

Mountain Lines

by Lucy Muller (ern@warwick.net)

(Lucy Muller started spending the summer in Cragmoor at age six months, graduated from Ellenville High School in 1962, and has returned to the mountain since June 2002. She studied journalism, worked for several newspapers in New Jersey, wrote a pet column for 15 years and worked for a veterinarian for 10. Lucy has been on the Board of the Animal Welfare Association in Voorhees, NJ, and has shared her life with many, pets.)

I think I can feel a slight change in the atmosphere up on the mountain already. It is very subtle, but everything that grows seems to be at a standstill; the golden rod is getting old, and a few trees are losing yellow leaves. Could we have an early fall? I hope so; it's my favorite time of year.

I did hear something the other night that gave me chills – the coyotes. Their bark and howl is different from the domestic dog, and who knows where they are lurking. Since my cats go in and out I worry about them every night. I wonder who reintroduced the coyotes to this area anyway? They were unheard of here 40 years ago. I saw a bobcat once or twice as a kid, but no one mentioned coyotes.

While I'm thinking about it – something that always burns me up is people who just love hawks, eagles, coyotes, and wolves, but not the domestic cat. Why? Why is it OK for the other animals to kill mice, rats, birds, etc., but not for cats to do it? Cats do a fine job of keeping rodents at a controllable level. They may seem cruel when they hunt, but what

is nicer about a hawk tearing a bird apart? I will never figure this out. I appreciate all the creatures for exactly who they are.

Pet Tip: The kids will soon be back in school and the routine for the next nine months will most likely be set. So to the family pet that means, all of a sudden, everyone is gone all day. Most parents work and the kids go to school until 3:00 or later.

Here are some ideas to keep pets from being bored and destructive:

- ☛ Be sure the pet has access to a window. Just being able to see out will help.
- ☛ Be sure there are plenty of toys for the pets.
- ☛ Be sure there is always water and some treats or a bowl of cat food available.
- ☛ The litter pan should be clean and the dog needs a pet door to get out into the fenced-in backyard or if it is more than six hours, to have someone stop in and let him out.
- ☛ Children should play with the pets after school for a while; it will be good for all.
- ☛ The dog needs a walk of some length in the afternoon or evening.
- ☛ Make sure the gates or doors are closed when kids go to school. A pet can get lost or hit by a car trying to follow a child to school.

Vet Tip: Hairballs in cats are the subject of many jokes, but to a cat that is coughing one up it is not funny. I asked Dr. Kate Lucas of Walker Valley Veterinary Hospital to explain

the cause and what to do about it.

Most cat owners have experienced the dreaded feline hairball. Almost every cat will vomit one up from time to time, but for some cats it is a chronic problem. We can blame the fact that cats are meticulous groomers for this problem. The more they groom, the more hair a cat has in his stomach. Longhaired cats and ones with a medical condition, causing a loss of hair, have the biggest problem.

For those cats with intermittent hairball issues, it is wise to use an over-the-counter feline hairball laxative that can be given orally to help it pass through the intestinal tract. If you have trouble putting it in the cat's mouth, just spread some on a paw and believe me a cat will feel compelled to clean it off. There are also cat foods that have this product already in them. You would probably buy that food for cats with a constant problem.

Hairballs do not become a serious medical problem unless they are not vomited or passed. If your cat stops eating and drinking or vomits repeatedly it is time for a visit to the vet.

And from The Humane Society of Walden on Albany Post Rd.: Remember to alter your pets. For available dogs or many other pets call 845-778-5115 for hours and directions. Or <http://www.walden.petfinder.com>

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