



Animal House
Veterinary surgery

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WANT A CAT

There are lots of things to consider before acquiring a new animal to share your life. Forewarned is forearmed as many pets need lots of attention to live successfully with us, sometimes more work than anticipated. If you have already had a similar pet it is wise to consider how that breed-type may have changed over the years and if your requirements have changed. If you are taking on an animal that you have not had experience of before, it can be a journey into the unknown. Have you already thought what to do with your pet if you visit friends for an overnight stay, for example? We have listed some pointers to help you make your choice about different types of animals and where to find them.

If you want details of strengths and weaknesses of specific breeds' ask a question on our web site or call into the surgery and ask in person.

There are many different breed types of cat. Adults can range from 2.2 to 6.5 kg. depending on the breed type. They all need vaccinating, de-fleaing and de-worming, feeding and bi-annual trips to the vet. Cattery costs may apply if you take holidays. It is seen as abandonment to leave your cat home alone for more than 48 hours and is a prosecutable offence. Most will need neutering and providing with cat litter. We estimate the cost of keeping the average cat to be **£13,900** during its lifetime.

WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT CATS

Cats are low-maintenance compared with dogs as they do not need to be walked or trained and if they have access to a litter tray or outside they do not need to be cleaned up after. They sleep a lot and are independent. They are also affectionate and companionable. They are successful pets for most people, especially if the house is empty of humans for a lot of the day. It is not suitable to have a small kitten and a toddler. Have an older cat or wait until the child is a little older as mutual accidents can happen. Cats and dogs can live happily together and be companions for each other. If you have mobility problems then you do not actively have to exercise a cat. Cats need to be groomed, but this is minimal in the case of a short-haired cat. A long haired cat needs regular grooming.

Rescues

Rescue centres up and down the country are full of all types and age of cat. Usually where someone has one, can't cope with the demands and gives them up. There are other common reasons for rescuing. Some people have to re-locate and cannot take their pet, or maybe their owner has died. Some are strays and some are cruelty cases where they have been taken from their previous owner. Visit the Cats Protection League or RSPCA and they are guaranteed to have animals who need a home. Crossbreeds are generally healthier than pedigrees as they have not been interbred. Generally, rescues centres have pedigrees and crossbreeds to offer. They monitor these cats closely and have a wealth of knowledge about them. They can tell you about their temperament and what type of home will suit them to check that the cat meets your needs and vice versa. They will want you to return the cat if you give it a trial and it does not work out

for any reason. You could volunteer to help the Cats Protection League as a foster carer as a good way to have a cat on a temporary basis until a permanent home is found.

What you may like to ask a rescue

Is this animal housetrained? Good with children, dogs, other cats. Any health problems or phobias, i.e. is afraid of traffic, hates the postman etc. Have they ever bitten anyone? Were they mistreated? Have they been neutered/vaccinated/de-wormed and de-fleaed. Did they live in a house or were they kept outside? Are there any foibles or peculiarities? Rescues will usually give you a home visit before they will give you one of their animals.

Breeders

We do not keep a list of breeders as there are very many and we personally cannot check them all out to see who is good and who is awful. If you know someone who has a cat that you think is good then ask if they acquired it from a breeder. Personal recommendation is a good start. To check out a breeder you need to visit them.

The best breeders only breed when they have a list of approved people waiting to give their kittens a home. They will home check you just like the rescues. Meet the queen who will be the mother. See that she has a good temperament and is healthy. Ask how many times she has been used for breeding and at what age the breeder intends to retire her. See the tom and check that he is emotionally and physically healthy. If you think either of these cats is aggressive or nasty then do not buy from these people. The kittens will inherit characteristics from their parents. Check that the queen and tom have been vaccinated and had parasite control. This is important as the kittens inherit a degree of resistance from the mother. If she is not vaccinated then the kittens will be more vulnerable to disease. Kittens learn from their mother and their litter-mates. The optimum age behaviourally for a kitten to leave its mum is 10 weeks. If it leaves before then it will not have learned enough about good behaviour from its mum and peers so you will have to become mum and mentor. It is unacceptable to be given a kitten younger than 8 weeks old. There is the odd circumstance where this is possible but these are the kittens with a high incidence of behavioural problems. Check that the breeder will take the kitten back if you have a problem at any time.

Breeders charge money. Different breeds command different sums. Expect to pay from hundreds to thousands of pounds for a kitten. This should include vaccination and worming but check to make sure. The sum is usually an indication of the rarity of the breed.

CAT TIPS

Do not put your cat out at night as this is when they are most likely to be run-over. High incidence of road traffic accidents is also when the weather is windy and rainy. If you do not wish to keep your cat indoors then a cat flap is the best option for your cat to come and go as they please. Cats can live entirely indoors successfully as they are naturally agoraphobic and this is recommended for the Persian type to make their fur more manageable. Check your wash basket before loading the washing machine as this is a common place for cats to hide in. Do not wash your cat as it is only funny on cartoons and lethal in real life.

THE FERAL CAT

A feral cat is a domestic cat that has gone wild. They live in colonies anywhere near an available food source. These cats live on scraps and vermin. Feral colonies breed in relation to the food available. The Cats Protection League and others capture ferals and have them neutered to restrict the amount of new ferals emerging. The tell tale sign is a clipped ear. Some ferals are rescued but are not suitable to live the domesticated life. They still need somewhere to live that will meet their needs. An ideal place is a stable or barn. They will eat the mice and rats and keep themselves to themselves perfectly happily. You can supplement their food by leaving a dish out for them. They are not cuddly and will spit at you or try to attack if cornered. Some, after years

of seeing harmless humans may wander inside but they rarely become more approachable than this. If you do not want a cat in your home but can offer a corner of your barn or stable this could be a mutually beneficial choice. The Cats Protection League are a good source to approach for offering a home to this type of cat.

You could consider having a cat and a rabbit! Look at **I Want A Rabbit**

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