

CALM CARE STRESS SCALE

Understanding your cats stress signals

Cats communicate how they feel through their body language. Recognising early signs of stress helps us provide calm, kind care and prevent fear from escalating.

0

RELAXED



- Body loose and soft, no tension
- Ears in neutral, relaxed position
- Slow blinking, soft facial expression
- May be resting, sleeping or engaging in routine grooming while maintaining a loose posture

1

ALERT



- Ears forward and mobile, tracking sounds
- Whiskers forward, engaged with environment
- Tail up or gently moving
- Alert and observing, not tense

2

UNEASY



- Ears turned sideways or slightly back
- Tail low, tip flicking or twitching
- Pupils slightly dilated
- May shift position or start to withdraw

3

ANXIOUS



- Body crouched low and close to the ground
- Tail held tightly against or wrapped closely around the body
- Ears flattened to the sides, whiskers pulled back
- May attempt to hide or freeze in place

4

FEARFUL



- Ears pressed flat against the head
- Pupils may be markedly dilated relative to the lighting conditions
- Piloerection (raised fur) may be visible along the back and tail
- May hiss, growl, or attempt to flee

5

OVERWHELMED



- Ears may be flattened; gaze may be fixed or averted
- Body highly tense; may crouch, arch or lean away
- May hiss, spit, growl, swat, lunge or attempt to bite
- Escape attempts, profound freezing or shutdown may also occur



0-1

Proceed consideredly and continue monitoring.



2

Pause and adjust the approach.



3

Stop and reassess before continuing.



4-5

Discontinue non-essential handling and develop a safer clinical plan.

