

The Perfect Time of Year to Take on a New Feline Companion

On the heels of kitten season, there's no better time to welcome a new kitty into your household than now. With shelters across the US full to overflowing with cats, young and old, in desperate need of forever homes, consider these five tips for a smooth transition.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- June is Adopt-a-Cat-Month, timed as a follow-up to kitten season, when shelters across the U.S. are full to overflowing with kitties of all ages in search of forever homes
- Cats make wonderful companions because they're relatively easy to care for, and retain just enough traits of their wild cousins to make them fascinating to share life with
- Adopting a pet is a significant commitment of time, energy, and resources for the life of the animal, so it's a decision that shouldn't be taken lightly
- Tips for a successful cat adoption include considering your current cat first (if you have one), avoiding an impulse adoption, and ensuring that your lifestyle will continue to be kitty-friendly 5, 10, or 15 years from now

June is Adopt-a-Cat-Month! If you don't have a feline family member, or you've been thinking of adding one (or more) to your household, this is the perfect time of year. From American Humane:

"American Humane celebrates Adopt-A-Cat Month® each June — a month that also marks the height of 'kitten season,' when large litters of kittens are born and often end up in animal shelters.

More than ever, they need our help. Not only are thousands of newborn kittens joining the millions of cats already in shelters, but a lack of foot traffic, funding and supplies at many shelters struggling to maintain operations during the COVID-19 pandemic further threaten these beautiful animals and their hopes to find a forever home.

*To help, American Humane is devoting the 47th annual 'Adopt-a-Cat Month®' to encouraging animal lovers to visit their local animal shelter and adopt a cat – or two, contribute to our '**Feed the Hungry**.' campaign, which is delivering hundreds of thousands of meals to shelter animals, and learn more about the joys (and responsibilities) of adding a cat to their families."¹*

There are countless great reasons to add a cat to your family. For example, unlike many other types of pets, kitties are clean, quiet (most of the time), and relatively low maintenance. And despite their reputation for being standoffish, many are every bit as attentive and affectionate as dogs.

Despite their long history as companion animals, cats have retained many of the traits of their wild cousins, which makes them captivating in both appearance and behavior. It's also impossible to know what they're thinking most of the time, which of course just adds to their appeal!

If you're considering adopting a new — or another — kitty from your local shelter or rescue, you know it's one of the most significant commitments you'll make in your lifetime. Accepting responsibility for caring for a living creature who will be totally dependent on you isn't something to take lightly.

5 Tips for a Successful Cat Adoption

1. **Be sure to consider the needs of your current cat first** — It's crucially important to plan ahead if you already have a kitty and want to add another to the household. Some cats with no history together can learn to get along or at least tolerate each other over time, but there are situations in which it's just too dangerous or stressful to keep two poorly matched animals under the same roof.

Unfortunately, bringing a new cat into a home with an existing cat is often one of those situations. Give some thought to how your current cat might react to a new cat. If in the past he's shown aggression or fear around other kitties, you could be setting the stage for a problem.

It's a good idea to try to match the temperament and energy level of a new cat with that of your existing cat to improve the chances the two will get along. If things don't go well initially, I encourage you to consult with an animal behavior specialist before throwing in the towel on adopting a second cat.

Often, it just takes some time and a few helpful tips to put an existing pet and a new one on the road to a harmonious relationship.

2. **Avoid an impulse adoption** — Sadly, many pets are acquired on a whim, without thought or preparation. Your heart may be in the right place, but unless you're prepared to invest the time, effort and money necessary to properly care for a cat for her lifetime, things can go south in a hurry.

In those cases, and there are far too many of them, the kitty is the inevitable loser. Shelters are full of pets that were the result of an impulse purchase or adoption. Questions to ask and answer honestly:

- "Can I afford to properly care for a cat?" (including unforeseen medical expenses)
- "Is anyone in the family **allergic to cats**?"
- "Does my landlord allow them?"
- "Do I have the time available to give her the attention and care she needs and deserves?"

3. **Consider opening your heart to an adult or senior cat** — Many prospective adopters feel a kitten is the only way to go, and that's a shame. Shelters have lots of wonderful mature cats waiting for homes, and there are far fewer surprises when you adopt an adult. For example, you already know how big he'll get, and the color and length of his coat.

Since he has a history, it's possible you can learn from shelter staff about his health status, whether or not he gets along with other pets, or how sociable he is. With kittens, you're rolling the dice.

Older cats are also usually well beyond the search-and-destroy kitten phase. Chances are your adult cat will have no desire to excavate your potted plants or shred the Christmas quilt grandma made for you.

4. **Also consider bringing a black cat home** — Sadly, black pets are among the most overlooked in shelters. Hopefully, you don't still (or never did) believe the silly myth that black cats bring bad luck, because it's utter nonsense!

Another reason it can be hard to find homes for black kitties is because their faces don't appear as expressive as those of lighter-colored cats, but I can assure you that's entirely attributable to their dark coloring and not their personalities!

If you've got your eye on a black cat, you might ask the shelter staff if they offer discounts on adoption fees for black pets. Many shelters do, because they're aware of the difficulties involved in placing these animals.

5. **Think long-term** — What changes do you expect in your life in the next 5, 10 or 15 years? While we can't predict the future, most of us have a vision for our lives that extends years down the road.

These days, it's not unusual for a well-cared for cat to live into her late teens or early 20s, so adoption means taking on a multi-year commitment. It's important to be reasonably sure your lifestyle will be as pet-friendly in the future as it is today.

Sources and References

¹ [American Humane](#)
