

**Alex Taylor** RVN C&G CertSAN ISFM DipFN&AdvCer

Alex qualified as a veterinary nurse in 1997 and has worked in both first opinion and referral small animal practice. Alex is especially interested in feline nursing and has completed both the ISFM feline nursing certificate and diploma with distinction. Alex recently finished studying towards the ISFM advanced certificate in feline behaviour and has just started studying towards gaining her advanced diploma in feline behaviour management. Alex currently works as a locum RVN and runs her own company 'The Cat Nurse' where she works as a locum RVN and offers CPD about feline nursing and behaviour. Alex volunteers for her local Cats Protection branch, helping to raise money for local cats in need. Alex has a particular interest in feline behaviour and stress related diseases in feline patients.

# Practical Feline Behaviour: Understanding Cat Behaviour and Improving Welfare, written by Trudi Atkinson

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## Overview

This book is written by recognised feline behaviourist Trudi Atkinson and provides the reader with plenty of useful information about the behaviour of the domestic cat. In my opinion a book like this is well overdue, as not only does Trudi explain in detail why cats behave the way they do, she also describes how we as humans can influence feline behaviour and how sometimes, even with the best intentions we get it wrong. This book has been put together in such a way that it takes the reader on a journey, from the ancestry of the domestic cat, right up to how to tackle common feline behaviour problems in a clear and practical way, which is useful for both veterinary professionals and owners alike

## Part 1 – Understanding Feline Behaviour

In part one of this book Trudi focuses on helping the reader to understand how cats have evolved from the African Wildcat into the domestic cat that we know and love today. Trudi also touches on the welfare issues linked with selective breeding and current fashionable breeds of cat, which could be useful for nurses when advising owners about associated health issues with certain breeds. Other subjects covered in this part of the book include cat senses, communication, social feeding and predatory behaviour, reproduction and the behavioural development of kittens, health and behaviour as well as learning, training and behaviour. From a nursing perspective the part that covers kitten development and socialisation is a really useful, as the information can be used and applied when advising breeders or owners about these subjects in practice.

The section about health and behaviour is valuable to veterinary professionals too, as it covers the connection between pain, stress and disease on the physical and emotional health of a cat. This is really useful for the veterinary nurse, who is often involved with advising owners about managing chronic health conditions such as feline idiopathic cystitis, obesity or behavioural issues such as house soiling.

## Part 2 – Practical Feline Behaviour

This part of the book gives the reader lots of practical advice and tips on how to prevent and manage unwanted behaviour problems in cats. I really like this part as it gives the reader clear and easy to follow advice on topics such as choosing the right cat or kitten, the responsibilities of cat ownership, what to look for and avoid when getting a kitten and how to prepare a new home for a kitten. There are some well-written and helpful tips about handling and examinations of feline patients as well as reducing stress in hospitalised cats. These hints and tips are essential, as they provide further knowledge for those veterinary nurses wishing to provide a more cat friendly experience in practice.

There is a whole section dedicated to cat owners covering questions about the pros and cons of indoor and outdoor access for cats, different containment systems, cat flaps, harness training and enclosures – all of which could be discussed with owners during a kitten consultation or even given as advice over the phone prior to owners obtaining a new kitten or cat.

There is an entire section dedicated to being more cat friendly in practice. This section is both relevant and informative for all members of the veterinary team. Trudi talks about the measures that practices can put in place to help cats feel more safe and secure throughout their journey through the practice, as well as explaining the importance of giving cat owners the a good experience too! A section is also provided for veterinary professionals about why and when we should be giving first aid feline behavioural advice to cat owners. This section is fantastic as it gives the reader all of the necessary advice on what clients and cats need during this process and the do's and don'ts of providing this sort of advice to owners. There is some

important information here on when it is most appropriate to refer a feline behavioural case to a CCAB (Certified Clinical Animal Behaviourist) and how to choose the right behaviourist. Lastly there is a section dedicated to explaining all about behavioural pharmacology and how medications that are commonly used in behavioural therapy work.

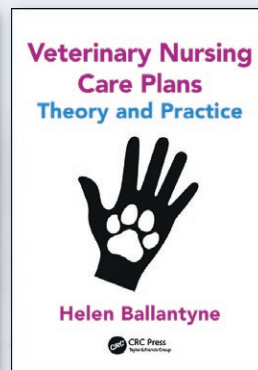
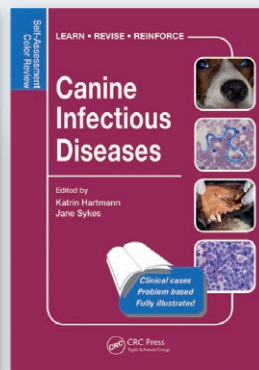
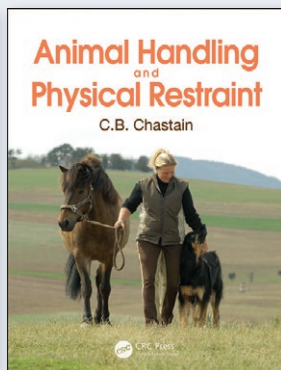
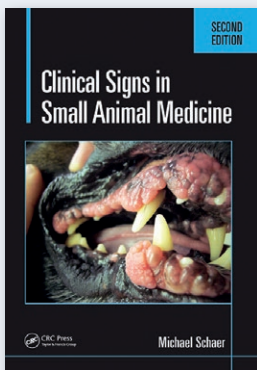
Appendices – There are 18 appendices that give practical advice for both owners and veterinary professionals on subjects such as introducing a new cat to the household, medicating cats, getting a cat used to being examined and first aid behaviour advice for common problems such as house soiling, aggression towards

other cats and people and furniture scratching. I really like this part of the book because the advice is succinct and easy to follow as its bullet pointed. I think this would be really handy for nurses to keep in the consult room drawer as it could be referred to easily when needed.

Reflection - I really like this book! It covers a lot and is really easy to navigate, with so many handy hints and tips. I would recommend it, especially for those nurses that are at the beginning of their 'cat friendly' journey or those that are wishing to study any of the ISFM nursing courses. My copy is already a bit 'dog eared' (or should that be cat eared?) from being used to much already!

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