

Purina Research Reveals Cats Are Better At Reading The Room Than We Think

New Purina Pet Behavior Study Shows Cats Are Dialed in to Human Attentiveness, Especially When They Need a Helping Paw

ST. LOUIS, Nov. 17, 2021 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- When dogs need help, a bark, paw or even a flash of those infamous puppy dog eyes can give their humans an attention-grabbing cue, but new Purina research shows that cats have their own methods for seeking help that depend as much on the human's behavior as their own. A recently published Purina study revealed that cats can 'read the room,' and adjust their own attention-getting behavior with the attentional state of the person they are trying to seek help from. This is counter to previous assumptions that cats have limited interest or ability to communicate with their people, which is a trait more often associated with dogs.

In this study, recently published in the journal *Animal Cognition*, cats were presented with a solvable task (an easily accessible treat in a container with a loose lid) and an unsolvable task (a treat in a closed container) in the presence of either an attentive or inattentive caregiver.

In the solvable task condition, cats easily figured out how to access the treat and did not try to involve the person in the process. However, when cats could not access the treat by themselves, they used behavioral strategies to communicate their intention to the person such as repeatedly looking at the treat and then at the person, vying for their attention and help in accessing the treat. Not only did they ask for help, but they also modified their behavior depending on the availability of the person. When the person was looking at them and paying attention, the cats were more engaged; they looked to them sooner and more often and approached the treat container more often. When caregivers weren't paying attention, the cats adjusted their strategy, presumably having noticed that the person was not engaged. These sophisticated cognitive abilities were believed to be used by dogs, not by cats.

"A key part of any relationship is communication, and this study shows that cats are perhaps better communicators than we've given them credit for," said François Martin, M.A., Ph.D., Applied behavior and welfare research section leader at Purina, and lead Purina scientist on the project. "The more attentive a cat owner is, the more engaged their cat will be in return, making their relationship stronger."

This study adds to decades of research by Purina pet behavior scientists to better understand the behavior and emotional development and health of cats and dogs.

"The more we understand about pet behavior and the contributing elements of their overall wellbeing, the better equipped current and future pet owners will be to care for their dogs and cats in a way that strengthens the bond that they share," said Martin.

Find out more about this study at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10071-021-01503-6>

About Purina

Nestlé Purina PetCare creates richer lives for pets and the people who love them. Founded in 1894, Purina has helped dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by offering scientifically based nutritional innovations. Purina manufactures some of the world's most trusted and popular pet care products, including Purina ONE, Pro Plan, Fancy Feast and Tidy Cats. Our more than 8,700 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 51 million dogs and 65 million cats every year. More than 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition.

Purina promotes responsible pet care through our scientific research, our products and our support for pet-related organizations. Over the past five years, Purina has contributed more than \$150 million towards organizations that bring, and keep, people and pets together, as well as those that help our communities and environment thrive.

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