

# CASE REPORT: FELINE

## Aggression in a Feline Treated with Bach Flower Essences

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On April 9, 2007, Nikki, a 4-year-old FS DSH, was seen for aggression. The owners reported she had started attacking their daughter three weeks previously. She had no physical abnormalities on physical examination or in the basic history from the owner. Nikki was up to date on FVRCP and Rabies vaccinations. An in-house chemistry panel, electrolyte panel and CBC were run, and were within normal limits (Table 1).

On taking a more in-depth holistic history, the owners reported that Nikki had been a "bottle baby" that they (primarily their daughter) had raised. She had always slept with the daughter, either on or under her bed. She had food and water available at all times (once she was eating solid food), but had always attacked the daughter when being fed. She also had a history of attacking the daughter's female friends, but hid from adults, although she preferred females to males. There was one adult dog (Labrador Retriever) in the house as well. Nikki was not destructive in the house, groomed normally and played with toys. She had one toy was bathed weekly.

The owner was considering making Nikki an outside cat, so behavioral therapy in the form of Bach Flower Essences (BFE) was recommended. The formula Nikki received was as follows: Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Cherry Plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), Chestnut Bud (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Vine (*Vitis vinifera*) and Water Violet (*Hottonia palustris*) (Table 2). The formula was mixed according to Dr. Edward Bach's guidelines, which advise 2 drops of each remedy from their stock bottles in spring water in a 30 mL amber bottle specific to BFE, with a calibrated dropper. 4 drops of this BFE formula was to be administered either on the cat's gums, inner ear pinna, pads, or placed in her water bowl 4 times a day for 3 weeks.

On April 10, 2007, the owner called and reported that the cat was very passive, "lethargic", and not performing her normal activities. The owner was concerned that the cat was "too drugged" and was considering discontinuing the formula. The owner was advised that this was a temporary reaction and that Nikki's behavior should level off in 2-3 days.

A phone call checking on Nikki on April 13, 2007 was not returned. However, on May 1, 2007, the owner refilled the BFE formula and was very happy with the cat's behavior at that point. The cat and the family were not seen again after May 1, 2007.

### Comments:

Dr. Edward Bach was a Welsh physician who lived from 1886-1936 and became disillusioned with allopathic medicine. He initially turned to homeopathy but as he worked with patients, he decided that the patient's personality mattered more than the ailment in recovery. He categorized people into seven groups: Fear, Uncertainty, Insufficient Interest in Present Circumstances, Loneliness, Oversensitive to Influences and Ideas, Despondency or Despair, and Overcare of Others (1-3). He then went on to discover treatments for these personality disorders. He discovered or invented Flower Therapy as we know it today (4,5).

Psychoneuroimmunology is the study of how emotions impact the nervous system and the immune system. Dr. Bach believed that flower essences could cure all diseases, physical as well as emotional. He believed negative emotions

caused stress which leads to disease (4). The 38 BFE cover all negative emotions. They remedies belong to one of two groups: "type remedies" for specific personalities, and "mood remedies" for specific emotional states (6). The Essences can be prescribed for any ailment, however, they are often used for psychological and emotional problems (2,7).

BFE are made in one of two ways: in the sun method, in which freshly picked flowers are placed in a glass bowl with spring water in the sun for approximately 3 hours; or boiling method, in which the freshly picked flowers are boiled in spring water for a half hour. After either method, the flowers are completely strained out, so all that is left is the energized water. This water is then mixed with brandy (80 proof) to make a stock bottle. The stock bottles are used to make remedies, in which 2 drops of each individual BFE prescribed for the patient are mixed into spring water (2,3,7-9). BFE are believed to work via energy vibrations: the energy of the flowers is infused into the water, and when administered, into the patient (2, 4, 5, 7). This allows for both mental and physical healing. The energetics of the flowers interact with the subtle energies of the patient and rebalance the patient while affecting behavioral patterns (2, 4, 7, 10). With the current research in nanoparticles and their effect on living creatures, this energetic vibration is being held up scientifically. According to Rivas-Saurez, et al., the sunlight could induce biogenic synthesis of nanoparticles that are the "medicine." Dr. Bach himself explained it as a "vibrational imprint" of the flower on the water. (2) Because BFE work on this subtle, vibrational, energetic level, they are safe to use with any and all other therapies, they have no pharmaceutical effects, no side effects and no contraindications (2, 5, 7, 8).. Additionally, each formulation for a patient should only contain 6-7 different BFE's and due to the dilution in fresh spring water, each treatment bottle is only good for 3 weeks.

The BFE used in Nikki's formula were: Beech, Cherry Plum, Chestnut Bud, Heather, Holly, Vine, and Water Violet (Table 2). Beech is for critical, unsympathetic animals. These animals need rigid order. They are intolerant towards people or situations. Beech was used to encourage Nikki to become more tolerant of people (8, 9, 12). Cherry Plum restores loss of self-control, whether that loss is real or merely perceived. The loss of self-control can be physical or emotional. It is used in animals that are "freaking out" (8, 9, 12). Nikki had no control over the beginning of her life, so Cherry Plum was to assuage that, as well as to stop her episodes of aggression, which were how she manifested a loss of control. Chestnut Bud breaks recurring patterns. It is used for OCDs or in animals that make the same mistake over and over. It is good for animals that are difficult to train because they don't learn from their mistakes (8, 9, 12). Chestnut Bud was to help Nikki move forward in a more positive manner. Heather is used in animals that constantly bark for attention and are self-obsessed. It is indicated in animals that are overly concerned with companionship (8, 9, 12). Heather was used to encourage Nikki to allow the daughter to have other friends and relationships. Holly is for aggressive or mean animals. It used in dogs with a vicious bark or any animal that attacks without provocation or is aggressive due to jealousy (8, 9, 12). Holly was clearly used for Nikki's aggression. Vine is used in animals with dominance issues, and always are alpha. These animals impose their will on others. It is good for animals that dominate their owners or scare children (8, 12, 13). Vine was used so Nikki would stop scaring her family and dominating the daughter. Water Violet is for loners, animals that are standoffish. It is indicated for pets that don't like to be touched and observe but don't participate. It is commonly used in cats (8, 12, 13). Water Violet was included to encourage Nikki to be more friendly in general. These specific Essences were chosen as a combination with the intent of making Nikki less aggressive, less possessive of the daughter, more sociable with all humans, and generally happier in her own being.

24 hours after the initiation of therapy, the owner reported that Nikki was overly sedated, she was concerned that she was overdosing the cat. It is not uncommon with BFE therapy for the patient to have a mild transient period (1-3 days) of unwanted effects (8). These effects can include physical, flu-like symptoms, worsening of symptoms being treated, strong emotional responses, etc. (7,8). In Nikki's case, her response was lethargy, perhaps either from a feeling of malaise or else from the ability to let down her guard and actually rest for the first time. Clearly, from the owner's refilling of her prescription, the transient period resolved.

In a pharmaceutically-based veterinary practice, Nikki would mostly likely have either been placed on a psychotropic medication or else become an outside cat. The life span of an outdoor cat is weeks, not years; especially one like Nikki, who had been a "bottle baby" and had no exposure to the outdoor world. Pharmaceuticals, as they only treat symptoms, not the underlying problem, would have been a life-long commitment for both the owners and Nikki, and it is unclear if they would have been able to administer a drug to her on a regular basis, long-term. Psychotropic pharmaceuticals also have a plethora of life-limiting side effects, including liver damage. With this case, this author hopes to have shown that there are options for behavioral issues that are curative, safe, short-term treatments, such as BFE.

Chemistry	Value	Measurement	Low Normal	High Normal
BUN	34	mg/dl	10	29
Glucose	107	mg/dl	70	138
ALP	26	IU/L	5	131
T-Protein	7.0	g/dl	5	7.4
ALT	44	IU/L	12	118
Creatinine	1.3	mg/dl	0.5	1.6
Albumin	3.2	g/dl	2.7	4.4
T-Bilirubin	<0.2	mg/dl	0.1	0.3
Calcium	9.4	mg/dl	8.9	11.4
<b>CBC</b>				
WBC	9.1	10 <sup>3</sup> /μl	5.5	19.5
Lymph	5.9	10 <sup>3</sup> /μl	1.8	7.0
Gran	2.6	10 <sup>3</sup> /μl	2.8	13.0
Mono	0.6	10 <sup>3</sup> /μl	0.2	1.0
Lymph %	65.4	%	0.0	99.9
Gran %	29.1	%	0.0	99.9
Mono %	5.5	%	0.0	99.9
HCT	41.4	%	25.0	45.0
MCV	44.5	fl	39.0	50.0
RBC	9.30	10 <sup>6</sup> /μl	5.0	11.0
HGB	14.7	g/dl	8.0	15.0
MCH	15.7	Pg	12.5	17.5
MCHC	35.5	g/dl	30.0	36.0
RDW %	19.5	%	14.0	20.0
MPV	9.2	fl	12.0	18.0
PLT*	160FD	10 <sup>3</sup> /μl	200	500
<b>Electrolytes</b>				
Sodium	152	mmol/L	139	154
Potassium	3.7	mmol/L	3.6	5.5
Chloride	122	mmol/L	102	120

Table 1: Laboratory Values for Nikki, April 9, 2007; Run on in-house Heska Machines

\*FD – Poor platelet/RBC separation. so result might be falsely low for platelets

<b>BFE Common Name</b>	<b>BFE Latin Name</b>	<b>Keywords (14)</b>	<b>Virtue (8)</b>	<b>Range (8)</b>	<b>Outcome (15)</b>
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Intolerant of others, critical	Tolerance, accepts others as they are, understanding	Lack of understanding →real intolerance, continual criticism	More tolerant of others
Cherry Plum	<i>Prunus cerasifera</i>	Fear of losing control	Balance under stress, guided courage, emotional control	Small worry of control →hysteria	Self-control
Chestnut Bud	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Failure to learn from past mistakes	Observant, wisdom, gains from experience	Slow to learn from experience →never learn	Learn from mistakes so they are not repeated
Heather	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Self-preoccupied, self-concerned, talkative	Selfless, good listener, helpful, emotional self-sufficiency	Self-obsessed poor listener →completely self-obsessed, does not listen AT ALL	No longer needs to be the center of attention
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Envious, jealous, feelings of hatred	Unconditional love, generous, willing to share, open-hearted	Unkindness, meanness, hard-heartedness →hateful, malicious, sadistic	Compassionate and willing to share with others
Vine	<i>Vitis vinifera</i>	Assertive, inflexible	Selfless service, tolerant, understanding leader	Domineering →Tyrannical dictator	Determined but not domineering
Water Violet	<i>Hottonia palustris</i>	Proud, aloof		Reserve →isolation	Companionable and social

Table 2: Bach Flower Essence Formula for Nikki



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