

Why do cats scratch furniture, carpets and other things we wish they wouldn't?



Let's just bust the big myth. No, cats do not do it to get back at you for working all day or because you did not open that can of tuna. Scratching actually satisfies a physiological, territorial and emotional need!

Firstly, cats need to scratch to condition their claws. Scratching helps get rid of old cuticles, and sharpens the weapons they use to defend themselves against other cats.

The actual motion of scratching gives the shoulders and back muscles a good stretch, releasing tension and maintaining flexibility.



When scratching, a cat leaves a scent from the glands in the cats front feet. The scratch left is then an olfactory and visual message which says to all that "this area/object belongs to me!". So, unless a very attractive substitute has been provided, expect an attempt to scratch your brand new lounge suite.

We have all seen the vigour of a scratch pole attack. Here we see that scratching an object

also serves as a pop-off valve for frustration and other emotions.

So when is scratching an indication of a problem?

Obviously when your new lounge suite gets mauled or the mat outside the patio door has been pulled apart, you have a problem.

These extremes may indicate an abnormal level of anxiety in your cat and you should look for the cause.

How do I prevent this or help the cat feel better?

A great way to reduce the marking of your furniture is to provide a substitute that the cat likes. Place a scratch post treated with catnip near to the furniture being scratched. Sometimes, it helps to wrap the abused furniture in cling wrap or a noisy or sticky material. For scratching that may be anxiety related, you should consult your veterinarian.

Various other aids like pheromones, silicone nail caps and anxiety relieving drugs are available, and can help normalise your furry friend's life.

For any further assistance, seek advice from your veterinarian.



