

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS

10-step plan to tackle
any house soiling issue

by Anneleen Bru



Anneleen Bru

Lover of happy cats

Cat Behaviour Counsellor at Felinova (2008 – present)

Author of the I Love Happy Cats books

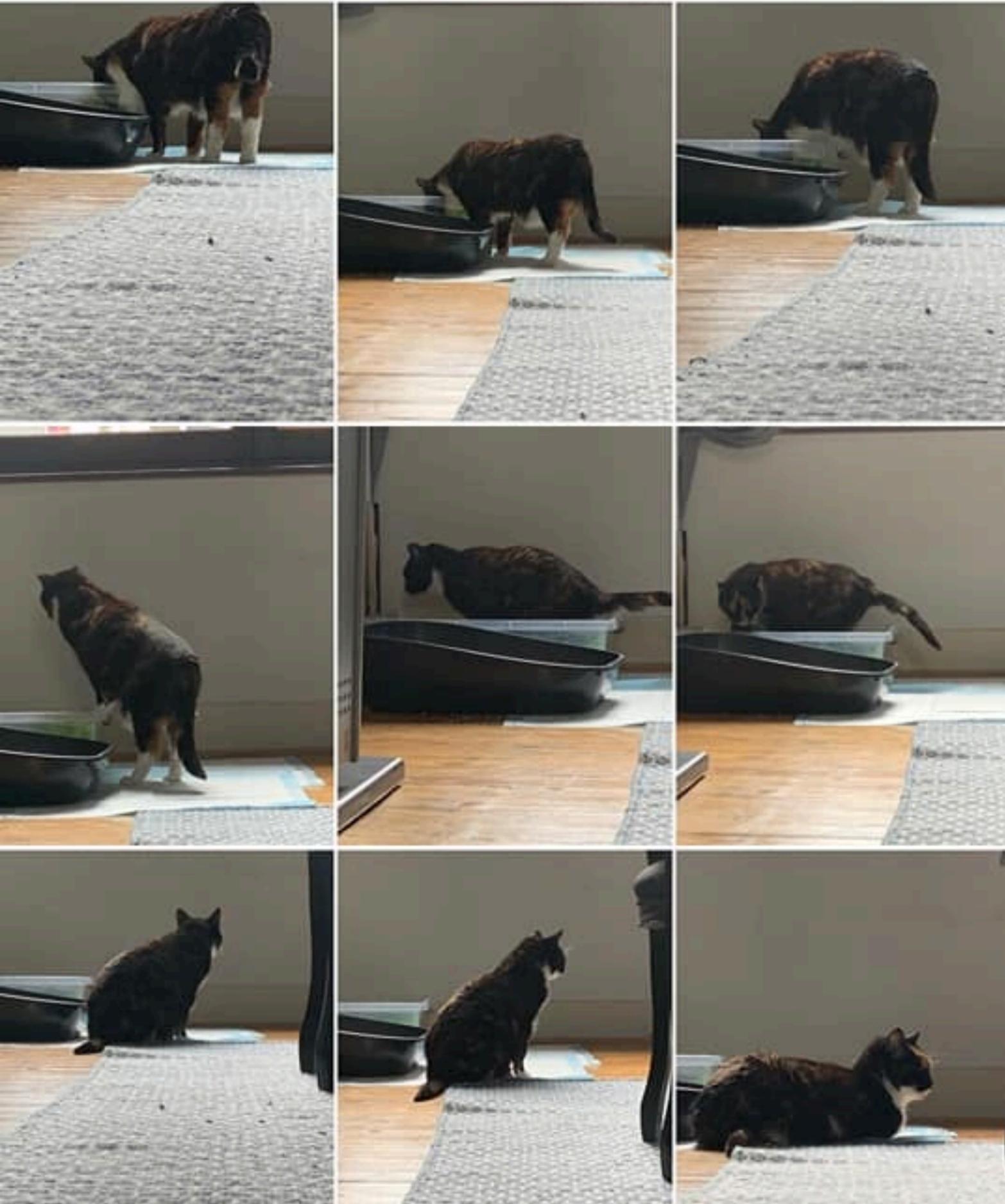
MSc in Communication Science (*UA, BE*)

MSc in Companion Animal Behaviour Counselling
(*Uni. Southampton, UK*)

Registered at the VDG (BE) & IAABC (USA)



Photo credit: Irmy Coeckelbergs



Before
we dive in

Photo credit: Sabine Castelein

Questions to ask ourselves



Is it urinating or urine marking?

Questions to ask ourselves

Is it this cat? Or possibly another cat?
Or both? Or other cats?



Is it urinating or urine marking?

Questions to ask ourselves

Is it this cat? Or possibly another cat?
Or both? Or other cats?

Does it happen all the
time or once in a
while?

Is it urinating or urine marking?



Questions to ask ourselves

Is it this cat? Or possibly another cat?
Or both? Or other cats?

Does it happen all the
time or once in a
while?

What are the
numbers?

Is it urinating or urine marking?



Questions to ask ourselves

Is it this cat? Or possibly another cat?
Or both? Or other cats?

Does it happen all the
time or once in a
while?

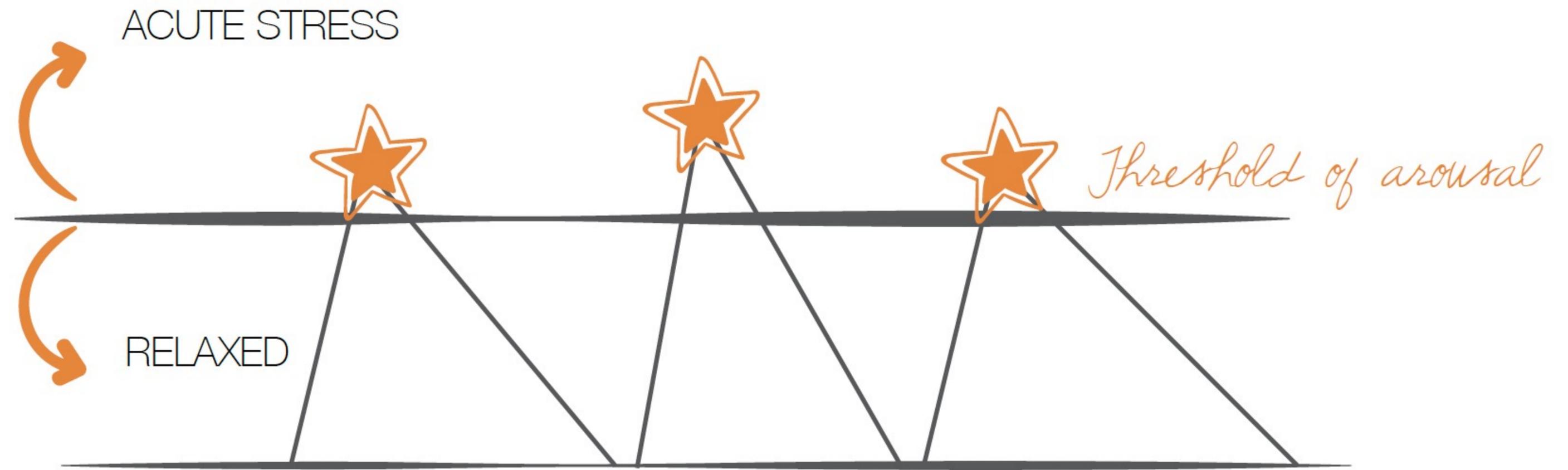
What are the
numbers?

Is it urinating or urine marking?

What are the general
stress levels of the
cat?



Acute stress



Chronic stress



Questions to ask ourselves



Is it this cat? Or possibly another cat?
Or both? Or other cats?

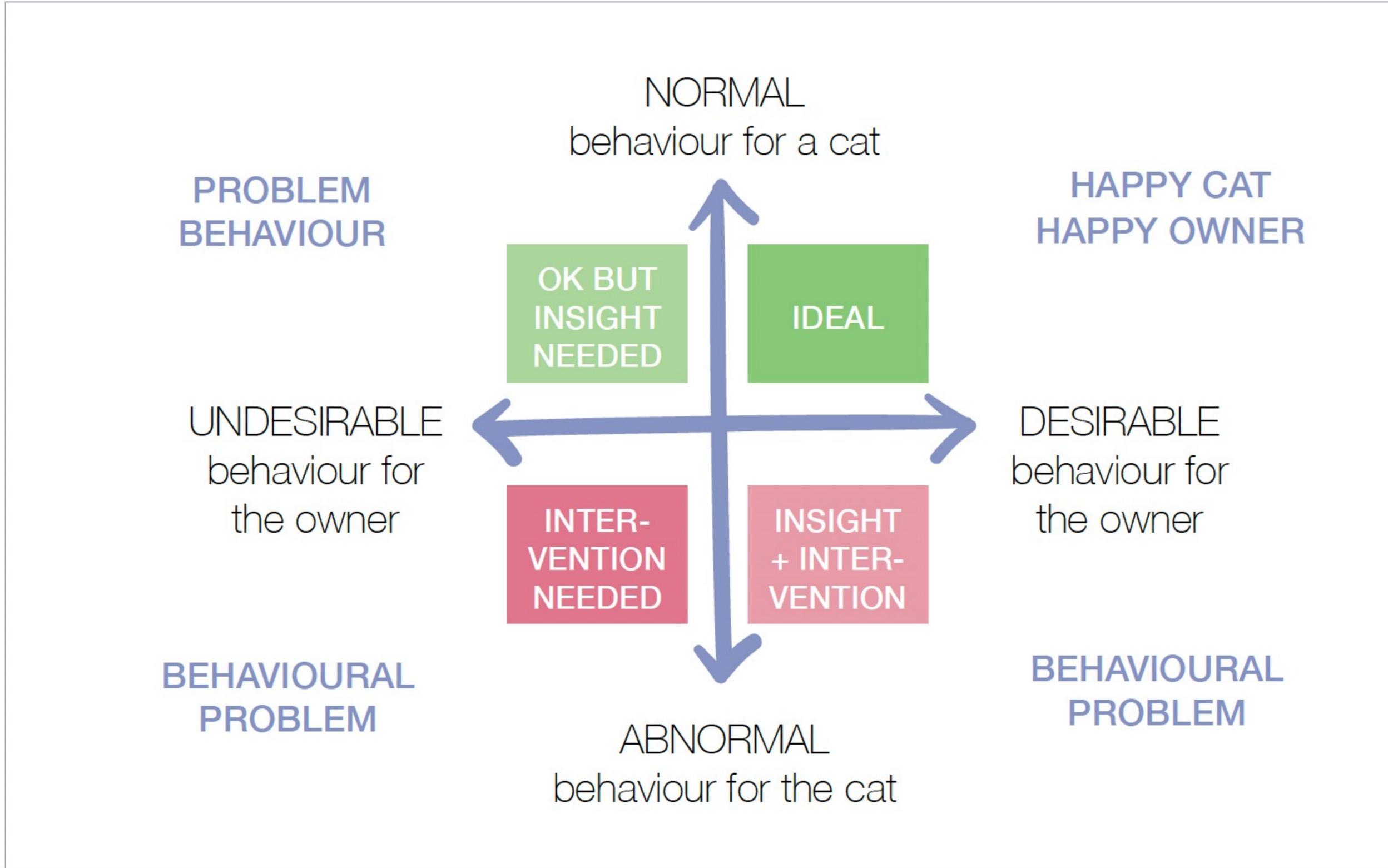
Does it happen all the
time or once in a
while?

What are the
numbers?

Is it urinating or urine marking?

What are the general
stress levels of the
cat?

Is there a welfare
issue?



Questions to ask ourselves



Is it this cat? Or possibly another cat?
Or both? Or other cats?

Does it happen all the
time or once in a
while?

What are the
numbers?

Is it urinating or urine marking?

What are the general
stress levels of the
cat?

Is there a welfare
issue?

What emotions does
the cat feel during
this behaviour?

Questions to ask ourselves



Is it this cat? Or possibly another cat?
Or both? Or other cats?

Does it happen all the
time or once in a
while?

What are the
numbers?

Is it urinating or urine marking?

What are the general
stress levels of the
cat?

Is there a welfare
issue?

What emotions does
the cat feel during
this behaviour?

When did it start?



Causes of house soiling



Causes of house soiling

Photo credit: Laura Daman – Cat model: Delphine

1

Medical issues

Pain, (previous) disease, irritation

2

Number of litter trays

Insufficient number of litter trays

3

Number of locations

Enough litter trays but positioned next to each other so count as one location.

4

Closed litter tray

The litter tray is a closed litter tray and your cat does not like it.

5

Low & open tray

The litter tray is a low open container and it doesn't not feel safe here

6

Cat litter

Your cat doesn't like the cat litter in the tray, it's too hard for her very sensitive paws or the grains are too big.

7

Plastic tray protector

There is a plastic cat litter protector in the litter tray, underneath the sand.

8

Funny smells

The sand has a strange smells, like baby powder, lavender, vanilla ...



Causes
of house
soiling

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Causes of house soiling

Photo credit: Marleen Cassiers

9

Height of cat litter

There is too little sand in the litter tray (< 7 cm).

10

Edges of litter trays

The edges of the tray are too high, which makes it difficult for some cats, such as seniors (+ 7-10y) and kittens

11

Too far away

The tray is positioned too far away, which is often an issue for kittens who don't get to the tray in time.

12

Hygiene

The litter tray is not sufficiently clean. Treat it like a diaper!

13

Size of litter trays

The litter tray is not big enough.

14

Learned behaviour

Any situation in the past that caused the cat to relocate might still cause the cat to choose to not go there (other cats, pain, etc.)

15

Unsafe locations

The litter tray is positioned in an unsafe location (in your cat's mind) and she decides to pick a safer and more secure location.

16

Unpredictable access

The litter trays are not easily accessible, e.g. via a cat flap, deal with territorial behaviour from another cat, or accidentally closed doors



Causes of house soiling

Photo credit: Anna Hendrix



Causes of house soiling

Photo credit: An-Sofie Depoorter

17

General stress levels

Cat is stress on a daily basis because of unpredictability in the environment and insufficient choices

18

Stress releasing

The cat doesn't have enough stations around the house and around litter trays to release stress

19

Play, hunting & exploring

Your cat doesn't have enough options to play or hunt during the day

20

Unpredictable owner

Cats become stressed when the owner is unpredictable



Solutions to house soiling

Photo credit: Liesbeth Buys - Cat model: Topsy

Step 1:
See a vet

Photo credit: Patricia Pardo - Cat model: Hero



Step 2: Increase resources

Reduce frustration , fear
and anxiety through
optimisation of resources
(N+1)

Step 3: Optimise hygiene

Photo credit: Auré Lie



Step 4:

Reinforce desirable
behaviour



1

LET IT BE

Approving the use of locations your cats want to use

3

OPTIMISING EXISTING TRAYS

Rewarding desired behaviour by optimising the existing litter trays

2

CHOICES ARE KEY

Enabling the desired behaviour by offering choices and start when they're kittens

4

PROMOTE NEW LOCATIONS

Stimulating the use of new perfect locations and giving your cat lots of choices along the way

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Photo credit: Cindy Cin'lla - Cat models: Charlotte & Mary'Lou

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Photo credit: Marjan Seynaeve



Photo credit: Charlotte Filippini

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Photo credit: Linda Bogaerts



I ♥
HAPPY
CATS

Photo credit: Romana Witte



56 x 70 x 46cm

Photo credit: Romana Witte



Photo credit: Liesbeth Buys - Cat model: Topsy



Photo credit: Martine Vos- Cat model: Ermes



Photo credit: Sonja Das



I ♥
HAPPY
CATS

Photo credit: Nancy Poortmans – Cat model: Whoopie



I ♥
HAPPY
CATS

Photo credit: Tamara Vanhees – Cat model: Felix

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Photo credit: Laura Daman – Cat model: Delphine

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Photo credit: Auré Lie

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Photo credit: Patricia Hendrickx – Cat model: Amelia



Photo credit: Sonja Das



Photo credit: Marjan Seynaeve



Photo credit: Veerle Van Den Broeck - Cat model: Pomerol

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Photo credit: Sarah Dekeyzer



Photo credit: Judith van der Linden-Lam



Photo credit: Sara Criel

**I ♥
HAPPY
CATS**

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Photo credit: Cindy Cin'lla- Cat models: Charlotte & Mary'Lou



Photo credit: Kathy Roland



I ♥
HAPPY
CATS

Photo credit: Leen Luyten

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Photo credit: Esther Dubbeld

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS

Photo credit: Esther Nobels



Photo credit: Geert Van Temsche





I ♥
HAPPY
CATS

Photo credit: Veerle Van Den Broeck



Photo credit: Inge Frieling



I ♥
HAPPY
CATS

Photo credit: Kaatje Zegers

Step 5:

Discourage the use of the undesirable urination area

1

Making unwanted urination impossible

2

Barricade the area

3

Remove the rewarding factor

4

Make the undesirable behaviour unpleasant



Photo credit: Charlotte Filippini



Step 6: Secure passageways

Step 7:
Using the litter
tray = super fun

Photo credit: Martine Verbraeken – Cat model: Pearl



I ♥
HAPPY
CATS

Step 8:
Make it
possible to
hide and
release stress
around litter
trays and
passageways
to litter trays



Step 9: Playing against stress

Photo credit: Martine Verbraeken – Cat model: Wolf



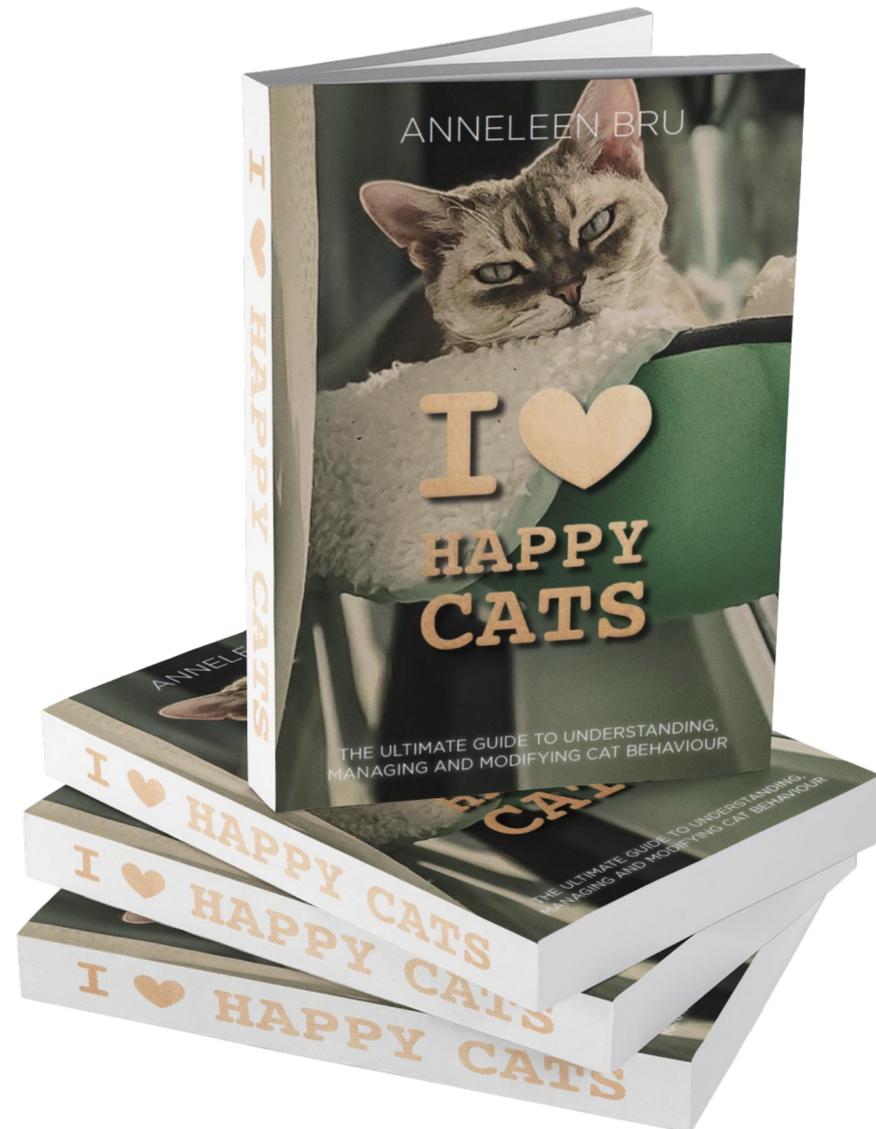
I ♥
HAPPY
CATS



Photo credit: Shutterstock

I ♥
HAPPY
CATS

Step 10:
Making contact
in the right way



Download the full chapter about
'House soiling' from the
Happy Cats E-book
'Cat Behaviour Problems' for free

www.happycats.com/cp

Thank you for your attention ♥

Any questions?

