

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION



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Thank you for interest and desire to become a volunteer for Hearts That Purr Feline Guardians! Hearts That Purr is an “all-volunteer” organization that cannot exist without people like you who have a love of cats and drive to get involved. Before you volunteer, we would like to inform you a little more about our organization so that you may better understand our mission and the focus of our work.

OUR MISSION

- ~ *To provide shelter and loving care for felines made homeless due to the terminal illness, incapacitation or death of their owners.*
- ~ *To educate the public about the importance of planning for the ongoing care of their beloved companion animals should a time come when they are no longer able to do so themselves.*

ABOUT US

Hearts That Purr Feline Guardians is a nonprofit, feline rescue organization founded in 2013 as a “niche” rescue sanctuary. We do not operate a cat shelter in the usual sense. Traditional shelters perform the wonderful and essential work of rescuing stray, abandoned, abused or neglected cats and usually focus on spay, neuter and adoption programs. Here, we understand the special needs of cats that were never unwanted, but have been essentially *orphaned*. They are often fearful and stressed over the sudden absence of their trusted person and upsetting changes in their worlds. Older cats are especially traumatized in these situations and have a hard time either finding another home or living a happy life in a crowded shelter. Our programs and priorities are designed to carefully transition cats that are used to a secure and loving home and give them the next best thing when their owner passes away or must enter a hospice or nursing home.

We use private, low-density residential group and foster homes to shelter these cats in need. Here, there are no cages. Our furry residents live in beautiful, feline-only environments where they are guaranteed a lifetime of loving care and the attention they remember from their previous homes.

Whether it be lifetime care in our low-density residential group home, a new home through our strict adoption program, or placement in a loving foster home through our unique *Senior Citizens and Senior Kittizens* foster program, we always put the best interest of each of our feline residents above all else, just as you would with your own beloved cat.

We are also passionate about educating people about the importance of planning for the ongoing care of their beloved companion animals, should a time come when they are no longer able to do so themselves. Our *Feline Guardian* program offers those cat owners without trusted family or friends willing to assume the responsibility of cat care, a superior alternative to a traditional shelter, sanctuary or euthanizing a kitty before its time.

Hearts That Purr Feline Guardians is recognized as tax-exempt by the IRS under Section 501(c)(3) and donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Cats are not always typical or predictable, which is why we love them! Please use caution when interacting with our cats, especially those that are new or unfamiliar to you. Be alert to tell-tale signs of a cat's feelings and feel free to seek assistance whenever you have any questions or concerns.

The following are some examples of typical feline behavior and body language to be aware of:

Understanding Cat Body Language: The Ears

It might be hard to believe, but cat ears contain over two dozen muscles, enabling them to do an Exorcist-like 180-degree swivel forward, backward, up and down. Although they pan around like radar dishes scanning for sounds, they're not just for hearing. A cat's ears (and tail, as illustrated later) are a vital part of **cat body language**, and proper interpretation can help you better understand any cat's mood and in some cases, keep you safe from injury.

The Relaxed Cat - Normally, a relaxed cat's ears will point slightly to the side and slightly forward as shown in Figure 1. This indicates contentment and sense of well-being. She's neither fearful nor aggressive.

The Alert and Interested Cat - When a cat is alert and something has captured her interest, her ears will assume a straight-up orientation, and a forward posture as in Figure 2. She'll usually greet you with ears erect, offering a friendly greeting.

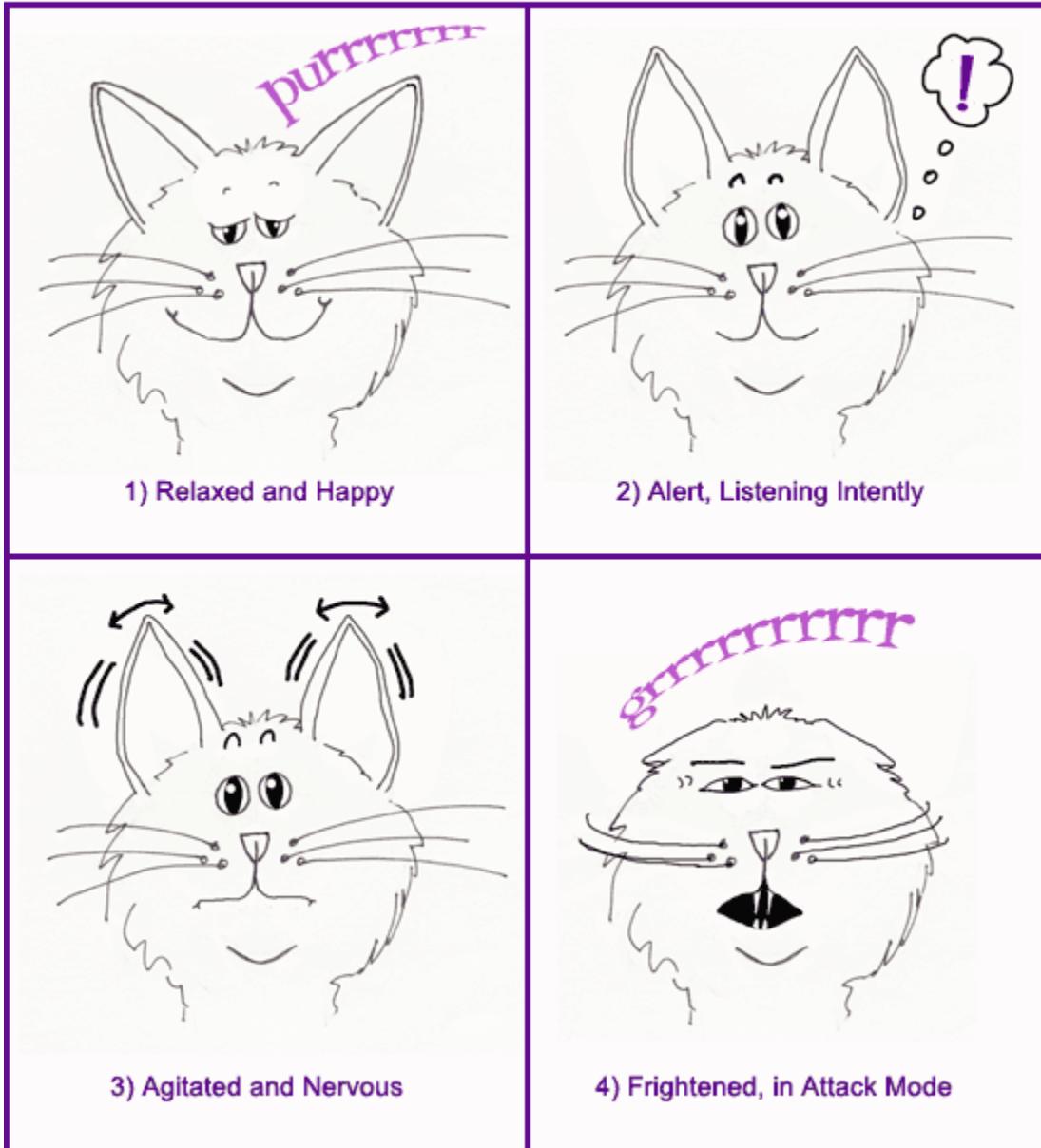
The Nervous Cat - If a cat's ears are twitching, she's agitated and nervous, as shown in Figure 3. This might be a cue to offer her some reassuring words in a soft tone and a slowly, extended hand to see if she'd like to be touched. (Note: Persistent twitching could also be a sign of a medical problem. If you encounter this with any of our cats, please let someone know.)

Signs of Aggression - A cat's ears moving from a forward posture to a backward posture indicate increased aggression. A cat's ears moving from an upright position to a full horizontal position indicate increased fear, annoyance, or submissiveness -- a warning for you to leave her alone. (Again, if you notice that a cat's ears seem irritated or are maintaining a horizontal orientation on a regular basis, it could be a symptom of an ear infection. Please let someone know.)

Attack Mode - When the ears flatten against the head in a defensive position as in Figure 4, a cat is frightened and may attack. She instinctively keeps her ears flat against her head in attack mode to protect her ears from claws and teeth during a fight. Ears that are pointing backward somewhere between the "alert" and "defensive" positions indicate an aggressive cat who may attack.

An Ambivalent Cat - A cat's ears are also able to move independently of one another. When they're in different positions, the cat is ambivalent and unsure of how to respond. She's likely to withdraw to assess the situation. As she does so, her ears may shift as they interpret stimuli and consider how to react.

When the Ears Speak, Listen!



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Understanding Cat Body Language: The Tail

A cat's tail is the perfect extension of feline expression. It is like a punctuation mark at the end of her body that puts a fine point on affection, aggression, fear and happiness. Whether we're talking about lions in the wild or house cats, there's much to be learned by observing the tail. For instance, both a lion stalking a zebra and a kitty stalking a mouse, will swish their tails in a similar manner to prompt their prey to move. This allows the cat to zero in for attack. If you see this behavior in one of our cats, either leave her be until she relaxes, or toss her a toy to attack. It's usually not a good idea to touch or try to pick her up when she's in swish-mode, as the object of her attack might be you!

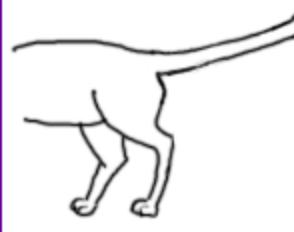
You also don't want to mess with a cat when her tail is in a position of defensive aggression. In this orientation, the tail is lowered, but the tip is curved upward. This indicates that something has attracted her attention, and she is very nervous, defensive, and unsure of her surroundings. If you try to pick her up, she may attack.

A happy cat holds her tail high, and if she greets with a quivering tail, she's happy to see you.. That's the time you want to shower her with affection.

If you're in the presence of multiple cats, reading their body language can be helpful in breaking up fights before they start. Hissing or swatting is a normal thing in multiple cat households. That being said, it is important to understand that most of the cats at Hearts That Purr may have come from one-cat households and are not used to living with other cats. While we never rush integration of new cats into the house and maintain low population densities as compared to traditional shelters, hissing and swatting is still something you will see occasionally when several cats interact here. However, if you feel that the behavior is turning more aggressive, please do not touch or pick up the aggressor at this point, because you may get scratched or bitten. It is safer for you to grab a nearby pillow, towel or blanket and safely distract or separate the aggressor from his or her target. Seek assistance as soon as possible if you observe bullying, fighting, or any other unusual behavior from any of the cats.

Understanding when a cat might attack can save you from injury. When the ears are back (the telltale sign of aggression), or the cat's tail is down and/or swishing back and forth, use caution. You should never try to touch or pick up a cat exhibiting this type of body language because you're at high risk of being bitten or scratched -- injuries that could require hospitalization. In addition, remember that a cat's mood can change quickly depending on the cat or what's going on around her. One moment she may enjoy having tummy rubs, but as soon as she catches a glimpse of a bird outside or another cat nearby, she may try to shred your arm. Always pay attention to the cat whenever you are touching her and be aware of changes in body language that you would miss if you were looking away.

The Telltale Tail

friendly and content	non-threatening, unsure	derisive
		
friendly, but unsure	amicable, not fearful or aggressive	defensive aggression
		
angry	potentially aggressive	submissive
		
very happy to see you	excited, angry or irritable	alert, interested
		

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Volunteer Waiver & Liability Release Form

- 1. Voluntary Participation:** I acknowledge that I have voluntarily applied to work as a volunteer for Hearts That Purr Feline Guardians (hereafter referred to as "HTP"), an Arizona nonprofit corporation, that provides sanctuary and care for homeless cats. I understand my service will be strictly as an unpaid volunteer working at the direction of HTP and may be terminated by either me or HTP at any time without cause.
- 2. Assumption of Risk:** As a volunteer for HTP, I may be participating in a variety of support activities. I understand that during the course of these activities, I may be exposed, directly or indirectly, to various risks and dangers. I hereby accept responsibility for any injury, loss or damage to myself and/or my property as a result of volunteering for HTP.
- 3. Release:** As consideration for being permitted to participate in the activities of HTP, I hereby waive any claim against HTP or its employees, landlord, representatives, other volunteers or feline residents for injury, loss or damage resulting from any act or failure to act. In addition, I agree to hold HTP harmless from any claim made by a third party acting on my behalf or as a result of any injury, loss or damage I may suffer as a result of my involvement with HTP.
- 4. Responsibility for My Own Acts and Omissions:** I hereby agree to be legally and financially responsible for my own acts and omissions relating to any activities and services I perform as a volunteer of HTP.
- 5. Conduct:** I will conduct myself at all times while on the premises, in a manner that is respectful to all and conducive to the secure and peaceful environment HTP cats are accustomed to.
- 6. Wi-Fi:** Internet may be available for use while socializing with cats at HTP. If using the service, I agree to do so responsibly and not access or download any offensive or copyrighted material.
- 7. Security Cameras:** I understand the premises may be monitored by recording devices that are intended to secure the premises and monitor undesirable feline behavior, such as bullying or to identify a cat that may be ill. In doing so, I also understand said devices may unintentionally capture my image or voice while I am on the premises and that any such recordings are the property of HTP, but will never be used for any commercial purpose without my consent.
- 8. Knowledge and Voluntary Execution of this Agreement:** I declare that I have read this agreement and fully understand it to be a release of all claims I have or may have against the parties released, arising from my volunteer work for HTP. I confirm that I am of legal age and competence to execute this agreement on my own accord.

Volunteer Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____ Phone (____) _____ Email _____ @ _____



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