

FACTSHEET

Choosing the right kitten or cat

Choosing a feline companion is a big decision about a relationship (and responsibility) that could last longer than 15 years. If you want to adopt a pet for someone else as a gift, then it must be a matter that is discussed and agreed with them – and *they* have to choose the cat.

Being a good cat owner and being a good neighbour means choosing the right kitten or cat for your home and lifestyle. A cat selected to suit their living environment is more likely to be happy and well-adjusted, and therefore less likely to exhibit unwanted behaviours. Unless you are a registered breeder, you should only adopt an already-desexed cat or kitten or take them to the vet for desexing before you bring them home.

Consider your home: can you provide secure outdoor access for a cat or will they be indoors-only? If you rent or live in a strata complex, do you have permission to keep a cat? Do you live in a wildlife sensitive area or are there any local government restrictions on cat ownership in your area? Can you install cat-proof fencing or a secure outdoor cat enclosure? Is there enough space indoors to provide a private space for a litterbox (or more than one if you plan to have more than one cat)? Are there secure places for a cat to retreat to when they don't want company? Can you provide vertical spaces in your home (e.g. tops of cupboards, window perches)? Are you prepared to let a cat have full access throughout your home and if not, how do you plan to limit access? How will you ensure your cat receives environmental enrichment, even if they are an indoor-only cat?

Think about your reasons for adopting a cat and consider the issues for your household. Are you choosing a cat as a friend for yourself, for your children, or for another pet? Do you plan to adopt more pets? What species? Are you planning to increase the size of your human family? These answers will help you decide on whether your new cat needs attributes such as boldness and self-reliance.

Does anyone in your family have allergies? Some people with allergies to cats will find that they are less or more sensitive to different breeds, or in different circumstances: they should meet a prospective pet several times and discuss allergy treatment options with their GP. Don't just assume the allergy is to the fur of the cat. People can be allergic to the fur, dander or saliva of a cat so chatting to your GP about having an allergy test done is a good idea.

It is important to choose a cat or kitten who will fit your lifestyle. How many hours are you away during the day? For someone who is away from home for long hours every day, an active kitten or an adult cat who craves companionship are not good choices. You may need to look at adopting a pair of kittens or an adult cat who prefers their own company. How active is your household? For a family with noisy young children, a shy kitten is unlikely to be a successful fit. Do you want your cat to be indoors only? Adult cats who have previously lived indoors/outdoors may have trouble adjusting to an indoor-only life. White cats and cats with pink noses are susceptible to skin cancer and are not suitable for outdoor living. If you

have an existing pet, have they lived with other pets in the past and do you have the space to keep them separate while doing introductions? Considering these issues will guide you on choosing a cat with an appropriate temperament, colouring and background. You need to consider the time and money you are prepared to spend and be aware that a cat with any special needs will likely require more extensive veterinary care.

It is a good idea for all members of the family to meet a cat or kitten before you adopt as all cats and kittens react differently to different people. To ensure a smooth transition into a forever home and avoid behaviour problems arising, it's good to see how the cat or kitten interacts with everyone.

Kittens

It is recommended that you adopt from a source where the personalities of kittens have been well-assessed (and where you are provided with the complete registration and medical records also). Good questions to ask are: what is the kitten's activity level? Is the kitten shy? Does the kitten get on well with other kittens/cats? How do they respond to new people and new situations? Adopting a pair of bonded littermates is a great idea if you plan to have more than one cat, as they are already friends and they will keep each other company when you are not home. It is essential to get to know each kitten as an individual and assess how they meet the requirements of your life and home, as discussed above. Cats have a tendency towards either boldness or shyness, and while a shy kitten will become more comfortable and confident as they adjust to their new home, they are likely to remain wary of strangers and new situations into adulthood. How many vaccinations has the kitten had and are they desexed?

Cats

Find out as much about the cat's background as you can: have they lived with dogs or other cats? Were their previous owners old or young? Did the cat have outdoor access or were they indoors only? Is the cat desexed? Is the cat litter trained? Has the cat been vaccinated? There may be scant information available, especially if the cat was a stray. It is advisable to make multiple visits (just like humans, cats can have good and bad days) and to spend at least 30 minutes alone with any cat you are seriously considering adopting. Take careful note of how they respond to you: cats can be quite firm about their preferences for people.

Always keep an open mind when visiting potential adoption candidates, sometimes the cat or kitten you least expected to adopt will choose you as their new forever family.

All cats and kittens sold in NSW must be microchipped at point of sale, so you should be given a copy of their microchip paperwork when you adopt as well as any vaccination paperwork that may be relevant.

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