

## OTHER FACTORS THAT CAN IMPACT FIGHTING (OR NOT)

*You can actually use food to “settle disputes” between two cats that have been fighting. Here’s how: First, separate the cats for at least a week. After they’re calm, start your cats eating meals at the same time instead of letting them eat by themselves. This way, each cat is rewarded in each other’s presence with food.*

*“At the beginning of this process,” says Dr. Houpt, “leash and tether the aggressive cat so it can’t attack the victimized cat.” Right away, they’ll both realize that the inevitable attack isn’t going to occur. Start by feeding your cats at the same time — but at opposite ends of the room. If they remain calm, move the dishes a little closer the next time. Gradually continue this until the cats are eating side-by-side. They should begin to actually enjoy each other’s company because they know they’ll be breaking bread together.*

*“Interestingly, cats rarely fight over food the way dogs usually do,” says Dr. Houpt. Although cats are usually solitary eaters, “sometime in their early socialization with humans, they may have evolved a strategy to get used to sharing food.”*

**Two’s Company; Three’s a Fight.** *The more cats you have, the more likely there is to be fighting. Cats are generally solitary creatures except when it comes to mating and kitten-raising. So living together in close quarters is a challenge to their natural socialization habits.*

*“It’s not normal for cats to live in high concentrations in the house,” says Dr. Houpt. Although some people may think fighting is natural among felines, “you should stop it so that no one gets hurt. If you don’t, the victim may get more frightened and be more likely to run when it sees the aggressor. And the aggressor will be more likely to chase the victim, resulting in a vicious circle. And that will allow the fighting to continue or even escalate. So separate fighting cats, and then gradually re-introduce them in a calmer atmosphere,” says Dr. Houpt.*

