



News from the Team

Welcome to Boredom Busters Pet Care Services Summer Newsletter

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A few reminders as summer holiday season is approaching.

I am on leave from 18th to 28th June (back to work on 29th). I'm sorry to have to take more than a week, my van is going for a holiday in Kent where it will be custom fitted with crates to my specifications. This will mean the bigger dogs have more head room and the smaller dogs won't have to be lifted into the 'top' crate. It should be much cooler in the back with a solar air vent, and there should be room for a ramp for those dogs that need it.

I am also on leave 19th to 23rd August, this is to attend a practical dog training course – I will be training a Battersea Dog's Home dog for the Bronze Good Citizen award – in a week!

If you would like to book me to board your dogs please note I cannot save the dates without a deposit (there is a 20% discount on prices on the website for regular customers). I also require a month's notice of your holiday, otherwise the full fee for the time is payable. With a month's notice it's just 10% to keep your space.

I have passed my 'Pet Home Sitting and Dog Walking Certificate', finally. I started in September to be have 'paper proof' of my lifetime's experiences with pets of all kinds, but as work got busier I had less time for study.

Hot Weather Care

Dogs should never be left in a car on a hot day – even in the shade or with windows open. If you are taking the dog on a car journey try to avoid travelling during the hottest part of the day. Ensure the dog is not in direct sunlight, and take plenty of water. On long trips, stop frequently, they should be drinking little and often, not gulping large quantities. If you have to go alone and may need to visit the little person's room, consider whether your dog really needs to come with you. Never allow your dog to hang their head out of the window when driving.

Dogs shouldn't be walked during the hottest part of the day, morning and evening are preferable. I find shady areas to walk your dogs, avoiding hot pavements which may burn their paws, and I always carry water. Dogs benefit most from little and often, so we do lots of pit stops and we do not walk as far as on cooler days. If the weather gets much hotter than the last week or so I may need to avoid the middle of the day. If this is the case I will do a second visit to allow relief and make sure they aren't alone for long periods.

During the day at home, most double glazing can be locked in the 'ajar' position to allow for fresh air and to catch any breeze, or try moving the dogs to another area if necessary. A two litre bottle of tap water can be frozen, wrapped in a tea towel and left for the dog to lie against if they wish to. Rabbits also enjoy this. If rabbits are outside in a run, make sure they will have shade all day long, and hutches aren't in 'suntrap' corners of the garden. Water in plastic drinking bottles can become very warm, so try a thermal cover, or keep a spare somewhere cool so that it can be changed. An old net curtain can be fitted over hutches to keep the flies out, and check your rabbit daily to avoid flystrike. Remove soiled litter daily.

Open windows on the top floor can be hazardous to cats – they often land on their feet, but this can be followed by their jaws and teeth, which may then need medical attention.

Short-nosed, black and long-haired breeds can suffer more from the heat. If they overheat, soaking them in cool (not cold) water and rubbing it right down to the skin is more beneficial than covering them with a wet towel. Don't forget underneath as well, the groin and 'armpit' area.

White dogs, cats and rabbits (or with white patches in sensitive areas), can get sunburn on ears, nose and around the eyes. Pet sunscreen is very rare, and hard to get hold of (products may be different for different species), so speak to your vet to see if they recommend a sunscreen – check with your insurance company that they will be covered if they have a reaction or lick it off. If your pet sunbathes on its back the stomach is at risk of burning, so keep them in the shade. Avoiding the sun is preferable.

Watch out for ticks while walking in long grass or meadows especially if there are horses or livestock nearby. These can be removed with a special 'tick tweezer'. Avoid smothering or burning the tick as this can cause it to regurgitate, raising the risk of infection. Grass seeds can be a hazard, so check paws, eyes and ears if they seem irritated

Bee stings – remove the sting by scraping it with a hard object, avoid using tweezers as this can lead to more poison entering your pet. Bathe with bicarbonate of soda and water, also an ice pack can relieve pain. Wasp stings – bathe the area with vinegar. There will be some swelling, if this is excessive, or inside or around your dog's mouth a vet check may be needed as pets can be allergic to stings in the same way humans can, and swelling can block the airway.

Communicating with Cats

Sounds Cats Make

The meow - everybody knows that cats meow, but they only do it to humans. Cats don't talk to each other using meows at all. The meow generally means that the cat wants something from the human, perhaps to go out, or in, or out again, or some food.

The chirrup - this sound is like a high-pitched trill and usually goes up in pitch. Imagine a Spaniard or Italian rolling their 'r's and saying a long 'rrrr'. The chirrup is a cat's way of saying: 'Hello, I'm pleased to meet you.'

The purr - cats purr deep in their throats as a sign that they are happy. A contented cat can apparently keep up a continuous purring, as they can make the sound while breathing in as well as breathing out. It sounds like a trilled 'r' – once again, using our Spanish or Italian friend to do the trilling, but without a break. Cats also occasionally purr when they are under stress, frightened, sick, in pain, in labour, or even dying. It shouldn't be too hard, though, to work out whether your cat is happy or in pain.

The hiss - is a throaty 'h' sound accompanied by backward-pointing ears. It signifies anger and fright. A cat will hiss as a warning to you not to come any closer. A cat will not normally hiss at his owner. If it does, it will feel mixed emotions while doing so - perhaps shame, perhaps apprehension.

The caterwaul - this wailing noise is not usually used by cats to talk to humans. It is generally reserved for the middle of the night when the cat is on a wall outside in the dark and you are trying to sleep. It sounds like someone with a very high-pitched voice being tortured, and will make the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end.

The chatter - a cat that is staring intently at a bird before pouncing on it will often make a chattering noise. It sounds like 'ya-ya-ya-ya' and is made while moving the jaw but keeping the rest of the body absolutely stationary. It's not known exactly why cats do this. They are not trying to talk to the bird, quite the opposite. It could perhaps be a method of exercising the jaw before crunching on the bird's neck, but this seems unlikely. All the rest of the cat's muscles are ready for action without the need for any such exercise.

Body Language

- Ears forward is the look of a happy cat. Ears back means apprehension, while ears down means fright.
- Tail held high with a little curl at the end means a happy cat. Tail horizontal with end twitching slightly is ambiguous - it can be contentment or interest. Tail horizontal and being lashed from side to side means anger.
- Eyes wide open can be a sign of aggression or extreme interest. As cats are nocturnal creatures, they try to maximise the amount of light into their eyes by widening their pupils. When a cat is about to pounce, you'll see the pupils of its eyes suddenly widen. This means you've got about a quarter of a second to protect yourself. And since the action is completely instinctive and involuntary, the cat doesn't know it's doing it, and doesn't understand how you're always able to anticipate its attack. A relaxed, carefree cat will close its eyes slightly, or even blink, to show it is not worried you are about to attack it. When you are looking into

a cat's eyes you should blink slowly. This reassures it that you are not being aggressive.

The Psychology of Cat Communication

A lot of the ideas in a cat's vocabulary involve attacking and being attacked. This is because cats communicate for different reasons from humans, who are pack animals. We thrive on company and our speech is designed to reinforce a bond of togetherness. Most people think the purpose of speech is to communicate information, but if you examine what the average human says on a night out at the pub, a lot more of it is to be sociable than actually imparting information.

Cats, on the other hand, are solitary creatures. In the wild they tend to live and hunt alone, and if two cats come together a fight usually occurs. Even mating takes place amid an atmosphere of intense dislike between the concerned parties. So cat communication is much more about aggression than human communication is. The main cat-to-cat calls are the caterwaul for distant aggression and the hiss for close-up combat. There's not much you can do with a cat when it is making either of these sounds, other than step back out of harm's way.

Cats also make great use of their eyes as offensive weapons. Two cats fighting will often do it face-to-face, staring into each other's eyes in an attempt to intimidate the other. This is why when talking to your cat you should avoid staring directly into its eyes – it will take this as aggression.

Of course, the one cat-to-cat interaction that does not involve aggression is a mother cat with her kittens. The kittens will meow when they want food, and this call easily gets transferred to the cat meowing at its owner when it wants food or access through a door. The chirrup is similarly something that cats might do in a family, although it never occurs between two adult cats.

Sounds You Should Make

Since cats' meows and caterwauls go up and down in pitch a lot, it is a good idea to do this yourself in your speech. The cat won't understand the words, but will understand the emotion in the speech; exaggerating the up and down will make it more interesting for it.

Like most smaller animals, cats can hear much higher pitched sounds than humans. Many people use a higher pitched voice than normal when talking to cats, which the cat can hear very clearly at a great distance. If you want to attract a distant cat's attention, a simple 's' will suffice. This is probably why the traditional 'puss-puss-puss' call is used.

If I Could Talk to the Animals

With a bit of practice, you'll have all the cats in the neighbourhood coming to you when you call them. You'll be able to get your cat to roll over when you say: 'Roll over, Grampuss!' And when your cat decides it's had enough and prepares to attack, you'll know the signs and be able to make a hasty retreat in time.

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