

The Loving Pet with a Memory That's 192 Times Longer Than a Dog's

If you want a pet that makes you feel loved and comforted during tough times, this intelligent creature takes the cake. If you're not feeling well, she'll know it and will be there for you. And now science reveals she can even help you shake your bad mood.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Many people “don't like cats” because they view them as aloof and disinterested
- In reality, cats are affectionate and playful companions that provide countless hours of comfort and fascination
- Cats are playful and funny, too, making them an uplifting addition to most any household
- Cats can be housetrained in an instant as long as they have access to a litter box
- If you have your heart set on a certain color pattern or personality trait in a cat, you might be surprised to find it at your local shelter

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While the US can certainly be described as a pet-loving nation, there is at least a slight bias toward dogs. In one survey by Public Policy Polling, 52% of respondents said they preferred dogs while only 21% said they preferred cats (another 27% couldn't decide).¹

If you've never lived with a cat, you might get the impression that they're aloof, disinterested, and skittish ... and decidedly not the best human companions. Dogs, on the other hand, will greet you at the door, curl up at your feet, and play a raucous game of fetch whenever you wish.

But this perception isn't always reality. Cats tend to warm up to the people they live with, such that a visitor won't always get the full experience of what sharing a home with a cat is all about.

As cat lovers know, cats can be equal parts loving, affectionate and loyal, with an independent streak that only adds to their appeal. If you're not currently a cat owner, VetStreet recently compiled seven great things you're missing out on.

Seven Things You Miss Out on if You Don't Have a Cat

1. **Endless laughs** — If you live with a cat, you'll be hard-pressed not to laugh on a daily basis. From the way they zoom around a corner for no apparent reason, send a milk cap hurtling down the hall, or perform acrobatic moves that seem to defy gravity, cat behavior can be just plain funny and fun to watch.

If you want to witness one of the funniest cat antics of all, simply set out a small cardboard box. Your cat will be drawn to it like a fly to honey, and he'll do whatever it takes to fit his body inside.

2. **Playtime** — Dogs aren't the only pets who can play fetch. Many cats enjoy a good game of fetch and are easily amused with items you already have around your home, like a small wadded up ball of paper or a pen cap.

A feather tied to the end of a string can provide you and your cat with hours of playtime, and you can also easily turn old t-shirts and extra yarn into toys your cats will adore. Even when you're not involved, cats will jump, pounce, bat, and climb, keeping themselves entertained in the most playful ways.

3. **Intelligence** — There's no doubting that cats are intelligent creatures, although they aren't always willing to show us just how much they know. For instance, researchers have shown that cats can be trained to distinguish between different quantities of objects and follow pointing gestures (like dogs).²

However, it wasn't easy to get the cats to display their talents. It's also been argued that the number of neurons is a greater indicator of intelligence than brain size. Cats have 300 million neurons in their cerebral cortex — the brain area associated with processing, problem solving, and perception — while dogs have 160 million.

In addition, cats can be housetrained in an instant as long as they have access to a litter box. There's really no training to it, in fact. It's instinct. And while a dog's memory is only about five minutes long, kitties can remember up to 16 hours.

Cats even seem to remember human kindness and will return the favor later. If an owner fulfills her feline's wish to interact, the cat will often comply with the owner's desire for contact at other times.³

4. **Companionship** — While dogs are often credited with being the best pets for companionship, cats deserve kudos in this regard too. Many cats love being with their humans and will follow them around the house, greet them at the door and cuddle in their laps.

Some **cats enjoy being carried around**. Others like to perch on your shoulder or sleep on your pillow. Even cats that prefer solitude tend to seek out their humans for regular petting (and purring) sessions.

5. **Comfort** — Cats provide wonderful comfort and company. They will often sense if you're not feeling well and plant themselves next to you in bed. They will head butt you as a display of affection, and research even shows the sound of a cat's purr can lower your blood pressure and reduce stress.

Research by Dr. Dennis Turner, an expert on the feline-human bond, also revealed that kitties can alleviate the bad moods of their human owners. Cats appear to be as capable as our partners are of helping us through feelings of anxiety, depression and fear.

“Both the cat’s presence and their interactions can reduce bad moods. This wasn’t in any sort of clinically ill population or people with psychological problems, this was with average cat owners,”

Dr. Turner said.

6. **They're fascinating** — Among the many fascinating facts about cats is this: cats have 32 muscles in each of their ears, and they can hear sounds up to 60 kHz (while humans can only hear up to 20 kHz). They also have super-sensitive whiskers that help them navigate and sense movement.

Further, your cat has an innate “righting” instinct that allows him to reflexively correct his position while he falls so his feet hit first. Cats also have a flexible backbone that helps them to right themselves during falls.⁴

And as for fitting into small spaces, if they can fit their head in, the rest of their body will tuck in there as well, seemingly like magic, in large part because cats don’t have rigid collarbones.

7. **They’re constant** — Life can be a rollercoaster, changing quickly from one day to the next. Cats, like many pets, provide a sense of constant security and familiarity throughout all of your life stages. Chances are, even if your job has changed, you’ve moved to a new location, or had other upheavals in your family, your cat has been there all along the way, steadfast in his dedication to you and his reliance on your routines.

If you’d like to experience all of this (and more) for yourself, take a trip to your local animal shelter, which will likely have dozens of unique kitties waiting to claim your heart as their own. As VetStreetnoted:⁵

“... the next time you hear someone say they don’t like cats, ask them if they’ve ever lived with one of these fascinating, funny felines. Chances are, they have no idea what they’re missing!”

Mixed-Breed Cats Often Have a Wonderful Mix of Traits

If you have your heart set on a certain color pattern or personality trait in a cat, you might be surprised to find it at your local shelter. Along with the occasional purebred, shelters are packed with mixed-breed cats, have some mix of purebred cat in their background, along with domestic cats, which is a term used to describe cats of unknown breed.

You’ll find all mixes of colors and personalities, cats that fetch, and cats that love to cuddle. So before going purebred, you might want to make a trip to a nearby shelter. If you have a certain trait in mind, be sure to talk with the workers and volunteers. They’ll probably be quite familiar with each cat’s personality and can help you find the perfect match for your family.

Sources and References

¹ [Ragdoll Historical Society](#)

² [Paw Nation November 6, 2014](#)

³ [Cattime.com Ragdolls](#)