

# RESPONDING TO DEFENSIVE AGGRESSION IN CATS



Usually, a cat is aggressive because they are fearful and want to protect themselves from a perceived threat.



## When a cat shows aggression to people:

- Stop any interactions immediately
- Do not attempt to approach the cat
- Keep yourself and other people or animals safe by leaving the room, if possible. Be careful not to block any potential escape routes for the cat
- Stay calm. Do not shout, lash out at the cat, or make any sudden movements which might cause the cat to attack
- Try to redirect the cat onto a moving toy
- If the cat attacks you, keep still. Movement can trigger further biting and scratching. When the cat releases their grip, withdraw your hand or body part very slowly



## Aggression to petting

If a cat displays aggression associated with petting, learn to give the cat attention in other ways, pet the cat for very short periods, or both.

First, ensure the cat has calmed down and is not increasing in fear or arousal. You may need to leave the room to allow the cat space and try again later.

Other ways to give attention to a cat that could become aggressive include engaging with treats, redirecting with play or wand toys.

## Aggression to other cats

If one cat is attacking another, a noise can distract or startle the attacker and interrupt the event. Use caution to not cause heightened aggression.

If cats must be handled while in this reactive state, gently covering them with a blanket or towel may allow safe handling.

