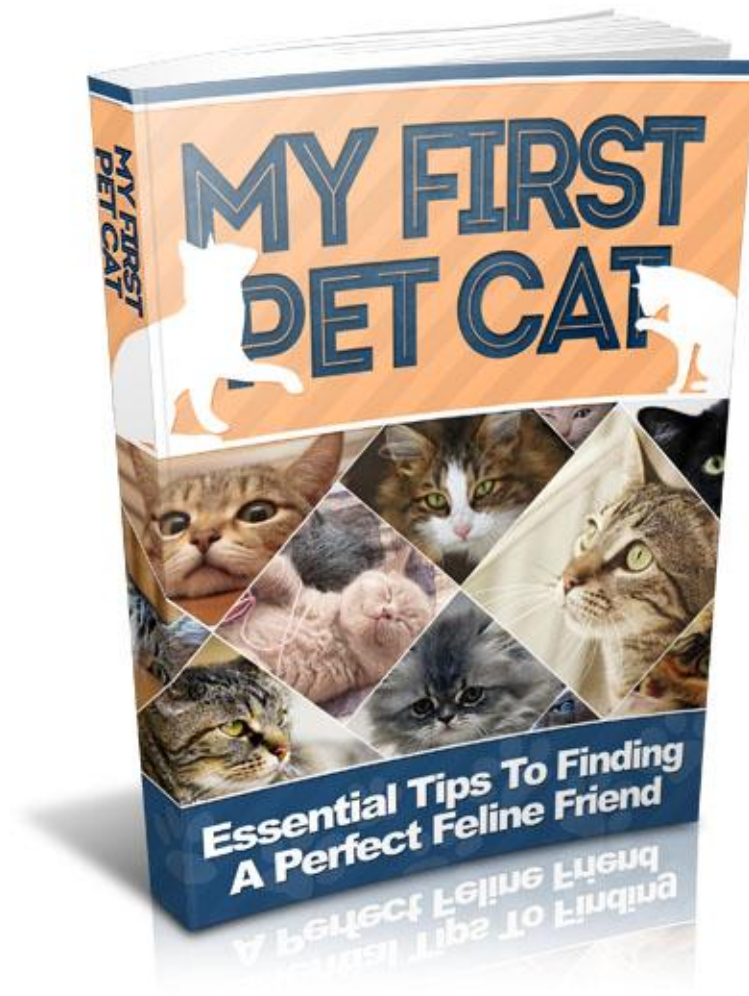


Finding a Feline Friend

The Pocket Guide to Adopting and Caring For a New Cat!



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Table of Contents

So You Want To Get A Cat...	4
<i>The Benefits of Cat Ownership</i>	5
Cats Reduce Stress & Provide Companionship.....	5
Cats Are Good For Kids	6
<i>The Pet Store: My Pet Peeve</i>	8
<i>Pure Breeds Are Not All They Seem</i>	9
Prepare Yourself for Pet Ownership	11
<i>Financial Planning</i>	12
<i>Time Management</i>	13
What To Consider Before Adopting	14
<i>Consider Age & Number of Animals</i>	14
<i>What Type Of Cat Do I Need?</i>	16
Allergies and Hair	16
Grooming	17
Cat Size = Food Consumption!	18
Caring For Your New Cat	19
<i>Preparing Your House for a New Cat</i>	19
<i>Integrating the Cat Into Your Home</i>	20
When You Have No Other Pets.....	20
When You Have Other Pets Already	21
<i>Nail Trimming</i>	23
<i>Grooming Your Cat</i>	25

Behavioral Issues and Remedies 28

Food and Drug Information.....**33**

Foods That Are Poisonous or Dangerous for Cats..... 33

 Onions, Garlic, & Root Vegetables 34

 Unripe Tomatoes & Potatoes 34

 Chocolate 34

 Grapes and Raisins 35

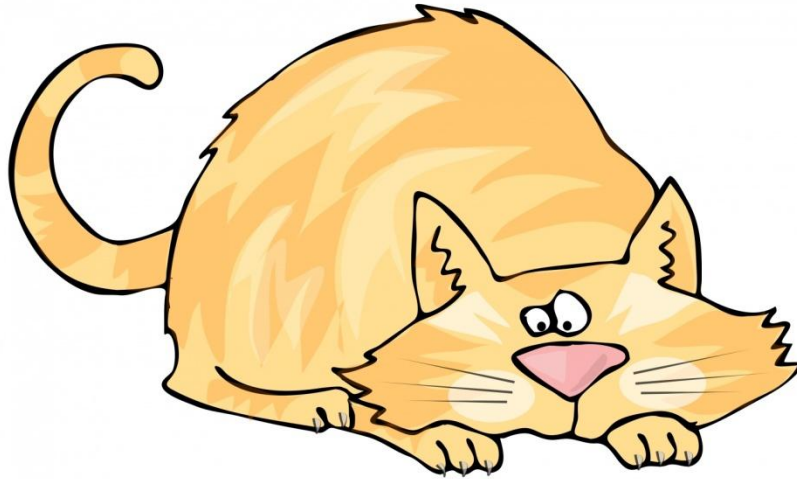
 Milk 35

Can I Give My Cat Medication?..... 35

Keep a Cat Emergency Kit 36

Enjoy Your New Friend**37**

So You Want To Get A Cat...



Owning a pet is one of the most rewarding and sometimes one of the most challenging endeavors that anyone can get into. Studies show that having a pet can significantly reduce stress levels and can play an active role in psychosocial development for children and adults. Many people have even had their lives saved by the animals they care for, and that goes for just about any pet.

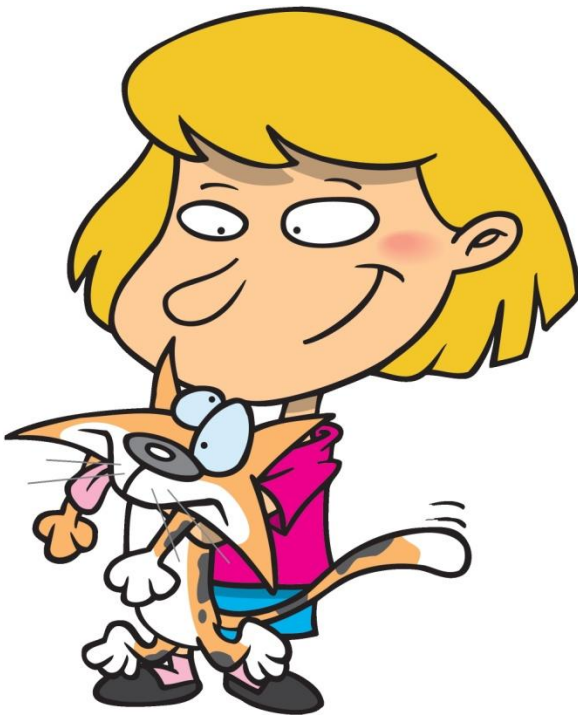
In this book we're going to be talking all about cats. Now, honesty I could write a few good books on getting and caring for a cat so we're going to try to focus on the most pertinent information that will actually help you select a new feline friend and take care of him or her!

First we'll discuss some reputable places that you can get a new cat and how to go about selecting the cat that best matches your personality. Then we'll go over the basic veterinarian needs that all new cats must have. After that we'll discuss social and

behavioral training for your cat, caring for your cat when it becomes injured or ill and how to extend the life of your pet with activity and a healthy diet. Before we begin our journey, let's talk about some of the wonderful benefits associated with owning a cat!

The Benefits of Cat Ownership

Cats Reduce Stress & Provide Companionship



Owning a cat has more benefits than downfalls by far. It is the perfect pet for the family and also for a single person.

Current research has demonstrated that pets in general can provide many physical and psychological benefits. Cats decrease blood pressure and can even lower cholesterol. They can also reduce the mortality rate related to heart disease. Cat ownership can lead to fewer office visits to the doctor and a significant reduction in

minor health problems.

Cats can also provide emotional support from time to time when it is most needed. People who suffer from diseases can feel alone and a cat can decrease these feelings by creating intimacy with its owner. They provide unconditional love to their owner and other members of the family. If you think about it, a cat never gets mad at you or holds a grudge. A cat never talks behind your back and is physically and emotionally unable to

hurt your feelings. This is why many people become so close to their cats and have such a hard time when their pet dies. They have nothing but good memories of their kitty.

It has been said that cats know when their owner is sick. Many people have noticed that when they have a cold or are stuck in bed with some kind of illness, their cat is right there snuggled up in bed or on the couch with them. They have also been known to be able to detect when their owner is emotionally upset.

Cats Are Good For Kids

If your child misses a lot of school due to illness, maybe you should get a cat. Research has shown that children who own pets attend school up to 9 more days a year than their non-pet-owning counterparts. The immune function of pet owners is more stable, making them better able to fend off illness. Pet owners visit doctors less.

Are you concerned about allergies? Isn't cat hair is a common source of irritation to immune systems? Well for one, no—it's not the hair—and a leading theory under investigation by asthma researchers suggests that the presence of pets in the home from an early age may adapt the immune system so it is less sensitive to allergens later in life. So it may in fact be the lack of pets in a child's life that contributes to asthma sensitivities. This is not unlike doctoral advice to expose children to each other so that the immune system can develop a repertoire of antibodies for the most common microorganisms.

Studies have also connected pet ownership with lower blood pressure and reduced anxiety levels. In fact, a recent long-term study has shown that people, who have never owned a cat, face a 40% greater risk of death due to heart attack than current and even previous cat owners. Dog owners did not have the same level of protection against heart disease as cat owners.

State University of New York researchers found that the cat doesn't even have to be present to achieve this. A group of stockbrokers with hypertension who owned pets showed lower blood pressure even when not with their cats.

Cat ownership may be a surprising remedy for absenteeism, however, good health and more days at school are just two of the many benefits to children of having a cat in their lives. Studies have associated numerous psychological benefits with pet ownership.

Children who live with cats show more empathy for others and help others more. This translates to being able to understand others and get along better. Children who live with animals develop a better understanding of body language and other non-verbal cues. A study of 455 school children between the ages of 11 and 16 revealed that children with pets had a better ability to understand non-verbal communications. As a result, these children are more popular with classmates than those who don't have pets at home.

Additionally, children who own pets are more likely to be involved in sports, hobbies, clubs and other social activities. Some studies even show that children who own cats have a higher IQ.

Children with pets learn develop an early sense of responsibility. The responsibility of owning a pet can give children the experience of being needed and this may translate into other areas of life. Cats are relatively easy to care for, as they clean themselves and don't need to be walked.

Social skills and responsibility make a great foundation for life. A US study of 394 university students revealed that those who had owned dogs or cats as childhood pets

were more self-confident than those who did not. This may be related to other findings that children raised with pets have higher self-esteem, thought to result from the unconditional love a pet provides. No matter what's going on at school, or with friends, pets treat children the same way.

It seems obvious to say then, that pets hold an important place in many children's lives, often on a par with parents, grandparents and siblings. Children often talk to their pets and regard them as an important friends and confidantes. A five-year study of 600 children aged 3-18 years showed that pet-owning children who have challenges such as being slow learners or having divorced parents cope better with life than those who don't have a pet. Again, having a pet that shows unconditional love regardless of what is happening can cushion other difficulties in life.

It's not surprising that pets have been used successfully in therapy for some time now. They help sick kids relax and take their minds off their illnesses. Some doctors, recognizing the importance of pets in children's lives ensure that pet names are included in their patients' medical records along with other family members. Even in the most depressing clinical environment, talking about a pet can lighten a situation.

The Pet Store: My Pet Peeve

Pet stores may seem innocent enough but they're honestly some of the lowliest establishments that one can walk into. I don't blame this entirely on pet-store owners; I'm sure there are some wonderful people out there who own pet shops. The fact is that many pet stores get their animals from mills that are needlessly breeding animals for profit. That's just the worst of it. Pet stores are also incredibly expensive compared to other adoption options and pet stores tend to deal a lot with purebred animals and not mixed breed animals. What's so bad about that? Pretty much everything, as it turns out.

Pure Breeds Are Not All They Seem

Having a purebred cat seems like a pretty good idea. There is a plethora of knowledge about specific cat breeds so you can hand-select the cat you feel has the best physical and personality traits that will match your lifestyle with astonishingly good accuracy. That could be a good option for you, if you don't mind constant health problems, reduced life expectancy and negative personality



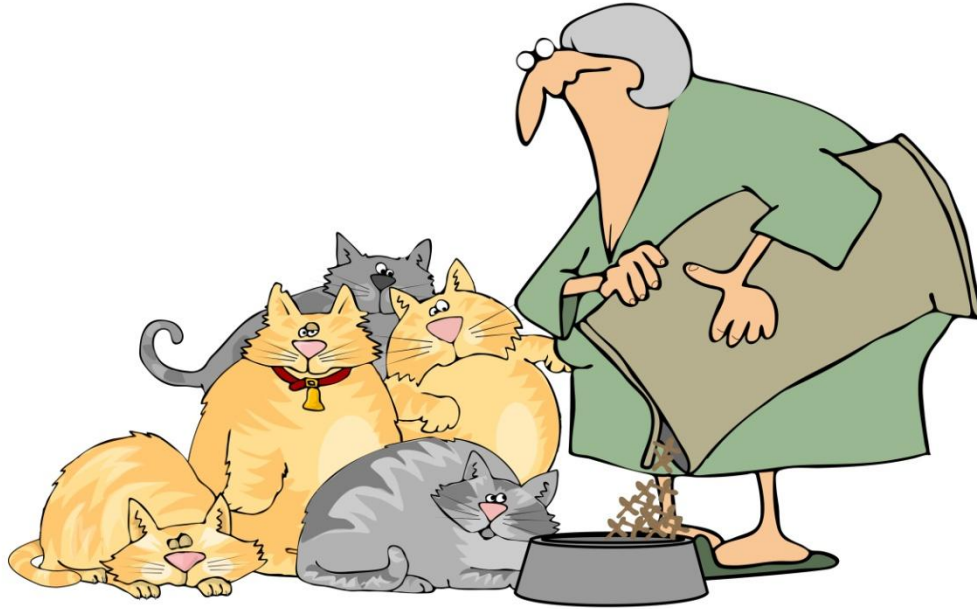
traits. The problem with purebred animals is that they tend to be wrought with inbreeding, which introduces congenital defects and diseases that are bred into the animals. What breeders won't tell you is that for every good trait a breed has there is a bad one that it inherits too. The problem with pure breeds is that they are not genetically diverse and because of that they carry on all the negative and positive traits of their ancestors. Many pure-breeds develop congenital defects and diseases that make maintaining them far more work than it should be. The truth is that inbreeding and creating purebred animals completely defies nature.

In the wild, cats would mate with whatever compatible species was around. When breeds mixed, the new animals that were born had attributes of both parent species, including their strengths and weaknesses. Over time the cats who had congenital diseases and defects did not survive to further breed and only the strongest cats who had positive attributes from many different breeds were able to further the

population. Human breeding of animals defies this by providing unnatural conditions for the cats to live and constant inbreeding.

So, if you feel like dropping a few hundred (or a few thousand) dollars on a specific breed and you're aware of the health and behavioral risks then be my guest. Please bear in mind that there are millions of homeless animals that need loving families and because they are "mutts" they are actually stronger, healthier and more pleasant animals! It's really a win-win situation when you decide to adopt a cat rather than buy one at a pet store. I don't mean to blast pet stores but the next time you go to one just ask them where they get their cats and dogs; see if they give you an answer.

Prepare Yourself for Pet Ownership



Before you even select a cat you need to consider whether or not you're really ready to be a cat owner. For the most part, cats are fairly low-maintenance compared to some more exotic pets. For one there are financial considerations: cats cost money in the first place, they have medical expenses, they eat food and depending on where you live they use litter on a regular basis. After the finances you have to consider your allergies and make sure you're either not allergic or select a cat that does not set off your allergies. You also need to have the proper amount of time to invest in your new feline friend or friends. It seems like a lot of work on paper but most people find that owning a cat is well worth any expenses that are involved.

Financial Planning

Cats require a great many things and many of those things require money. For one, cats need to eat. We'll discuss specific feeding strategies later but let's just say that on average it will cost about \$20 a month to feed your cat (a small can of food a day plus supplemental dry food). For every cat you add you can tack on \$15-\$20 extra every month. Cats also need basic veterinarian attention such as shots. The cost of these depends on your local vet but you can probably expect between \$20-\$50 for shots and upwards of \$50 for neutering or spaying. Luckily, if you decide to get your cat from a shelter they will generally make sure the cat is spayed or neutered for you. You then have to consider things like cat toys, flea and tick control, preventative worm medication, litter, training aids, etc. All and all a good estimate is between \$350 and \$700 a year.

Cats are notoriously independent and many people have owned cats happily without many costly amenities. All the same, you're looking at \$300 a year minimum just the basic needs every year and \$500-\$800 in total costs for the first year of owning a cat. The first year costs more because there are more medical expenses and you may have to pay for neutering or spaying. So, as you can see, it's not incredibly financially taxing but if it's out of your budget then you should seriously consider getting a feline. Vaccines and vet care is where most people try to save money and avoid when owning a cat (or any pet). The sad truth is that lack of veterinary care significantly reduces the life expectancy of cats. With proper care, most mixed-breed cats can live upwards of 18 years! Without proper care, the life expectancy shrinks to 10-12 years and "wild" or "feral" cats that live outside and have minimal veterinary or owner care have a frighteningly short life expectancy of only 3-4 years.

Pedigree also comes into play here. Remember when I told you that purebred cats tend to have more congenital defects and conditions? They also come with

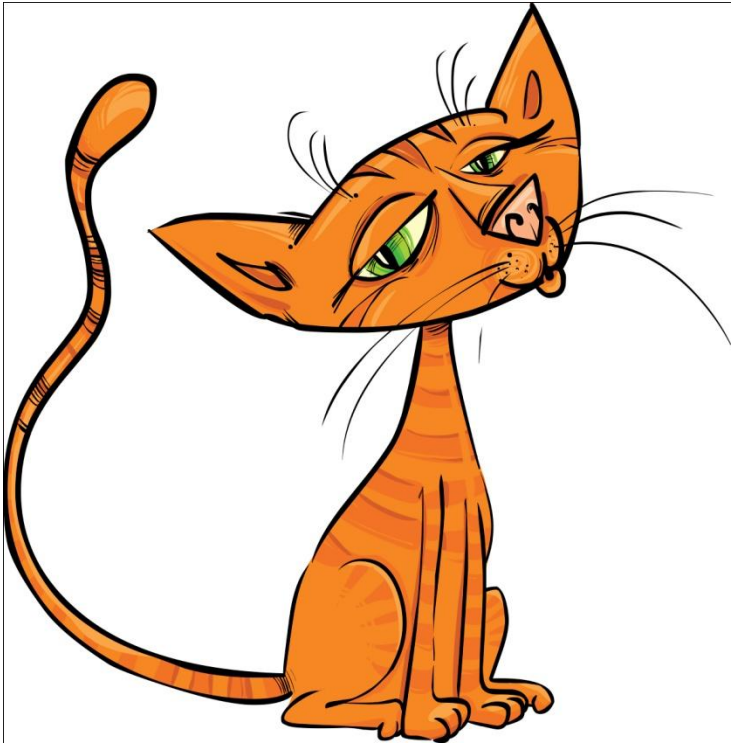
substantially higher costs! Your vet bills for a purebred cat may be triple or quadruple your bills for a mixed breed! Take this into consideration before adopting a new pet.

Time Management

Statistically, cats are the top choice for people who have higher education and professional jobs. Is that because felines are inherently smart or that sophisticated people are attracted to them? Maybe, but the more likely reason is that cats are extremely independent. People with those sorts of commitments probably don't have the time or energy to own a high-maintenance pet like a dog (dogs don't have to be high maintenance but if you're taking care of your dog properly, it's a full-time job!). That being said, you can't just buy a cat and then leave it at home all day and hardly ever have contact with it.

Cats need human contact to maintain healthy behaviors and attitudes towards humans and even other animals. Your future cat will be happy just walking around the house, doing as he or she pleases. But like any living things, cats need companionship and do get bored. If you work a full-time job and don't have a lot of time to pay attention to your pet when you get home then you may want to reconsider owning one, especially if there's no one home when you're gone to interact with the animal. Sometimes we can't really control where we work but the desire for a furry companion is still there; you can make it work. This is why I usually recommend always getting at least two cats. A single-cat household can work out but having sibling cats or cats that have grown up together is the optimal setting. The cats will have contact with each other and with humans; the added benefit is that they get to play with each other when you don't have time to play. This will keep your cats from going stir-crazy when you have to go to work every day and can't be with them. A two-cat household is more expensive and requires more work to maintain but cats are social animals and will have a much better quality of life if they have their own feline friends to hang out with.

What to Consider Before Adopting



If you feel that you're truly ready to take on the world of pet ownership and that you can invest the time and money into it then you're ready to start looking for cats. When it comes to cats there are a number of factors that come into play. How old of a cat do you want to get? How many cats do you want to get? What type of cat should you get breed wise? If you have an idea of what you're looking for before you go to

the shelter then you'll have an easier time deciding.

Consider Age & Number of Animals

Most people always want kittens. This is why shelters usually have no problems taking kittens in; they know that almost all of them will be the first to get adopted. Adopting a kitten is a good idea because you'll be able to spend the cat's formative years with it. It's easiest to develop a strong relationship with a cat while it's still a baby. This is also the time where the cat will learn most of its social and behavioral habits. If you adopt a kitten you can properly expose it to the type of environment it should be used to and have a well-developed feline friend that doesn't get stressed out by your home situation. One thing about getting a kitten is that they require constant attention. It is best to buy

cats in pairs if you get kittens or at least buy more than one. Kittens that grow up together develop a good relationship and they have less behavioral problems than kittens that grow up without any other cats around. Another interesting fact is that if male kittens are neutered as early as possible, they have an extremely high chance of never learning the spraying behavior and will not be likely to urinate on your household items to be territorial. This is a major benefit of getting a kitten, so you can train it from an early age.

There are, however, merits to buying an adult cat. For one, they are not nearly as rambunctious or playful as kittens and are far less likely to destroy your furniture and run around your house at all hours of the night. Adult cats also need to be adopted every bit as much as kittens; millions of cats are euthanized every year because the shelter couldn't find a home for them. The other great thing about an adult cat is that they tend to be extremely independent. If you're buying an adult cat then you can only get the one cat without much fear that being alone will negatively affect its social or behavioral development. In contrast, many adult cats from shelters won't even like to come into contact with other felines. The one big, negative issue with older cats is that you have no idea how they were potty trained or when they were neutered. If the adult male cat needs to be neutered by the shelter then you can pretty much bet that the cat knows how to "spray" and will mark his territory with urine even after he's been neutered. The good news is that after neutering, his urine will not have nearly as potent or unbearable as a smell but it may require some time and effort to train the behavior out of him.

So based on this information we can say that a pair of kittens is well suited for a family of people where they can have many different social interactions and they're not often made to be left alone for extended periods of time. An adult cat is perfectly suited for a more relaxed family, possibly an older couple or single person who wants a quiet

pet that will enjoy their company and not make a bunch of fuss. In particular, I recommend getting a female if you buy an adult cat so that you don't have to worry about urinating and because they have slightly longer life spans than males and I recommend a male if you get a kitten because they're easy to train and are more sociable to new cats. Of course the personality traits depend on the individual cats, they're as unique as people are, but that's the general rule of thumb.

What Type Of Cat Do I Need?



This is a bit of a loaded question. Hopefully you've decided to get your cat from a shelter. This means you have far less choice over the particular breed but honestly if you want a good pet then that shouldn't be too important to you. When it comes to adopting mixed-breed cats you have two major considerations: size and fur type. Cats are unique in that they're one of the few domesticated animals that have true fur; they have an undercoat that's completely different from the overcoat. They don't vary in size that much like dogs do but they can reach up to 30 lbs. and be as small as 3lbs depending on the breed.

Allergies and Hair

Don't be fooled into thinking that all long-haired cats will cause your allergies to flare up. It's not the hair that you or anyone is allergic to. It's a protein in the cat's saliva. Since cats bathe themselves on a daily basis by licking their fur, they tend to have a lot of dried saliva on them; it seems a little gross but when you consider the type of things dogs



are willing to eat you realize that animals in general can be a little “gross.”

The good news is that this protein in cat saliva is a genetic trait. Not all cats have it. The bad news is that you’ve run into the one and only weakness of adopting a shelter cat instead of buying a purebred cat; because the cat can be of many different breeds you really have no way of knowing if it has the protein that people are often allergic to.

The first thing you should do is find some friends that have cats or go to a shelter that will let you hold cats and come into contact with as many as possible. You’re bound to stumble upon one that does have the protein so see if you really are allergic; the symptoms are usually pretty mild and much like hay fever. If you are allergic to the protein then you’re going to have to be careful about the cat you select. If you groom and bathe your cat on a regular basis and wash your hands after petting your cat then you can still have a happy feline friendship despite an allergy.

Grooming



This is where the length of the hair comes into play. All cats try to groom themselves and for the most part will do a good job, regardless of their hair type. Some cats, however, might just not be very good at it or do it less when they get older. The type of fur your cat has determines how high-maintenance its fur will be. Long haired cats require more frequent grooming and brushing and will be slightly more expensive and require more of your time in the long run. Short-haired cats tend to take care of themselves extremely well and you might not feel the need to bathe them at all (you should, of course, but they will mask their odors and dirt very well).

Don't let that turn you off from adopting a long-haired cat. There are a great many long-haired breeds like the Ragdoll that are absolutely wonderful animals with a beautiful temperament. Just because you're buying a mixed breed doesn't mean that breeding traits are irrelevant; usually your cat will have the physical appearance of a certain breed that is dominant in its lineage and will often have many of the good traits of that breed. I could write an entirely new book on breeds alone so you'll have to do some research on your own and see if you're looking for a particular breed of cat.

Cat Size = Food Consumption!

The size of your cat is usually not a big issue because cats have such a small variance in size compared to other animals. That being said, the larger the cat and the more active the cat, the more food will be consumed. This is pretty easy to judge on an adult cat but if you're buying kittens you've got to know what to look for. Kittens that are



destined to grow up large will usually have an abnormal paw-to-leg ratio wherein they look like they have very large, lion-like paws. These cats will also tend to have very long tails, even as kittens. Their tails may be 70% the length of their body! As in humans, kittens that appear lanky and awkward are almost destined for a massive growth spurt. There are benefits to owning a large cat; many people have actually been saved from burglars by protective cats. If you think a dog bite is scary just witness a cat mauling and you'll see that they can be very effective guard animals indeed!

Caring For Your New Cat

Preparing Your House for a New Cat



Cats like to hide, and be very cantankerous at times, so hide the breakables, but every cat owner knows this. Make sure there is some catnip around to save on your favorite stuffed animals and pillows. Note that catnip may not always be effective for your cat. Addictiveness to catnip depends entirely on genetics and not all cats have the gene. It also appears to affect adult cats rather than kittens so wait a few months before trying to expose any new kittens.

Cats like to perch and be up high, so maybe add some special shelves for them. They like to perch in window sills so make sure it's closed to keep from witnessing the worst case scenario. Keep them away from mini blinds also they have been known to chew on the strings that move the blinds up and down.

Area rugs are usually better to have around than wall to wall carpet. A lot of cats like to sharpen their claws on a sofa or recliner. To keep them from destroying the furniture, arm and seat covers are a must. Their beds can be set on the floor next to your bed or sofa. Sometimes they will hide like under the bed. They also enjoy being by themselves at times

Cat condos are also a big hit for cats. You can cover the condos with the same fabric that matches your decor or find some colors that complement it.

If you happen to be painting use paint with low or no VOC's which can release toxins. Try to stay away from textured wall paper also; it's an open invitation to scratch.

Keep a clean litter box at all times for your cat. If you have two cats, use two. Using the same litter box is a common way of getting two cats to be acquainted with each other but some cats will not use the litter box if they sense a new cat has used it so it's always good to have one litter box per cat, just in case.

Integrating the Cat into Your Home

When You Have No Other Pets

You have no other household pets, integrating a new kitten into your home is a fairly simple matter. You'll automatically make her one of the family, and will no doubt spend a great deal of time with your kitten, bonding and generally "spoiling" her.

However, keep in mind that your home is a strange new place to your kitten, and depending on her background, he or she will need time to adjust and explore. He or she may have come from a foster care situation where care was taken to bond her to humans. On the other hand, many kittens spend their early weeks in a shelter - either in a cage with littermates, or in a "room" setting with a number of other cats, young and adult. In the latter case, your new kitten will require lots of love and patience, plus the chance to be alone when he or she requires it. Your care in providing these needs will help ease your kitten's fears about her new environment.

An excellent way of starting the bond with your new kitten is to practice the "gentling" technique:

This is a technique for getting your first kitten used to being handled by you. When your kitten is comfortable with you and trusts you, you will have a much easier time handling them during a vet visit or trying to take a bath. The more you expose your kitten to the more comfortable he or she will be. I personally recommend following these steps with all household family members and regularly introducing your kitten to new people and having different people in the house. You can actually train your cat to be very calm and non-reactive to being handled; you have to start from an early age and teach the kitten that this is a normal part of life for them.

1. Gently pick up your kitten at least once a day and speak soothingly to him in a soft, quiet voice. Hold the kitten for 5 minutes or so before setting him down in a favorite spot
2. After a few days, gradually sit down while holding the kitten. Talk to him quietly and pet him gently. Don't encourage rough play (scratching, biting). If he tries it, tell him firmly, "No." and gently put him down.
3. When kitty is comfortable with the first two steps, stroll around the room holding him and talking to him. Don't distract him with outside elements; he should be focused on you.
4. Put the kitten on a well-lighted table and stroke him. You can talk baby-talk to him if you want. It's okay.
5. Next day, on the table, pick up a paw and press gently to extend the nails, examine the nails and toes, and then gently examine the foot and leg. Get to know the normal feel of his limbs.
6. Back to the table again. This time, examine the kitten's ears visually. You may have to move his head about so you can see inside his ears. Feel the outside of the ears to familiarize yourself with them.
7. On the table again, gently palpitate (press gently) the kitten's abdomen. Stroke his back and sides, feeling for any abnormalities. Again, you're familiarizing yourself with his normal characteristics.
8. Open the kitten's mouth and look at the teeth. Rub your finger along the length of the teeth starting at the gum. Insert your index finger in the corner of his mouth to view the back teeth.
9. By now, your kitten should be totally comfortable with your handling of him, so grooming, teeth cleaning and toenail clipping should be a breeze. Give him a treat for being such a cooperative kitten.

When You Have Other Pets Already

It's another matter entirely, however, if you have existing dogs and/or cats in your family. First, it's important to quarantine the little newcomer(s) until they have had their veterinary exam, to prevent spreading diseases or parasites they may carry. Feral kittens

often have ear mites, fleas, and other parasites. Sadly, they may too be carriers or be infected with FIV or FeLV. Kittens adopted from shelters quite often have URIs (upper respiratory infections), including Bordetella (kennel cough). Even kittens from breeders (which, as I've said, I don't recommend!) occasionally may have the former, as often URIs have an incubation period of up to three or four weeks, thus even a seemingly reputable breeder may be unaware of this condition in a newly adopted kitten.

So, put your kitten in a separate Safe Room (see above) for a couple of days. Make sure she has her own bed, food and water dish, and litter box. After she has been cleared by your veterinarian, you can open the door to her "safe room" a crack, to allow the other cats to sniff and peek at her. Rub her with a towel to impart her scent on it, and then put the towel in the sleeping area of your existing cats, so they'll become accustomed to her smell. Reverse the tactic by giving her a towel or blanket with the scent of your older cats. In a couple of days you can put her in a carrier and allow the other cats to come in and sniff her. Expect a bit of growling and hissing behavior at first; it's instinctive.

For "holdouts," try not to rush things, but provide occasions where the older cats and the new kitten can share pleasurable activities. My cats enjoy playing "chase the ball" with little Billy. The "ball" may only be a crumpled up piece of paper, but it offers interactivity as the cats compete to be the first to bring down the "prey." It's surprising sometimes how often they let Billy "win."

Soon—within a week or two—the bunch of them should settle down and be getting along just fine. The key is not to rush things, and to give both sides a lot of individual attention in the interim. In no time at all, your kitten will be part of your clowder of cats (yes, that's actually what it's called!).

Nail Trimming

Before I start this section I have one bit of advice: do not declaw your cat. Yes, many cats have been declawed successfully and lived relatively good lives. That being said, how would you feel if someone cut off your fingertips at the last knuckle? That's basically what declawing is. There are also some pretty horrible complications. The procedure is extremely painful and rarely the digit will actually try to grow back which



will cause extreme pain and harm to your pet. If trimming your cat's claws is not enough and you cannot live with the animal unless it is declawed, do not own a cat. Get a different pet that doesn't have claws.

Even though our cats do a pretty good job of keeping their nails or claws sharp by scratching on scratching posts, trees or even our furniture, you should also trim their nails regularly so they do not become overgrown. And as with all things cats, the younger you get it used to something, the easier it will be for you both.

If your cat is not used to it, handling the feet can be very stressful for it. Feet are incredibly important to all of us, especially cats who need them for catching prey and defending themselves. In the wild, a cat with an injured foot would be unable to hunt, climb or defend itself. And a part of the domestic cat's memory remembers this which makes them very sensitive about having the feet touched or manipulated. I make a point of gently rubbing Cassie's paws and holding them while he or she is relaxed on my lap. This makes it much easier when I need to examine them.

If your cat is not used to having its nails trimmed, I strongly suggest you get your vet or a professional groomer to do the job for you. Remember, these claws are incredibly sharp and can do a lot of damage. You do not want to destroy the bond you have with your cat by doing something it considers unpleasant or frightening. Cats have amazing memories and you could well find your cat becoming fearful of you. And remember your cat will be upset if it knows it has hurt you.

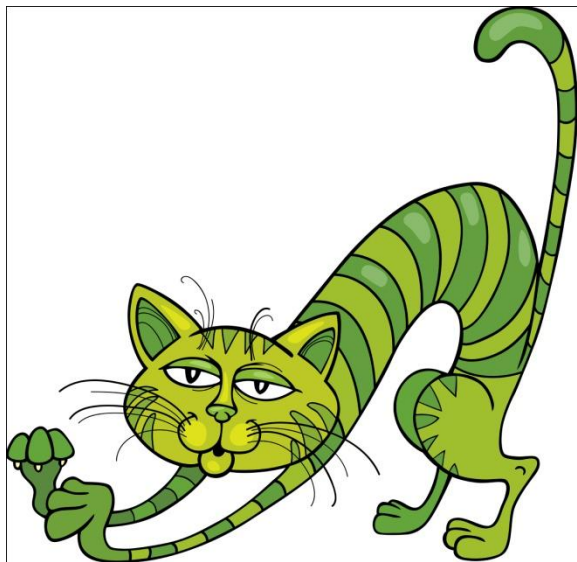
While your kitten is still young, get it used to having its nails trimmed by starting to gently touch its feet, one paw at a time. This is something you can do when your kitten is on your lap and relaxed. (Refer back to gentling the kitten.) You only need to start with a brief touch and stop if your kitten starts objecting. Reward your kitten with a treat and petting when you stop. After a week or so, your kitten will be used to this so start exposing the nails or claws by massaging the pads on the feet. By gently pressing there, the nails will come out automatically. Just look at the nails to begin with so you are familiar with them. If they are white, the tips should appear to be almost transparent. When the time comes, this is the part that will be clipped. You must never cut to the 'quick' which should be visible with a vein and look pink. On black nails, you must judge where it is. The quick generally starts about 1/16th of an inch (around 2mm) from the tip of the nail. You can purchase specialized cat nail trimmers from most pet shops. Never use the nail trimmers you would use on yourself or your family.

You will want your kitten to get used to having its nails exposed and touched, then moving to having the tip of the nail clipper placed on them. Every step of this must be done slowly and you must watch your cat and stop if it is getting upset. Remember to praise your cat and give it treats after every session. When you feel your kitten is ready, start by only clipping one or two nails. If you are unsure, clip less rather than more. You know what it feels like if you split a nail down to the quick. You don't want this to happen to your kitten. You will need to practice to build up your skill and confidence so

starting with only one or two nails is best. When you are both ready, you can move on to trimming a paw at a time then all four paws. Make sure you appear confident to your kitten as it will pick up on your body language. If you are hesitant, your kitten will be aware of this and become wary. Remember to only trim the absolute tip of the nail, nothing more.

By having your kitten used to getting its nails trimmed, you will help save your furniture and the possibility of your cat's nails curling back into the pads if they become too long. If you are at all unsure or if your kitten objects, get a professional to do this job. This way you won't break that bond you are trying to create and you will remain a trustworthy person to your kitten.

Grooming Your Cat



As I said before, cats have a tendency to keep themselves extremely clean through self-grooming. They groom so often that they can actually dehydrate themselves from all the saliva they lose while grooming. Even though they do a fine job for an animal that might live out in the wild, they're in your house now. Regular bathing and grooming will allow you to keep your cat from getting skin and fur conditions (such as fleas) as well as protect

the people in your household from cat allergies.

Long-haired cats require the most frequent attention; I recommend a grooming regimen every other day and brushing every single day. Short haired cats do not need to be groomed as often as long haired cats need it, but it is recommended to be done at

least twice a week. The reason why is to make sure that the cat is free from fleas and ticks, and to check for any other abnormalities, such as bald spots or inflammations of the skin.

Your cat's overall health will be greatly improved by keeping its hair neatly combed and wash, and trimmed periodically. The best type of brush for a short haired cat would be one with very short bristles. Too long of bristles, especially if the bristles are metal, can cut your cat's skin. Be sure when combing your cat that you use the proper comb for it.

Long-haired cats are notorious for getting hair balls and matts (chunks of cat hair stuck together or tangled), but even though a short haired cat is less likely to get them, it is still possible. Be careful when trying to remove them, especially in older cats. Before cutting off a hair matt, make sure that you insert a comb underneath the matted hair, above the skin. Then, very carefully cut with a cat grooming scissors, and be sure not to scratch or puncture the cat's skin.

One brush contains extra small pins, and a small enough head to make brushing cats very easily. Be careful to brush the direction of your cat's hair growth, otherwise you may hear it snarl. (Washing your cat's hair in the wrong direction is like petting an animal's hair in the wrong direction, and causes discomfort to the pet.)

Another necessary step in helping keep your cat clean and well groomed is to give the cat a bath. It is recommended to take a towel and a small carrier into the bathroom with you in case your cat gets upset before, during or after the bathing routine. The cat can be placed in it until he or she calms down.

When bathing the cat, it is best to use the proper shampoo. A gentle cat shampoo that lathers up pretty good is recommended. Either that, or if a cat has dandruff, it is best to use a shampoo that will help reduce the dryness and flaking of the cat's skin. If the cat does not have dandruff, but instead has fleas, be sure to use a flea shampoo, and the proper flea comb to remove them.

Other grooming tips, when applied can help giving your cat a bath much easier, and safer. One tip to remember before putting your cat into the bathwater (usually in a sink or baby bath pan, because cats are too small to fit in a bathtub) is to make sure that your house temperature is at least 70 degrees, so your cat does not freeze when taken out of the water to dry.

Furthermore, before you put your cat into the bathwater, sure to check the temperature of the water, so it is not too hot or too cold for your cat. The part of the hand that provides the most accurate indication of water temperature is the on the back of your hand, or on the wrist. Best results for providing the right water temperature is to make sure you periodically test it when you are filling up the sink or other bath basin with water, and not afterwards.

One more tip to remember when it is time to bathe your cat is to keep on hand at least two towels on hand. One should be used for drying, and the other towel should be used for wrapping. For greater warmth, a blanket can also be used after towel drying to prevent the cat from getting a cold or sickness.

To protect the cat's ears while bathing, you can insert cotton balls into your cat's ears. Inserting these cotton balls can reduce the chance of ear infection from forming, especially immediately after the cat is removed from the bath water.

When you remove your cat from the bath water, be sure to quickly and thoroughly dry the cat off.) This, along with making sure the cat's ears are plugged will taking a bath will help fight against the possibility of cold or sickness when the cat's wet body is exposed to the air (even if the room temperature is 70 degrees, because the water is usually slightly hotter than that).

After you give your cat a bath, it is better to let your cat rest for a little while, especially if the cat is upset from having to take a bath. When your cat is calm, and then will want to comb and/or trim his or her hair, and check for matted hair. Again, cats with short hair are less likely to have tangled hair, but if there is, you can use a cat hair detangler to spray onto the coat of hair. This will help make combing through the tangles easier.

When trimming a cat's hair, be sure that you have the proper grooming scissors, and be sure that you using a comb underneath the scissors, so you do not scratch or puncture your cat's skin. If you do not feel comfortable cutting your own cat's hair, or if you do not have the patience you can hire a professional pet groomer who will do it for you. However, if you just keep in mind to just make sure you cut evenly, without hurting the cat, you will be just fine grooming your cat at home.

Behavioral Issues and Remedies

A pet cat is perfect for anybody who loves it so much. I mean, although your cat's already eating your own food on the table, you still think it's cute. And although it climbs into your closet to lie down and 'make furry' your beloved suede bags and shoes, you still think



it's sweet. It's no surprise if only enthusiastic admirers of pet cats can relate to these. But fan or not, you can't definitely say you like everything your pet cat does. It's got to display a couple of behavior problems now and again. The thing is, we ought to stop passing them off as cute deeds. The not-so-likable behaviors of your pet cat can in reality be corrected. The following are a few of the most usual cat behaviors that owners should train their cats to stop doing.

Gnawing or Chewing: Not only once did I hear of a cat chewing the electricity bill or of a cat leaving tooth marks on his owner's soft leather footwear. And I remember, even our former pet cat loved punching fang holes into my mother's indoor plants.

Gnawing and chewing are part of a growing cat's habits. What you ought to do is dust the usual things your cat chews on with pepper. You should also call your cat's attention every time it chews or gnaws on things. You can surprise it with a clap or by angrily improving your voice a bit. Other cat owners try to take their cat's attention away from their indoor plants by growing and locating a catnip plant indoor as well.

Missing The Litter Box: Cat excrement is probably the most aggravating of all pet excrements. That's because they may really stink so much for days! So if you keep your cat indoors and it abruptly chooses your carpet or kitchen floor over the sandbox, it's understandable if you would like to ground it (by probably neglecting it for 24 hours perhaps?).

Cats miss the litter box for many reasons. They may well be stressed, they don't find their litter pan appealing enough, or they may have a urinary pathway infection (for urine-spraying cats). What you can do is make certain the litter box has enough litter. Also, be sure to change and clean the litter tray regularly, probably every weekend.

Simply remember though, that you should not hurt your cat when it exhibits behavioral issues. Just wait when looking at training your cat. Its intelligence doesn't actually bear that much weight on its training anyway, so you just need to make it a trait to train your cat and you'll be rewarded with its good habits in the long term.

Aggression: Fear aggression occurs when your cat believes something is threatening it and is about to attack. This could be a person, another animal or even a toy. I have heard of cats that are fearful of the TV when loud action type movies are on.

Signs of fear aggression are ears flat against the head; fur fluffed out to make itself look bigger, arched back, tail thrashing back and forth and dilated pupils. Your cat may also move backwards slowly but be prepared for an attack at any moment. In extreme cases, the cat may lie on its side with all four paws up and ready to lash out. Make sure your children are aware that this pose is not an invitation to play! It means the cat will attack and scratch and bite.

Remember, just like us, the cat will decide what is frightening and what is not. Some people are frightened of mice or snakes or heights. Cats can even have phobias (rational and irrational) just like humans. Remember, your cat will choose what it is frightened of, not you.

If a kitten hasn't been socialized properly while still with its littermates, it has a much higher chance of it showing fear aggression later on. If they are removed from this natural and normal environment before they are eight weeks old, the chances are that they will grow into fearful and timid adults.

Just like with us, bad experiences will also trigger fear aggression. If a young kitten is frightened by a dog, it will probably always be frightened by dogs and show fear

aggression around them. Cats have amazing memories and will be fearful of someone or something that has hurt them for a long time. Cats that have been teased by children may show fear aggression towards all children. They are worried that the teasing will occur again.

If your cat is fearful, there are some things you can do to help it.

- Instead of allowing visitors to pick up and pet your cat, have them offer treats instead.
- Make sure you bring your new kitten into a quiet and predictable environment, not one with lots of unpredictable goings on. If you are planning to move, postpone getting your kitten until you are in your new house. Bringing a kitten into a chaotic house full of packing boxes and furniture being moved is a recipe for disaster.
- Make sure that your children don't chase the cat or tease it.
- Keep the kitten's food and litter tray in a quiet area without much traffic. A good idea is the laundry or basement but not close to washing machines or dryers.
- Choose your kitten carefully. Make sure it has been socialized with different people from around two weeks old. Be wary of getting your kitten from friends, especially if they are a 'working household' as the kittens may have had little or no human contact.
- If you are choosing a kitten in a pet shop, ask how long the kittens have been in the shop. If it is longer than a few days, you can be fairly sure they have not had much human contact over that time. Instead, they have been in a glass 'cage' with strangers staring at them and tapping the glass. This would be terrifying for a kitten.
- Never take a kitten that is younger than eight weeks old. It needs this time with its littermates to socialize properly.
- Choose a kitten that looks confident, curious and friendly. If it appears at all timid, look for a different one.
- Socialize your kitten as much as possible when you bring it home.

By being aware of your kitten or cat's body language, you will be able to be prepared for any signs of fear aggression. If you notice your kitten or cat is showing signs of becoming frightened, talk to it in a gentle voice and get down on the same level by sitting on the floor. Don't be too close as you don't want to frighten it further. Keep

talking to it gently and when it calms down, reach out your hand and let it come to you. By doing this whenever your kitten is frightened, it will learn to trust you and will then be able to create a bond with you. With patience and love, your frightened kitten will grow into a well-adjusted cat that will be a joy to your family for many years.

Food and Drug Information



Foods That Are Poisonous or Dangerous for Cats

Let's face it: some cats are inveterate "bums" and will beg and plead most appealingly while you try to eat. While I will (rarely) give a cat a tidbit of chicken or turkey from my plate, it's a practice I don't encourage as a regular habit for a few reasons. First, because cats need the nutrients specifically provided for them in good, premium cat foods, and any "extras" that they consume will take away their appetites for their regular meals. A

sliver of turkey or chicken from your dinner plate certainly won't kill a cat, but you're helping him develop bad habits. What happens when a relative comes over and your cat decides to jump on the table and try to eat their food?

However, the main reason I'd discourage feeding cats "people food" is that there are a number of foods that are toxic to cats. You may have forgotten that the gravy slathered over your Thanksgiving turkey used broth that was flavored with onion, among other things. While it is tasty and harmless to humans, onions are very toxic to cats. The following is a list of foods that cats should never eat:

Onions, Garlic, & Root Vegetables

Onions contain a substance (N-propyl disulphide) which destroys red blood cells in the cat, causing a form of anemia called Heinz body anemia. Garlic contains a similar substance in a lesser amount.

Unripe Tomatoes & Potatoes

These foods are members of the Solanaceae family of plants, which includes the Deadly Nightshade, and contain a bitter, poisonous alkaloid called GlycoalkaloidSolanine, which can cause violent lower gastrointestinal symptoms. The leaves and stems are particularly toxic. (Tomatoes in pet foods are ripe, and should cause no concern because they appear in relatively small amounts)

Chocolate

It's becoming more widely known that chocolate is very toxic to both cats and dogs. Theobromine is the offending substance here. Janet Tobiassen Crosby, D.V.M. has an excellent article on the symptoms, effects, and treatment of chocolate toxicity.

Grapes and Raisins

These foods' toxicity has mainly been found in dogs, in quantities of varying amounts. The ASPCA advises: "As there are still many unknowns with the toxic potential of grapes and raisins, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center advises not giving grapes or raisins to pets in any amount." That's good enough for me.

Milk

Although milk is not toxic to cats, it may have adverse effects. Simply put, adult cats fed a nutritious diet don't need milk, and many cats are lactose-intolerant, which means that the lactose in milk and milk products produces stomach upset, cramps, and gassiness. If your cat loves milk, and begs for it, a small amount of cream may be okay, two or three times a week. (The more fat in the milk, the less lactose.) Another compromise is CatSip[®], a product made from skim milk with an enzyme added that helps the digestion of lactose. Catsip[®] is available in supermarkets such as Safeway, Albertson's and A&P, as well as pet products chains, such as PetSmart[®] and Petco[®].

These are the most commonly seen "people foods" that are potentially harmful to cats. The bottom line is to feed your cat nutritious food developed with his needs in mind and choose treats designed for cats instead of table scraps.

Can I Give My Cat Human Medication?

The short answer is no, I do not recommend it. Your vet will have to give your cat any medication. Most medications that are safe for humans are deadly for animals and some don't even have the same effect so you're just poisoning your animal needlessly without any benefit. The only medication I know of that has been used on cats safely is Benadryl, which can be used to calm your cat down and make them drowsy, like a sedative. Unfortunately there's no official dosing so there's really no safe way to

administer it. What's worse is that Benadryl has an extremely bitter taste that is so bitter for cats it makes them foam at the mouth.

When in doubt, call the local vet and ask them. I wouldn't feel right giving you advice on giving animals specific human-based medicine but your vet may be able to point you in the right direction.

Always Keep a Cat Emergency Kit At Hand

Here are some items you need to have around for cat-related emergencies. Assemble the following supplies in a box with a secure lid. Keep the box near your cat food supplies in case you need to find it in a hurry.

- Tweezers, preferably very sharp pointed.
- Rectal thermometer. The digital variety is preferable because it is more readily read.
- Small scissors, preferably with blunt ends. (For cutting hair, bandages, tape.)
- Sterile gauze pads, rolled sterile gauze, white surgical tape.
- Cotton balls and a roll of cotton padding.
- Hydrogen Peroxide for cleaning out wounds.
- Sterile eyewash solution (The human variety is fine.)
- Antiseptic cleaner, such as Bactine[®].
- Hydrocortisone ointment for insect stings.
- Eye droppers. You can buy these separately at your pharmacy.
- Emergency ice pack. (Keep this item in your freezer, and wrap in a towel before using.)
- The telephone number of your veterinarian, including night and emergency numbers. Keep this information in a waterproof packet, along with your pet's medical records.

Enjoy Your New Feline Friend



Hopefully this book has helped you make an educated decision about accepting a brand new, furry family member into your household. Cats are some of the most rewarding pets on the planet to have. They're loving, compassionate, intelligent and all-around amazing animals.

Hopefully you've been able to thoroughly assess your financial and time needs so that you can decide if a cat is really for you. Remember, you don't have to own a pet to interact and enjoy them. If owning a cat just doesn't fit your budget and you're worried that the animal's quality of life will suffer then you can at least visit a friend with pets

or check out animal-centric events like fairs. Just being around these wonderful creatures can melt away your stress and troubles.

Be sure to carefully consider my advice about breeders and pet shops. There are literally millions of lonely, homeless animals who will be euthanized (killed) if loving families don't adopt them. It's really sad that people feel the need to mass-breed these animals when there are already so many in need of loving families. Your mixed breed cat will benefit from a much longer life span and far less instances of congenital diseases and birth defects than any purebred cat! Mixed-breed or "mutt" cats generally have

good dispositions and are very strong and healthy; there really are not clear benefits to owning a purebred besides status—and if that’s why you’re buying a cat then shame on you!

Remember to refer back to this guide when you get your cat so you can ensure a positive entry into your home and develop a good relationship with your new feline friend. Pay special attention to the Food and Drug Information section; even though it’s brief, it’s extremely important. If you ever feel that you desperately need to give your cat medication, call a local vet and ask for advice before doing so. Enjoy your new friend and may the lot of you have many years of fun and excitement to come!

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