



The Vets Will See You Now

ANSWERS TO YOUR HAIRIEST PET QUESTIONS

By Jennifer Chen

THREAD COUNT

My cat loves to pull threads from blankets and towels. How can I get her to stop, other than by keeping linens out of reach?

Your cat might be bored or curious, says animal behavior expert Steven Appelbaum. Give her something more interesting to occupy herself with, such as an interactive cat toy (like the Bergan Turbo Scratcher Cat Toy, \$12; chewy.com). Or try a scratching post made of sisal (like the Trixie Pet Products Parla Scratching Post, \$33; jet.com), which, unlike posts made of soft fabric, your cat won't confuse with textiles. Stimulate her interest by sprinkling some catnip on the post, and avoid placing it near her favorite nap spot, as she might ignore the post if there's a bed nearby she likes better. Spritz linens with a natural, textile-safe repellent (like NaturVet Bitter Yuck No Chew Spray, \$10; petco.com) to deter her. Let the spray dry before touching linens and reapply after every wash.

TRAINING DAY

We just got an 8-week-old puppy. How soon should we put him in training classes?

Enroll him right away, encourages animal trainer Mikkel Becker. Between 3 and 16 weeks old, puppies are in their socialization period, meaning what they're exposed to during this time will directly impact their social development and confidence level. For roughly four to six weeks, take a weekly hour-long group class with your pup or schedule a few shorter private sessions per week. A good class will use positive reinforcement; offer ample rewards, like treats or toys; and provide guided play sessions with other, friendly pups. Practice the skills taught in class at home to reinforce the new behavior, says Becker. Look for a class that requires veterinary proof of current vaccinations to help ensure it's a safe environment for your pup. Ask your vet or local rescue group for recommendations for a certified trainer.



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ITCH TO SCRATCH

My dog has been scratching more than usual. How do I find out whether he has allergies?

Bathe him once or twice a week and use unscented, hypoallergenic diaper wipes on his paws every time he comes in from a walk to help remove grass allergens and pollen. If he's still scratching and you're sure he doesn't have fleas, try the prescription injection Cytopoint or an over-the-counter antihistamine without decongestant, like Zyrtec (\$31 for 70 tablets; amazon.com), says veterinarian Donna Solomon, DVM. Hide the tablet in a palatable food, such as almond butter, or place it in a pill pocket (try Milk-Bone Pill Pouches, \$4; target.com). Consult with your vet about dosage, but the general daily dose is half a tablet (five milligrams) for dogs under 25 pounds, one tablet for 25- to 50-pound dogs, and one to two tablets for dogs more than 50 pounds. If that doesn't help, a veterinary dermatologist can run a blood or skin test to identify environmental allergies.

OUR EXPERTS

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