

# New Year, New Pet

Pooch, Kitty, and Birdie have some resolutions of their own

BY LINDSY VAN GELDER



**W**hy should we leave the animal members of our families out of the ritual resolves we make for the New Year? Here's what they might be thinking and what you can do to help make them happier and healthier in 2006.

### Birdie's Vow

Neatness counts, amigos! So I, **TWEETY**, will refrain from splashing bathwater outside my cage and madly tossing seeds, blueberries, strawberries, and other wet, gloppy items on the floor. (Although, hey, what's the diff? The Dog will eventually clean it up.)

I will not do the crystal-shattering squawk thing just for the heck of it (although it's sooo cool!).

When the Tall Unfeathered Ones are at home, I will not imitate the sound of the Dog's howls or the Cat when he's receiving a pill. When they are not home, I will not imitate them saying "Bad Dog!"



### Pooch's Promise

I, **MUTTLEY**, resolve to stop using the toilet as a punch bowl. (Or if I do, I promise to not regurgitate what I swallow on that carpet the Masters seem to be so fond of.)

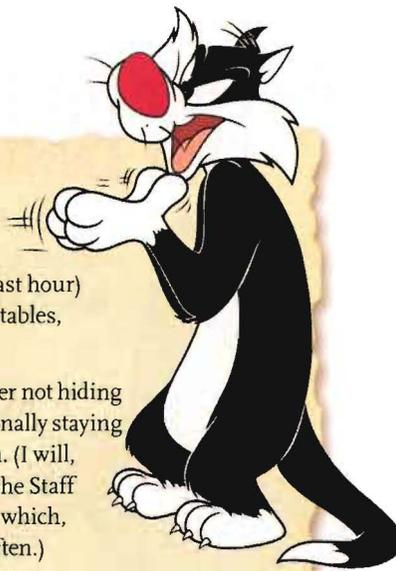
I will work hard on my boredom issues. No digging holes in the yard that a human could step in and break an ankle. No noshing on slippers, table legs, or items that the Masters have foolishly put in the garbage.

I will not jump on guests. Or paw their legs under the dinner table in the hopes of food. Or get...um, romantic.

I will not chase the Cat. Or eat his food. Or (please, please, please!) let him mess with my head.



MUTTLEY AND TWEETY BIRD: EVERETT COLLECTION; PARCHMENT PAPER: BURKE/TRIOLO PRODUCTIONS/PICTUREARTS; PAW PRINT: KARI MARTILLA/LAMY



### Kitty's Pledge

I, SYLVESTER, will think about not greeting the dawn (when the Staff unaccountably has no idea that it's already the breakfast hour) by slowly knocking the items off the night tables, especially the things that break.

When it's time to go to the Vet, I will consider not hiding in the deepest recesses of the closet, occasionally staying there for days, just to teach them all a lesson. (I will, however, continue to dive back there when the Staff insists on using that scary vacuum cleaner, which, thanks to the disgusting Bird and Dog, is often.)

I will perhaps stop clawing the Oriental rug. I will not stop clawing the table legs, but I will endeavor to scratch them in a manner that would be consistent with the bite marks from the Dog.

I will usually abstain from lengthy, noisy sculpting of litter-based Taj Mahals and Notre Dames, especially in the middle of the night...although, of course, I reserve my right to retaliate in any way that I see fit if the Staff doesn't clean the box in a timely fashion.



### How you can help

As with humans, support will help your pets keep their resolutions. Do your part to not tempt your best friend to do bad things, whether that means keeping the toilet lid down or changing the litter box more often. "Find ways to steer your animals toward appropriate behavior," says Melissa Shyan-Norwalt, PhD, an animal behaviorist and the owner of Companion Animal Problem Solvers in

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the Cincinnati region. If the dog chews on your couch or the cat scratches it, spray it with an odor your pet won't like—and also place bones, chew toys, or vertical and horizontal scratching posts nearby.

Reinforce the behavior when she does well, and don't reward actions you don't want repeated: When you scold a jumping dog or a howling cat, he simply interprets your chatter as positive attention.

SYLVESTER THE CAT: EVERETT COLLECTION