

The AVMA launched its first in a series of podcasts geared toward pet owners. Dubbed AVMA Animal Tracks, the series will feature AVMA staff interviewing veterinary experts from around the country and discussing topics such as pet health and safety tips, the threat of zoonotic diseases, and the surprising variety of roles veterinarians can have in ensuring animal and human health across the globe.

The first podcast features Dr. Kimberly A. May, assistant director of professional and public affairs in the AVMA Communications Division, talking about pet safety tips for the summer. The podcast is available online at www.avma.org/news/info_rss.asp.

The AVMA Animal Tracks will be available to download from the Association's Web site and through an RSS feed. The podcasts will also be accessible through Apple's iTunes. Those with iTunes, which can be downloaded for free at www.apple.com/itunes/overview, can subscribe to AVMA Animal Tracks and receive new episodes as soon as they become available through a portable media player such as an iPod. <http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/jul08/080715j.asp>

California Ballot Label for Prop. 2

LOS ANGELES, CA – California Secretary of State Deborah Bowen last week released the revised, new ballot label for Prop. 2. Drafted by the Attorney General, the new ballot label for Prop. 2 is “STANDARDS FOR CONFINING FARM ANIMALS. INITIATIVE STATUTE.”

As released by Secretary of State, Debra Bowen’s office, on July 22, the current and accurate label of Prop. 2 should read as follows: “STANDARDS FOR CONFINING FARM ANIMALS. INITIATIVE STATUTE. Requires that certain farm animals be allowed, for the majority of every day, to fully extend their limbs or wings, lie down, stand up and turn around. Limited exceptions apply. Fiscal Impact: Potential unknown decrease in state and local tax revenues from farm businesses, possibly in the range of several million dollars annually. Potential minor local and state enforcement and prosecution costs, partly offset by increased fine revenue.”

According to the recently released UC Davis economic impact study Prop. 2 will eliminate almost all of the state’s egg industry in five years and further harm the state’s economy due to resulting job and revenue losses. Eliminating most of California’s egg industry, Prop. 2 will cost the state \$615 million in economic activity and a statewide loss of 4,750 jobs, at a time when Californians are struggling with skyrocketing food and gas prices. For more information visit Californians for Safe Food <http://www.safecaliforniafood.org/>

HSUS Taking Action for Animals Conference

July 19-21 marked the 4th annual HSUS Taking Action for Animals Conference in Washington, DC. The event boasted a list of 75 speakers from the animal rights – now referred to as animal protection – movement. The weekend concluded with a hands-on lobby day as conference registrants participated in a rally against puppy mills with activist, Jana Kohl, and “Baby” at the Capital. Event sponsors included the Animal Legal Defense Fund, Born Free USA, American Anti-Vivisection Society, United Poultry Concerns, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, VegNews Magazine, and The Chicago Dog Magazine.

Who were some of the speakers?

Earl Blumenauer – U.S. Congressman (D-Ore.); 2007 Humane Legislator of the Year

Jean Flemma – U.S. House Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans
Co-presenter of “**Advocating for Animals in the U.S. Congress**” along with Lauren Silverman - federal legislative specialist for The Humane Society of the United States, and Tracy Silverman - general counsel for the Animal Welfare Institute: from lobbyists and an experienced Hill staffer learn the tricks of the trade for effectively communicating with federal legislators and staff, and the important role that animal welfare advocates like you can play in advancing public policy for animals this year and in the future.

Gene Baur - Farm Sanctuary

Writes in his blog “I’ve spoken with many agribusiness officials and farmers over the years, and encouraged them to think outside the box and consider the benefits of growing plants in place of animals.”

Pamela Alexander – Animal Legal Defense Fund

Her goal “is to see an animal law course established at every accredited law school in the nation.”

Joyce Tischler – Animal Legal Defense Fund

Founded ALDF over 25 years ago and is quoted as saying, “When and how legal rights for animals will be established is as yet unknown. We are only beginning to explore the legal theories that may be argued. We’re pushing the envelope until we can press a case in which the animal is plaintiff.”

Dr. Laura Hobgood-Oster - Southwestern University and American Academy of Religion

HSUS has been making a major effort to push forward its Animals and Religion Campaign and Dr. Hobgood-Oster was one of a panel of speakers instructing the conference audience on “How to Reach Religious Communities.” She is author of the book, “Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition”, which utilizes the feminist perspective in her examination of the impact of animal presence and challenges the metaphoric reading of animals that reinforces human superiority and dominance.

Sarah Amundson Executive Director, Humane Society Legislative Fund.

Amundson should be familiar to all from her role as Legislative Director for Doris Day Animal League lobbying for passage of the Pet Animal Welfare Statute (PAWS) in 2005. In her senate testimony she stated, “The interstate commerce opportunities afforded through the Internet have so significantly changed the retail puppy business that it is imperative these breeders who are selling directly to the public be required to obtain a USDA license, abide by the agency’s minimal regulations and be inspected.”

Attendance at the conference increased this year to nearly 1,000. Pictures, videos and stories of abuse kept emotions high through the many workshops and presentations on effective lobbying. During the 3-day event attendees raised \$3,000 to assist in lobbying efforts for California's Prop 2.

Wayne Pacelle, HSUS president, told attendees: "We have arrived! We are in the mainstream!" However, later in that same speech he said, "We have to refine our message to be mainstream." Evidently, he still has doubts that his organization's vegetarian and vegan messages, and agenda, will be accepted by the majority of Americans.

KUDOS to the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association

In response to a proposed mandatory spay neuter ordinance in Chicago, ISVMA issued the following opposition statement:

July 28, 2008. The Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association (ISVMA) opposes the mandatory spay/neuter ordinance being proposed for the City of Chicago. The ISVMA opposes this proposed ordinance for the following reasons:

- There is no scientifically-based research that supports the proponent's argument that only intact animals bite.
- There is no conclusive evidence that mandatory spay/neuter programs work.
- This mandate would discourage pet owners from seeking rabies immunization if they are opposed to neutering/spaying and fear they will be reported. It is already a struggle to ensure the proper safeguards are in place to protect the public from rabies. Anything that makes rabies vaccination compliance more difficult should be seriously scrutinized. Rabies is essentially a 100% fatal disease to humans, dogs and cats.
- There are not enough resources in Chicago to enforce mandatory spay/neuter in a meaningful way.
- With regard to creating a healthier pet, there are both positive and negative affects accrued from sterilization. It appears that benefits outweigh risks; however, there are many breed and individual dog variants, suggesting that professional judgment is required to determine whether and when to neuter/spay pets.

Although the ordinance's stated goals to reduce the number of unwanted pets and gang activity are laudable, said Dr. Steve Dullard, ISVMA Legislative Committee Chair, the reality is that it will have no effect on these problems. Instead, it will create some serious public health concerns, cause many animals to be denied necessary health care, and will trample on the personal property rights of conscientious pet owners.

A copy of the ISVMA Position Statement on this proposal is available at http://www.isvma.org/member_correspondence/mandatory_spay_neuter.doc

Vaccines: What Cat Owners Need to Know

Sarah Dowling-Information Specialist, University of Illinois, College of Veterinary Medicine

July 9, 2008. On my first trip to the veterinarian's office as proud new cat owner I pondered the question that I am sure has crossed the minds of many cat owners at some point. Does my cat really need these vaccines? My kitten, like many of yours, was destined to be an indoor-only cat so why did I need to drag her into the vet clinic every year for vaccines?

According to Dr. Melissa Riensche, a small animal internal medicine resident at the University of Illinois Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Urbana, the answer is actually quite simple. As with human medicine, vaccinations are an important part of the preventative medicine veterinarians practice. The ultimate goal of a vaccination is to eliminate the spread of certain diseases or, if that is not possible, to reduce the disease severity.

The vaccines engineered for your cat are separated into several categories referred to as core, non-core, and those that are generally not recommended. These categories are defined based on factors like: the overall efficacy of the vaccine, your pet's individual risk factors, and the health risks associated with the vaccine. Core vaccines are ones that most animals should receive and in some cases a core vaccine may actually be required by law.

The vaccine for the rabies virus is one such vaccine that is required by law, although requirements to vaccinate can vary by state and county. Dr. Riensche recommends checking with your local veterinarian to see if the rabies vaccine is mandated by law where you live. In these areas there can be penalties and fines for owners that choose not to vaccinate for rabies, with the most severe consequences occurring should your pet bite a person or another animal.

Other core vaccines include feline herpesvirus 1, feline calicivirus, and feline panleukopenia virus vaccines. Dr. Riensche explains that "While these vaccines may be listed as core vaccines, certain health conditions and lifestyles can change your cat's need for vaccination and owners should discuss with their veterinarian to make sure the benefits of vaccination outweigh any risks."

Core vaccines are those that most animals should have. Vaccines that are considered to be non-core, including vaccines for *Chlamydia felis*, *Bordetella bronchiseptica* (bordetella), feline immunodeficiency virus, and feline leukemia virus (FeLV), are given based on your pet's individual risk factor for acquiring those diseases.

For example, if your cat lives its entire life indoors with no contact with any other cats it may not be a good candidate to receive the FeLV vaccine since that disease is spread from cat to cat via bite wounds, nursing, and other close, direct contact. However, cats that are negative for FeLV that spend time outdoors or may otherwise come in contact with an infected cat should be vaccinated against the virus.

In order to determine your cat's need for any non-core vaccines your veterinarian will need to know your pet's risk factors. Discuss with your veterinarian whether your cat will have any access to the outdoors, if there are any potentially infected pets in your household, whether you routinely foster any animals or take in stray cats, etc. Based on your cat's lifestyle, your veterinarian will be able to make recommendations as to which, if any, non-core vaccines your fluffy companion should receive.

The last category of vaccines are those that are generally not recommended, regardless of your pet's risk of infection. Vaccines in this category include those for feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) and giardia. Many veterinarians refrain from using the FIP vaccine since the efficacy of the vaccine is controversial. Similarly, routine use of the Giardia vaccine is not recommended since infection is not usually life-threatening, in fact most infected animals are asymptomatic, and the vaccine does not actually prevent infection.

After you and your veterinarian determine which vaccines your cat should receive during its appointment your job as an owner is not over. According to Dr. Riensche the risks associated with vaccinations are low but can include allergic reactions and vaccine-associated sarcomas.

"An allergic reaction to a vaccine will usually present itself soon after vaccination. Owners should watch for vomiting, swelling of the face or around the injection site, respiratory distress such as panting, and any other signs that their pet just isn't doing well," advises Dr. Riensche.

If you know your pet has reacted to a vaccine in the past Dr. Riensche recommends discussing with your veterinarian how to prevent reactions from occurring next time your pet is vaccinated and whether the risk of your pet's vaccine reaction outweighs the benefit of vaccination.

Some of the vaccines that your pet may be receiving can carry with them the risk of a cancer known as vaccine-associated sarcoma. While the risk of your pet developing a vaccine-associated sarcoma is low, this form of soft-tissue cancer has been linked to the use of adjuvanted FeLV and rabies vaccines.

"Owners should be vigilant when their cat is receiving its vaccines to make sure they are given in the correct region of the body and as far down on the limb as possible. This will make diagnosis and treatment easier if your pet does develop a sarcoma later down the road," explains Dr. Riensche.

For more information on vaccines for your cat please contact your local veterinarian.

<http://www.cvm.uiuc.edu/petcolumns/index.cfm?function=showarticle&id=578>

Novartis Aids CVM Research

The College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) at North Carolina State University is the recipient of a \$625,000 gift from Novartis Animal Health US, Inc., to help support the Clinical Trials Program administered by the CVM Center for Comparative Medicine and Translational Research.

Presented over a five-year period, the Novartis gift will fund a clinical trials veterinarian, a veterinary research technician, and laboratory space and equipment that will be dedicated to supporting clinical research studies involving patients in the CVM Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

"Clinical studies are integral to the advancement of veterinary medicine," says Dr. Gregg Dean, director of the Center for Comparative Medicine and Translational Research (CCMTR). "Such studies investigate risk factors for disease as well as methods to prevent, treat, or cure illnesses that affect both animals and humans. The Novartis gift will fund resources that are critical to helping the CCMTR ensure an effective Clinical Trials Program."

"Novartis Animal Health is a proud supporter of the College of Veterinary Medicine at North Carolina State University, especially in the opportunity to contribute to the development of the school's Clinical Trials Program (CPT)," says Dr. Gary Bosch, vice president for research and development for Novartis animal Health in North America.

“We recognize the veterinary program at North Carolina State as a center of excellence for clinical research in veterinary medicine, and believe that this gift will support the advancement of research and the development of innovative solutions for animal health problems.”

Dean says the CCMTR Clinical Trials Program (CTP) enables clinical investigators the opportunity to evaluate novel approaches to diagnose and treat disease and deliver innovative solutions that enhance animal and human health. The CTP promotes research collaboration by serving as a liaison between clinical investigators, basic researchers, referring veterinarians, pet owners, and industry scientists. In addition, participating in the program may help interest DVM students and residents in exploring careers in translational medicine.

The CTP can assist with or independently design and implement all organizational and technical aspects of clinical trials including case recruitment, patient enrollment, patient visits, sample collection and processing, and patient follow-up and data analysis. There are currently 19 ongoing investigations in seven hospital clinics: Cardiology, Dermatology, Internal Medicine, Neurology, Oncology, Pain Management, and Surgery.

According to Dean, a dedicated clinical trials enterprise is an essential component of an evidence-based medicine approach to determine the standard of care. Such trials, he says, enable clinical investigators to determine the best way to treat specific medical conditions while offering patients access to the most advanced diagnostic and therapeutic technology available.

“We are particularly pleased with the Novartis support,” says CVM Dean Warwick Arden. “The Novartis gift will help us continue building a clinical trial framework that will become self supporting as it matures into a premiere national veterinary clinical trials program. We envision that the CTP will also conduct trials that will have implications for the treatment of people, making the program unique in the veterinary and human medical fields.”

<http://webapps.cvm.ncsu.edu/news/view.cfm?id=964>

Your Donations at Work

Your donations truly make a difference to animals worldwide. Currently, Morris Animal Foundation is funding nearly 150 studies that will help protect, treat and cure companion animals and many wildlife species.

FOR DOGS: halting anemia

Investigator: Dr. Katharine F. Lunn; Colorado State University, YEAR 2 OF 2

What is it? Immune-mediated hemolytic anemia (IMHA) refers to a low red blood cell count caused by the destruction of red blood cells when a dog’s immune system attacks them. Sometimes the disease is triggered by infections, cancer or as a reaction to certain drugs or toxins, but in many cases the disease has no known cause. Of the dogs that die, most do so shortly after diagnosis, making early treatment critical.

How will this study help? Much of the destruction of red blood cells in dogs with IMHA occurs in the spleen. Preliminary studies suggest that drug therapy using liposomal clodronate temporarily prevents the spleen from destroying red blood cells. If researchers can prevent the destruction from occurring early on, patients will have a longer time to respond to more traditional therapies. This would result in less hospitalization and fewer blood transfusions. Through this MAF-funded clinical trial, researchers are evaluating this new drug treatment to determine whether it will help dogs survive the early stages of IMHA. If so, the drug therapy would be added to the list of standard protocols for the disease and could significantly increase the survival rate of dogs with IMHA.

FOR CATS: detecting anemia-causing bacteria

Investigator: : Dr. Joanne B. Messick; Purdue University, year 1 of 2

What is it? *Mycoplasma haemofelis* is a bacteria that targets a cat's red blood cells and causes a type of anemia that is sometimes referred to as feline infectious anemia (FIA). The most common clinical signs of acute infection include pale gums or mucous membranes and skin that is very pale instead of pink. An infected cat may also seem weak or lethargic.

How will this study help? Infection with *M. haemofelis* can cause life-threatening anemia in cats, especially young ones. Unfortunately, very little is known about the consequences of chronic infection. Investigators hope to develop a blood test that would detect antibodies in the cat's body that developed specifically to work against certain components of *M. haemofelis*; these components are known as antigens. The antibody response in an acute infection likely differs from the response that develops in a chronic infection. As a result of this research work, the researchers hope to better understand acute and chronic infections and the effect each has on the health and well-being of cats.

<http://www.morrisanimalfoundation.org/>

Light A Candle, Save A Life

On Sunday, August 24th at 8 PM, dog lovers around the world will gather to Light A Candle, Save A Life, during the My Dog Votes 4th Annual Worldwide Candlelight Vigil Against Breed Bans.

From Alaska to Australia, from Newfoundland to New Jersey, the UK, Spain, Portugal, Canada, and Australia - will stand in solidarity to send a message to the world that we must stop breed bans, we must stop profiling dogs and owners based on breed, and we must stop the slaughter of innocent dogs.

The My Dog Votes 4th Annual Worldwide Vigil Against Breed Bans is a peaceful way to send a very powerful message to the world that and we need laws based on Deed, Not Breed.

Together, We Will Light A Candle, Save A Life

Stand up for innocent dogs and their owners and tell the world to stop killing innocent dogs!

Sign Up for the My Dog Votes Candlelight Vigil

<http://www.lightacandlesavealife.com/>



Dutch Government Lifts 25-Year Ban on Pit Bulls

The Dutch government says it will lift a long-standing ban on pit bulls because it did not lead to any decrease in bite incidents.

Agriculture Minister Gerda Verburg has informed parliament of the decision, which follows the advice of a commission of experts appointed to review the policy.

Instead, the country will focus on enforcing local leashing laws and owner education programs. Spokesman Koen Geelink said the ministry hopes to have a new policy in place by year-end, in which dogs that have displayed aggression will be tested by an expert.

The country banned the breeding and possession of pit bulls in 1993, after three children were killed by the dogs.

Wesley J. Smith:

Granting apes rights will only devalue human life

The Great Ape Project was launched just 15 years ago by Princeton utilitarian bioethicist Peter Singer and Italian animal rights philosopher Paola Cavalieri with the stated goal of obtaining a U.N. declaration welcoming apes into a "community of equals" with humans.

But why grant apes rights? After all, if the Spanish parliament deems these animals insufficiently protected, it can enact more stringent protections, as other countries have.

But improving the treatment of apes – of which there are few in Spain – is not really the game that is afoot. Rather, as Spanish animal rights activist Pedro Pozas chortled after the Spanish decision, this precedent will be the "spear point" that breaks the "species barrier."

Why break the species barrier? To destroy the unique status of man and thus initiate a wholesale transformation of Western civilization.

Specifically, by including animals in the "community of equals" and in effect declaring apes to be persons, the Great Ape Project would break the spine of Judeo-Christian moral philosophy, which holds that humans enjoy equal and incalculable moral worth, regardless of our respective capacities, age and state of health.

Once man is demoted to merely another animal in the forest, universal human rights will have to be tossed out and new criteria devised to determine which human/animal lives matter and which individuals can be treated like, well, animals.

Should that come to pass, our social order based on the sanctity and equality of human life would crumble. In its place would emerge a society humbled to the point where people would willingly sacrifice our own flourishing "for the animals" or to "save the planet," utilitarian enough to countenance ridding ourselves of unwanted human ballast.

Thus, in the world that would rise from the ashes of human exceptionalism, moral value would be subjective and rights temporary, depending on the extent of each animal's individual capacities at the time of measuring.

Concerted efforts to knock ourselves off the pedestal of exceptionalism are terribly misguided. The way we act is based substantially on what kind of being we perceive ourselves to be.

Thus, if we truly want to make this a better and more humane world, the answer is not to think of ourselves as inhabiting the same moral plane as animals – none of which can even begin to comprehend rights. Rather, it is to embrace the unique importance of being human.

After all, if not our humanity, what gives rise to our duty to treat animals properly and to act toward one another in accordance with what is – the Great Ape Project notwithstanding – our exclusive membership in a community of equals?

– Excerpted from a Weekly Standard column by Wesley J. Smith, a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute and a special consultant to the Center for Bioethics and Culture.

Brief Overview of Cat Behavior:

What Makes a Cat a Cat?

By Myrna Milani, BS, DVM

One of the reasons cats tend to elicit strong feelings in people takes the form of this species's many unique characteristics. People who expect cats to act like humans, little dogs, or all other domestic animals often find these differences difficult to deal with or even intolerable. On the other hand, those who enjoy novelty find cats most enjoyable, if sometimes maddening, animals with which to share their homes.

Although all domestic animals possess behaviors that make them unique, cats offer the added challenge provided by their status as our most recently domesticated species. In fact, judging by the numbers of feral cats (domestic animals gone wild) whose numbers some estimate equals the almost 60 million pets in our homes, we might even argue that the cat isn't domesticated at all. On the other hand, if we look at some of the purebreds which are even newer entries in the domestic cat scene, some of these appear so fragile as to make their survival outside the most highly controlled environment questionable. But that, too, is typical for the cat: For every extreme one cat presents, we can find another cat displaying exactly the opposite!

Because cats are so much closer to their wild roots than dogs or any other domestic animal, a lot of seemingly incomprehensible feline behaviors make more sense if we understand where the cat is coming from. Most scientists agree that today's pet cat descended from a small African wildcat, *Felis silvestris libyca*; the term wildcat is used to differentiate the small cats from the wild cat group which contains all wild felines. One way a small creature can insure its own food supply at the same time it decreases its own chance of being eaten, is to seek food when others aren't, such as at night. Cats adopted this nocturnal strategy and can function very well in restricted light or even in what we humans would consider total darkness.

While hunting at night does confer some benefits, it's not completely without problems. First, while the approach does limit encounters with diurnal (daylight-active) predators, it doesn't rule out predators completely.

Imagine yourself a small hunter hunting in the tall grasses and forests in minimal light to total darkness at the same time some other animal may be hunting you. What kinds of characteristics would help you protect yourself? First, you might want to start out with some sort of camouflage. For the cat who hunts in tall grass, brush, and forest, a nice tabby pattern that gives the illusion of light shining through vegetation does a most effective job of hiding it. Second, a keen sense of hearing would be a big advantage when locating food or keeping track of predators at night. Third, color and detail vision won't help a lot in the dark, but eyes that could make the most of what light is available as well as those which are sensitive to the slightest motion would be a real plus.

In addition to all of this marvelous dark-adapted physiology, the cat needs some way to move swiftly through its territory on even the darkest night to escape predators and other threats if necessary. To that end, cats lay down scent trails using the scent glands on their feet, plus secretions from similar glands on the sides of the face and head to mark prominent objects along that path. In some wild animals, these scents serve as such potent markers that, if an animal accidentally veers when laying down the original trail, it will veer at that same point every time thereafter. In this manner the cat lays down a trail that has as much meaning to it as a trail of lights through the forest would have for us.

The good news about scent marks is that they can communicate their message on the darkest night as well as brightest day, and these messages last much longer than sounds which might also alert predators. The bad news is that the cat periodically must freshen up those marks as well as mark off any new additions along the trail—which probably explains the reason for the cat's well-know curiosity. After a storm, the resident cat who doesn't check out his territory and mark off any downed branches or other new obstructions in his path could find himself in deep trouble when he encounters these for first time, unmarked and in the dead of night, while trying to flee a predator.

Given the critical role scent marking plays in the small wildcat's survival, we can understand why cats are also extremely territorial. Because they must refresh these marks periodically and there are so many hours in a day (even though cat-hours might not be quite the same as ours!), cats who spend all of their time policing up a large territory won't have any time left to find food and water and reproduce and, hence, will be eliminated from the gene pool. On the other hand, the cat who claims just enough territory to support himself (or herself and her kittens) will be able to achieve these goals more readily.

So now we have a relatively small creature who hunts and is being hunted at night in an area just big enough to fulfill its needs. Given its dependence both on that territory and those scent cues for its survival, we can also appreciate why cats are solitary rather than social animals under such conditions. They can't afford to share their space with other cats for two critical life-saving reasons.

1. There's not enough food.
2. The scent trails of other cats could confuse the resident cat.

From this, we can see why it makes terribly good sense for a cat to be nocturnal, predatory, territorial, and solitary. But what could possibly explain the feline maternal-sexual nature that distinguishes it from all other domestic animals, too?

The answer to that question also lies in the domestic cat's heritage. Like all other animals, the goal of a mother cat (or queen), is to get her genes into the gene pool, which means doing everything possible to insure her young survive. However, unlike social species who can rely on other pack members for assistance throughout life, the cat has no such luxury. The queen must teach the kittens everything they need to know to survive on their own. Not only that, she must do this before the kittens' food requirements exceed the limits of the territory. That means she must teach them a great deal in a very short time, and they must possess the capacity to learn all this. Needless to say, a very strong maternal bond comes in handy when fulfilling such a tall order.

Similarly, an animal which experiences a solitary existence on a fixed territory with a limited food supply faces special challenges when it comes to finding a partner. An animal which doesn't particularly enjoy hanging out with its own kind—and may even view them as a threat—obviously needs a little extra incentive when it comes to mating, as well as physiological and behavioral adaptations to enable them to make the most of feline breeding season. We need only look at the alarming rate at which the small wildcat populations are disappearing worldwide to appreciate how difficult it is for these species to maintain their numbers in a shrinking habitat. Ironically and sadly, more numerous domestic cats who compete for food, breed with wildcats thereby diluting their already shrinking gene pool, and expose them to disease also contribute to the problem.

To summarize then, five behaviors make cats cats: They're nocturnal, territorial, solitary, predatory, and maternal-sexual. And because cats are so newly domesticated, we can be sure these same behaviors influence our pets every bit as much as they did their ancient ancestors.

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<http://www.milani.com/what-makes-a-cat.html>

Protecting your right to responsibly own and breed animals.

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For more information on animal health, training, reports on pet issues, animal sheltering, or to learn the difference between animal welfare and animal rights – visit our website at www.ncraoa.com

North Carolina Responsible Animal Owners Alliance, Inc. (NCRAOA) is a statewide organization of animal owners and professionals dedicated to animal welfare, responsible animal ownership, and maintaining the rights of responsible citizens to breed and own animals. NCRAOA, a 501(c)3 organization, provides education and information to the public and supports reasonable and humane animal welfare laws.

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