

TACTICS TO STOP THE NIGHT FOOD STALKER

Unlike dogs who beg for food at the table, cats will beg for food at what seems like an odd hour to us. “The real complaints are of cats at night making noise, waking up owners because they want to be fed,” says behaviorist Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D. If a begging cat is annoying, she suggests that you:

- ◆ Feed your cat before your bedtime.
- ◆ Feed him before you eat if he’s begging at meals.
- ◆ Leave food out overnight.
- ◆ Try a timed food dispenser or provide kibble-filled toys for distraction and exercise, especially for overweight cats. Dr. Houpt recommends a toy that dispenses little moving balls, each filled with a treat. “You could set it to go off on a timed basis, and the cat can chase the balls and have to work to find the kibble.”
- ◆ Play with your cat before bedtime. Leave out favorite toys, such as puzzle toys, for overnight activity.
- ◆ Put the cat in another room when you’re sleeping or eating.
- ◆ If your cat jumps onto the table or your lap when unwanted, gently lift him down. “And keep doing it,” Dr. Houpt says.