

Talking to one's cat is no cause for alarm

Kathy Hedberg/Lewiston Tribune

There was a story in the paper a few days ago about a guy who was described as "swinging a machete in a northwest Portland street and talking to his cat."

The guy was subdued by officers and taken to a hospital for a mental health evaluation, the story said.

I can understand why people might be concerned about the emotional well-being of somebody swinging a machete in public. It's definitely not good behavior, and it's appropriate to take the guy into custody to be checked out.

But what's the problem with "talking to his cat?"

As anyone familiar with cats knows, the feline was probably trying to talk some sense into this poor fellow.

"Just lay the machete on the ground, Bill, and nobody gets hurt."

Talking to one's cat, or dog, or guinea pig or whatever, is not a sign a person is crazy.

It's probably the sanest thing most of us do in a day.

There have even been scientific studies proving that talking to animals and plants stimulates growth and emotional well-being. And it's even good for the humans doing the talking.

I have no problem carrying on lengthy conversations with my dog Christmas Belle, my cat Mango and now my new dog Miss Lilly. Miss Lilly's mother went to heaven recently and she came to live with us. She's what is commonly known as a wiener dog. But because she's overweight I call her a "sausage dog." She doesn't seem to mind.

One thing I like about talking to animals is that you can go on and on, which I have a tendency to do, and they never interrupt. Sometimes they fall asleep in the middle of my diatribe, but I overlook the slight.

Where I have a problem, though, is when I find myself not only discussing things with my pets, but justifying my decisions when I tell them something they're not happy about.

"No, you cannot get up on the furniture," I say. "We're going to have company and people don't like to get pet hair all over their clothes."

"Don't look at me like that. You have plenty of places to lie down in this house and you don't need to be up on the couch."

"Now don't pout. There are times when you have to remember you are an animal and lower on the food chain than humans.

"Oh, did I really say that? I'm sorry. I mean, we're equals on the food chain. It's just that if you shed all over the furniture and our company gets hair on their clothes they might get mad and then they would take it out on me and ...

"Oh heck, never mind. You're right - you live here; they don't. Just hop up on this couch right now and make yourself comfortable."

See what I mean? I may not be swinging a machete in public, but perhaps I need a reality check to make sure I know who's in charge around here. Just don't tell my pets about it, please.

Hedberg may be contacted at kathyhedberg@gmail.com (208) 983-2326.