



As a cat lover with multiple cats, as well as a veterinarian I was surprised at some feline statistics I came across. Recent studies have shown that there are 82 million cats in the U.S. compared to 72 million dogs making cats the #1 pet in America. Yet these same statistics show that year after year cat veterinary visits are declining. In an effort to try and find out why, a Bayer Veterinary Care Usage study found that 58% of cat owners stated their cats hated going to the veterinarian.

There seems to be a common perception that veterinary visits are too stressful for our feline companions. Our cats run and hide when they see the cat carrier come out and when we finally do “catch” them and put them in the dreaded carrier the car ride does nothing to ease their anxiety. The good news is there are things we can do to decrease the perceived stress of these visits. Letting your cat become familiarized with its carrier is a great first start. Leaving it in a central location in your home with some cat treats or favorites toys will encourage your cat to come and check it out. A synthetic pheromone such as Feliway can be sprayed in the carrier to reduce anxiety. This same pheromone can also be used in the car on the ride over to your veterinarian.

The truth of the matter is that the pros of an annual examination and preventative care for your cat far outweigh the stress of the visit. A physical exam of your cat by a licensed veterinarian can detect such things as periodontal disease, ear infections, heart disease, and arthritis just to mention a few. Early wellness screening and annual parasite checks round off the care by searching for things internally that your cat may be trying to hide from you. In a clinical study, more than 25% of cats diagnosed with heartworm disease – a deadly parasite with no treatment for felines - were indoor only according to their owners.

So do your furry feline family member a favor and schedule its annual physical exam with your veterinarian to make sure he or she does not have any underlying health issues. Check with your veterinarian’s technician or assistant about ways to make the visit less stressful. See if your veterinarian has a cat friendly protocol to ease your pet’s visit. But most of all make sure you get your kitty the medical attention he or she needs.

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