

What Has Dr. Shook Been Reading?

Cat Massage

By Maryjean Ballener

St Martin Griffen New York (1997)

I'm a cat person, always have been and, I imagine, always will be. My life purpose is to serve the needs of my feline companion -- or so she would have you believe.

I remember my former ally cat Sophie, she would throw herself at the feet of anyone.

Welcoming their caress, purring like a freight train, she would turn her belly up and take her luv'n anywhere and anyway she could get it.

Jordan came to me as a young, hungry and recently orphaned kitty. Her mysterious past had left her eager for a full food bowl and cautious of strangers. For years she would flinch when I'd reach out to pet her. It broke my heart. Her long fluffy fur and tender scalp was a recipe for hair mat. Combing and grooming Jordan ... a necessary task or deliberate cat torture? That is was matter of opinion.

Maryjean Ballener changed all that.

Cat Massage is a book about – massaging cats. Like all good massage books it begins with a discussion of basic anatomy and a simple description of feline muscle and bony structure.

The recommended approach for first contact is gentle and friendly, allowing your feline friend ample opportunity to sniff, recognize and accept, thus allowing for the expression of natural feline superiority.

The most important tool will be your hand(s). Finger pads and tips, knuckles, thumb, open palm, closed palm, two fingers or four fingers. Long elegant fingernails are discouraged. Hand positions are discussed at length. The hand motions are described as gliding, waving, circling, flicking, kneading or rubbing. Speed varies from no- motion to fast and frisky. The pressure used might be anything from feather light to deep.

The importance of Feline feedback is emphasized. Friendly feedback such as purring, kneading, stretching, playful nipping and demands for more massage are described at length. Unfriendly feedback such as scratching, hissing and moving away indicate a qualified opinion on the part of the cat. She is expressing her likes and dislikes.

The technique portion of the book divided into bodily regions. Head, back, neck, shoulders, tummy, paw and tail. Through out the book are photos of super-model cats graciously receiving human touch.

Special considerations are given for massaging kittens and the supervision of human children around cats. When massaging pregnant, elderly or post surgical cats the counsel of a qualified veterinarian is recommended.

Jordan responded well and seemed to enjoy my experimentation with the techniques described in this book. Jordan is not and may never be the love junkie that Sophie was ... not many earthlings are ... but our relationship is much improved, as is the quality of her coat. Grooming is no longer a chore. She tolerates well and even asks for a daily brushing and combing. Clipping her nails? ... Only and I do mean only if she's on the mood.

This is a cute, fun book. If you have an interest in improving a relationship with a feline friend, if you are a cat lover or you know someone who is a cat lover, I think **Cat Massage** will be purrrrfect for you.

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