

Cats purrfect the art of getting what they want

貓咪利用呼嚕聲達成目的

Cats **coax** their owners into giving them what they want with a special **purr** that blends their normal soft, low sound with a high-pitched element that is hard to ignore, British researchers said.

The high-frequency part is similar to a cry or a meow, and cats incorporate this into their normal, contented purr to put humans **under their spell** and exploit the nurturing **instincts** of people for their own needs — usually to get fed, according to scientists.

Lead author Dr Karen McComb of Sussex University in southern England said she initiated the study after being repeatedly woken up in the mornings by her own cat, Pepo.

"I wondered why this purring sounded so annoying and was so difficult to ignore. Talking with other cat owners, I found that some of them — including co-author Anna Taylor — also had cats that showed similar behavior," she said.

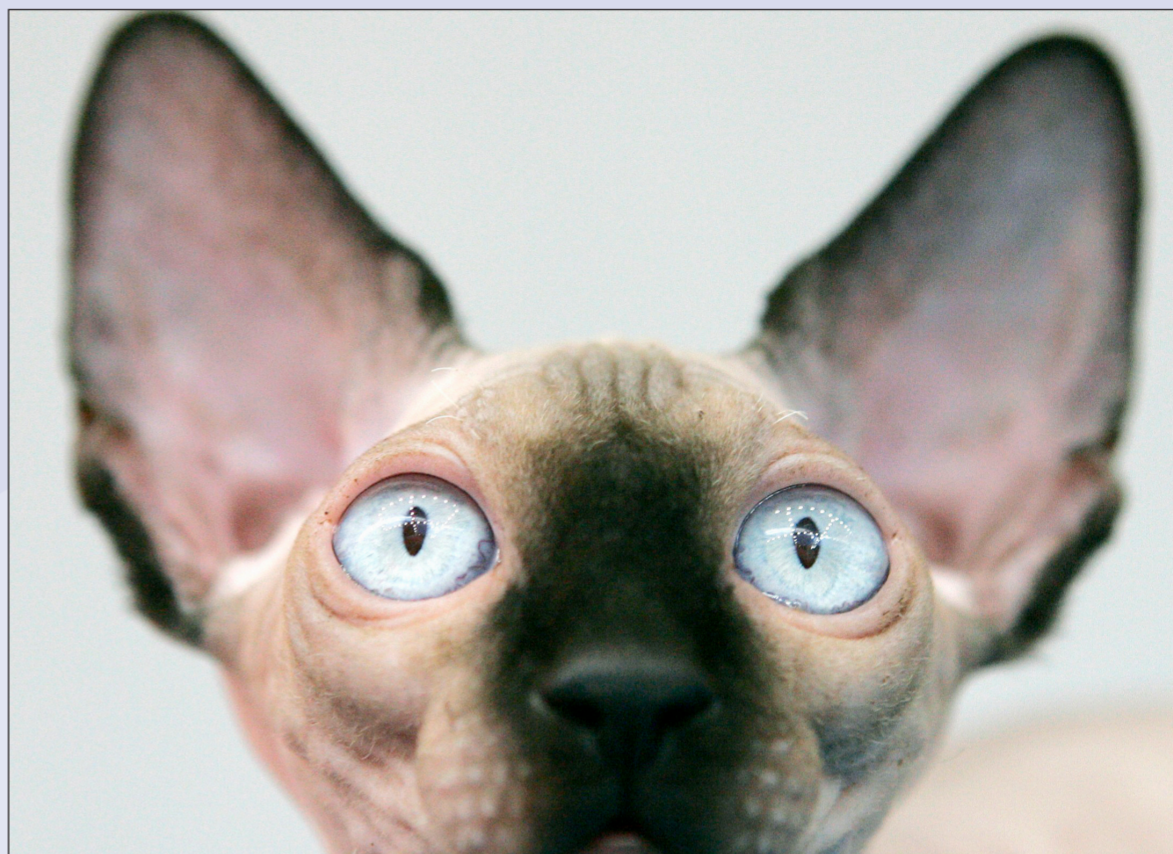
McComb and her team tested human responses to different purring types, including "solicitation" purrs — which included the high-frequency element and were made by hungry cats — against "non-solicitation" or normal purrs.

"When humans were played purrs recorded while cats were actively seeking food at equal volume to purrs recorded in non-solicitation contexts, even those with no experience of cats judged the solicitation purrs to be more urgent and less pleasant," she said.

When the team re-synthesised the purrs to remove the embedded cry, the urgency ratings decreased significantly.

McComb concluded that the cats were using the special purr to make their views known without risking irritating humans with an overt meow.

However, this solution appears only to work in cats living one-on-one with their owners — cats in large households usually have to meow to be heard. (AFP)



英國研究學者表示，貓咪會靠一種特殊的「呼嚕聲」來誘哄飼主滿足牠們的需求，這種呼嚕聲融合了貓咪正常且輕柔、低沉的呼嚕聲和一種讓人難以忽視的尖銳聲調。

科學家表示，貓咪把這種聽起來類似嗚嗚聲或喵喵聲的高頻聲調，融合在牠們正常的呼嚕聲中，這種叫聲會讓人類著迷，激發人類的照顧天性，進而滿足牠們的需要——通常是填飽牠們的肚子。

英國南部薩塞克斯大學的主要作者凱倫·麥康杜說，她每天早上都被她養的貓咪「佩波」吵醒，因而促使她開始這項研究。

她說：「我不知道這種呼嚕聲為什麼這麼惱人，讓人無法置之不理。我和其他貓咪飼主討論過後，發現其中一些飼主（包括這項研究的共同作者安娜·泰勒）養的貓也有類似的行為。」

麥康杜和她的研究團隊測試了人類對不同呼嚕聲的反應，包括「有所求」的呼嚕聲，對照「無所求」或正常的呼嚕聲；有所求的呼嚕聲包括這種高頻聲調和貓咪肚子餓時會發出的聲音。

「研究團隊以等量音量播放貓咪想討食物時所發出的呼嚕聲，和無所求時的呼嚕聲給受試者聽，即使是沒養過貓的受試者也認為有所求的呼嚕聲聽起來較為急迫且較不悅耳。」

研究團隊利用混音技術將呼嚕聲中的嗚嗚聲拿掉後，受試者感受到的急迫感大幅下降。

麥康杜推斷，貓咪發出這種不會像嗚嗚大叫那般引人不悅的特殊呼嚕聲，是想讓人類了解牠們的需求。

然而，這種方式似乎僅適用於和飼主一對一生活的家貓身上，生活在一大戶人家的家貓還是得喵喵叫才能獲得注意。

(法新社/翻譯：袁星慶)

Left: A cat relaxes in the morning sun on a terrace near Kiel, northern Germany, on June 1, 2009.

PHOTO: AP

Top: A Canadian Sphynx cat sits during an event at the Pets Fashion Week Russia in Moscow, May 30, 2009.

PHOTO: REUTERS

左圖：六月一日，一隻貓咪在德國北部基爾附近的一座陽台上享受早晨的陽光。

照片：美聯社

上圖：五月三十日，一隻加拿大無毛貓在莫斯科俄國寵物時尚週的一場活動上坐著。

照片：路透社



TODAY'S WORDS

今日單字

1. coax /kɒks/ v.

哄誘 (hong3 you4)

例：Sandra coaxed me into giving her a lift to the supermarket.
(珊卓哄誘我載她去超市。)

2. purr /pɜː/ n./v.

貓的呼嚕聲 (mao1 de5 hu1 lu1 sheng1)；咕嚕作聲 (gu1 lu1 zuo4 sheng1)

例：It's common for cats to purr when they are contented.
(貓咪滿足時會發出呼嚕呼嚕的聲音。)

3. instinct /ˈɪnstɪŋkt/ n.

本能 (ben3 neng2)；天性 (tian1 xing4)

例：When he got lost in the outback, Nigel's survival instinct ensured he made it out alive.

(奈吉爾在澳洲內陸迷路時，靠著求生本能才活著出來。)

IDIOM POINT

重要片語

under someone's spell

被某人迷住

You are **under someone's spell** if you are prepared to do anything for them. The article says that cats have learned to put humans **under their spell** by using a special purr.

Examples: "Anita can be charming, but if you fall **under her spell**, she can become extremely manipulative," or "Sophia fell **under Max's spell** and was completely enchanted by him."

若你「**under someone's spell**」，意思就是你準備任他們予取予求。文章中說，貓咪知道能利用一種特殊的呼嚕聲來對人類予取予求。

例如：「安妮塔或許很有魅力，不過若你被她迷住，你就會被她管得死死的」，或是「蘇菲亞迷上麥克斯，而且迷到神魂顛倒」。