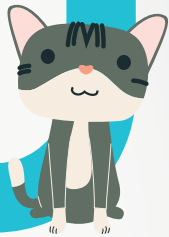


SOCIALISATION AND THE 'LOCKDOWN CAT'



There's no doubt that some cats will be breathing a sigh of relief as their human family start to leave the home more – those who like peace, quiet and time to themselves may have found the last few months rather stressful. However, there are some cats who have undoubtedly loved having their owners at their beck and call all day and having a warm lap to snuggle into whenever they choose. These cats may be at risk of separation issues developing as restrictions are lifted and caregivers increasingly spending time away from the home. The Vetoquinol team have partnered with clinical animal behaviourist Rosie Bescoby who shares her top tips on coping with this new situation.

Providing cats with opportunities to gain reinforcement from the environment, rather than all the good stuff coming from you, can help encourage independent behaviour. For example, if you normally feed your cats at set times of the day, consider providing activity feeders that provide both physical and mental stimulation to get the cat to work for their food (as they would naturally have to hunt for their food) or place food around the house or garden for your cats to search for (as they are also natural scavengers). Feeding smaller meals more frequently fulfils their natural eating habits and helps reduce the salience of meal times. A timed feeder removes the association with you providing the food as well - provided there is no medical reason why your cat cannot be fed at different times of the day



Whilst interactive play sessions are hugely important for all cats, we can also encourage some independent play by providing items for the cat to hunt and chase too. Having a variety of textured toys that have different sounds (squeaks, bells, rustles etc) and even smells (e.g. catnip) and rotating these on a regular basis, placing them for your cat to find (maybe hidey holes where mice might choose to hide) or hanging from string can enrich your cat's home environment. There are also cat specific games that can be purchased, which encourage cats to play independently too.

Another tip is to look at your home from a feline perspective – are there plenty of high up perches for your cat to climb onto? Are there hiding places for them to snooze in? Are there warm, comfy areas that are off the ground (that fulfil all the criteria of your lap)?! Providing access to shelves, tops of furniture, as well as any empty cardboard boxes from your deliveries (we know you get at least 1 a day!) can really help your cat feel more secure without involving you. This is particularly important in multi-cat households, homes with dogs, or for any cat who exhibits signs of fearfulness – because your presence might be the only time they currently feel safe. To start with, you might create a high, comfy resting area or an empty box next to where you work and encourage your cat to settle there. Combine with placing food in this area for your cat to search for so they associate that location with something pleasant, and you should find your cat starts to make the choice to settle more independently away from you and copes better when you leave them at home alone.



LIFE CAN BE STRESSFUL FOR PETS

Visit zylkenepet.co.uk to access video guides of Rosie's advice

Zylkene is a calming supplement that contains a natural ingredient derived from a protein in milk called casein that has clinically proven calming properties to help relax cats and dogs. It is a peptide (protein) molecule, well-known to promote the relaxation of new-borns after breastfeeding.

Zylkene has become a valuable support for veterinary surgeons, behaviourists, nurses and pet owners for use in helping pets cope when facing unusual and unpredictable situations or before occasions such as a change in their normal environment.

