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About The Author

Some of Barbara Ford's earliest memories were of the two cats which her parents had.

She feels that her life has been richer for the companionship of her cats.

Barbara said, "I know that any kind of pet can make your life more enjoyable, but I think cats are unique as companions."

"They aren't like the other animals I have had."

Barbara hopes that her book will help readers enjoy their relationships with their cats more by sharing her advice and experiences.

"There are as much variety among cats as there are between humans. But they are all capable of enriching our lives and helping us through any downtimes if we give them the chance."

Barbara has learned a lot of tips through her own experience and from friends and other cat owners that have shared their stories with her.

"I'm not an expert but I believe that my ebook will help people to learn more about cats so they can avoid problems and get the best possible experience with their cat. This book will help them to keep it happy and healthy."

"There are lots of simple ways to avoid or deal with problems and inexpensive ideas that will help you show your cat how you feel about him."

She wants to help every reader and every cat have the best experience together that they can.

Introduction

The advantages of having a pet to share your life are well-known.



While almost any pet will increase your enjoyment of every day that you are able to spend together, I believe that any person that gets to share their life with a cat is especially lucky!

Cats are more independent by nature even though they need support and care from their human owner. This gives a special quality to the relationship and makes the memories very special too.

Along with all the attractions of having a cat, there is also a significant commitment of time and expense to feed, house and protect your cat.

I wrote this ebook to help you get the most enjoyment from your relationship and give your cat the best possible care.

The tips and ideas in my book will help you keep your expenses down without compromising the safety and comfort of your pet.

I hope that you will find answers to many of the questions which potential cat owners need to have answers for and be a guide as you share your time with your cat through all the stages of its life from being a kitten to the time when it is a much-loved senior member of your household.

Barbara Ford

Before You get a Cat

The first consideration is not what cat to get but whether you can fit a cat into your life after carefully reviewing any potential problems or benefits of your lifestyle, budget, type of residence, neighborhood, family and other pets.

Lifestyle: Will you have enough time to enjoy and look after the needs of your new cat? Although most cats do not need the amount of personal interaction which many pet dogs do, they will need some time shared with you every day.

You will have to provide them with some individual attention so that they develop reasonable social skills and at least know how to behave with people that visit your home.

Keeping them supplied with water and food, checking their general health, cleaning their litter tray, and playing with them are all necessary each day.

They need to have a routine to follow, although it won't usually be a problem if you have some variations from time to time.

You also have to be able to handle inevitable visits to the vet for routine and emergency treatments.

If you travel frequently on business or to somewhere where you cannot take the cat with you, you have to accept the responsibility and possibly the cost of having someone do these duties for your cat while you are away.

Budget: This should be one of the first things which you check because keeping any pet with the needs and life expectancy of a cat can be a significant and ongoing demand on some people's income.

To ensure the best outcome for yourself and the pet you want, you need to be as sure as possible that you will be able to care for your new pet financially and socially for its lifetime from within your regular income. There are more pets being euthanized or abandoned every year because of their owners' unanticipated changes in capacity to support them.

That prompts me to say that I hope that any readers who are able to, will either adopt a pet that is waiting in a shelter, against the odds, for a new and permanent home, or will donate to a local shelter so they can help as many as possible.

Your Home: You also must consider whether your home is suitable for keeping a cat? If you do not own it, then you will need to be sure that the owner will allow you to keep it. Don't get the cat unless you already have the permission in writing.

Even when they give permission, owners or agents will require that you control the pet so that there is no damage or disturbance to other tenants or neighbors.

Neighborhood: You must consider whether the cat will be welcome and safe in the neighborhood.

The reasons include the safety of the cat, its potential effect on the neighbors' quality of life and also the threat it may be to wildlife in the area.

More cats are being kept inside all the time or only allowed out of their owner's home when they are walked on a lead. If this is your intention, you need to make sure that you make sure there is nothing which the cat can cause injury to itself with and also that the contents of your home are protected from the cat's claws and curiosity.

Family: It's obviously important to work through any possible risks or friction between your new pet and other members of the family.



Other pets: The effect of the cat's arrival on your other pets also needs further consideration.

A new cat may be a real or possible threat to other animals or birds which you already have. Large dogs might be a risk to your new cat. It's better to think these possibilities through before you actually get a new cat.

Which Cat is Best for You?

Most people would get a lot of enjoyment from having almost any sort of cat as their companion.

But there are usually some characteristics which would make certain cats a better match for your particular life-style, family and location.

Male or Female

There is little to choose between males and females as pets in my experience. Some owners say that male cats are more aggressive but, as with people, there are plenty of forceful female cats.



Male cats may tend to roam more than females but a good owner can reduce their desire to do that simply by their attitude to their cat.

But, I strongly recommend that your new pet cat should be neutered while a kitten, whether it is a male or female.

This will remove the prospect of more unwanted kittens and also avoid the stress for you and the cat during the mating season.

Unneutered males will fight other cats when there are females around and spray their strong-smelling urine to mark their territory. Unneutered females will also spray though they may do it less widely or often.

Purebred or Mixed Breed?

When I am looking for a new cat, I always look first for any indications of problems with their health and temperament.

For me, that's more important than their appearance or other factors.

I am not concerned that I have only had mixed breed cats.



I know several people whose cats are purebreds. One bought her cat because she wanted to think about breeding cats. She didn't go ahead with that plan. Because she changed her mind fairly soon after getting her cat, she had it de-sexed while it was still young.

She said she never regretted the high cost of her pet because it was a wonderful companion.

Some people have cats because of particular qualities in that breed,

and most of the others had a preference for a particular type.

And, some people also avoid particular breeds because of some characteristic such as a heavy coat or whatever.

One consideration with purebreds is that many are bred which have genetic faults that breeders have accidentally introduced as they try to change its appearance or other characteristics. Always do the best physical inspection of any cat of any age that you intend to buy.

But, I think it would be worth the cost to have a vet inspect any pedigree animal you are paying a high price for. Many breeders do sell some cats which are fine except they don't have the correct appearance for showing at lower prices.

Anyway, I think the main criteria to ensure a good, lasting relationship between the owner and cat is the matching of their particular characters rather than their appearance.

That's just like people becoming friends, isn't it?

Some Popular Cat Breeds

I've said many times that my favorite cat breed is a happy cat. That can be one that is any particular breed or one that is many breeds blended together.

Here's a few breeds which I've heard good things about.

NOTE: Some breeds have different names in different countries. Some specifications for the same breed may vary from one country to another.

Some are recognized as breeds in some places and not others.

Tabby cats and Cardigan cats.

Tabby: Okay, "Tabby" is **not** a breed of cat.

It is how we describe a type of coloration which may be found in many different breeds.



I'm sure you have seen the striped tabby which sometimes has a set of stripes forming an "M" on their forehead. This cat shows the common pattern very well but the colors may range over most of the spectrum.

Cardigan: Cardigan is, like tabby, a description for a type of coloring pattern which may appear in a variety of breeds. The cause is genetic and so you may just find a cardigan decorated cat in a litter of most breeds.

While the tabby is striped, a cardigan cat has three colors, usually in blocks of color. The groups which set standards for cardigan cats insist that the colors are in solid blocks and not with the colors swirled together.

Most male cats which have the cardigan pattern are sterile.

Turkish Van: This is a breed which I love the look of. They are mostly white with color only on the top of the head and their tail. They are sometimes called the "Swimming Cat" because they are particularly fond of swimming.



I found one site which has a lot of information about this breed:

<http://www.swimmingcats.com/> I don't know the breeders who run the site but I think they must love their cats!

Himalayans: are good natured cats with a noticeable flat facial area. This has caused some people to become very concerned because some of these cats develop breathing problems and other conditions related to their particular facial characteristics. Some also have problems giving birth.

Maine Coon: These cats are large (males can be up to eighteen pounds and females up to about half of that). Their coat is water-resistant and needs combing with a strong steel comb about twice a week.

This is one of the most popular breeds in the U.S.A.

Munchkin: This is a recent development and is still developing. Not everyone agrees that these short-legged cats are a true breed.

But, they are cute and have enough strength to hold their own with other cats of similar size even if the others have longer legs.

They are playful and able to do almost anything other cats do except leap tall dogs.

Do you want a Kitten or a Mature Cat?

Although most people automatically think only of getting a kitten and not a more mature cat for their new pet, there are some benefits for people that get an older cat, whether from a friend who cannot keep it or a shelter.

Some older people find the mature cat easier to manage than an adventurous kitten.



The older cat will be used to mixing with people and trained to be tidy with its litter box. Of course, you should not be surprised if the

cat takes a few days to settle itself properly in its new home after the recent stress it has had from losing its previous home and owner.

If you know the cat's history, then you will know about any health problems it has had and any particular likes or dislikes it has developed.

The other benefit is the great feeling which comes from being able to give an older cat a second chance. They are less likely to be adopted into a new forever home than those cute kittens in the next cage.

If you have young children, a cat of up to two years or so can be a good choice, especially if it is used to children. A kitten may strike out at an adventurous child's rough handling or be injured by the child's action.

At two years, the cat still has plenty of years to accompany the children on their new and exciting life journey.

Where to Get Your Cat

The number of ways in which people get to adopt a new cat or kitten into their family are many.

The traditional pet shops are still popular but there seem to be less people buying their new pets there in many areas. The benefit of buying from a well-managed pet store is that the staff are knowledgeable and you should be able to have confidence in their advice and the health of the kittens they offer.

Unfortunately, as business has become even more competitive, some stores have become less reliable sources. Others have focused more on supplying accessories and equipment to pet owners instead of selling animals.

Many people still get a kitten from a friend or neighbor that has a cat which they did not have desexed. The poor cat is doomed to repeated pregnancies or to be abandoned when dealing with her and the kittens becomes too much for the owner.

Advertisements are appearing online more often because they are cheaper there than buying an ad in the local newspaper.

None of these sources give any sort of guarantee about the health or pedigree of the kittens.

Breeders who are registered have to abide by rules imposed by the group controlling the regulations for their breed. They are a fund of advice to their customers and usually give some sort of guarantee about the health of the kitten you purchase. They won't usually accept returns where the buyer just changes their mind.

I suggest that you consult your friends who own cats for feedback about suppliers that they had dealings with.

A good source of information and reliable recommendations, if you already have other pets, is your vet. They have first hand information about the owners and the animals in their care.

Another source is your local animal shelter which is always in need of new homes for abandoned animals of all ages.

The hardest decision that we have when we go to a shelter is how to decide which animal, out of all those there, we give a chance of a better life.

Fitting Your new cat into Your Home

There are a few steps to preparing for the arrival of your kitten.

If you are getting a new cat that is over the kitten stage, some of this won't apply but I have got some special tips further down for that situation.

You need to protect your home and contents from potential damage from a curious and very active kitten.

At the same time, you will have to check for any potential risks which might hurt the new arrival.

Decide where you will have the kitten sleep.

Set up an area where you are sure there is nothing which might cause the kitten any harm in its sleeping area.

You also need to check every room and all structures in your home for risks.

You have to work on the basis that your kitten is more agile, more curious and more at risk than any other kitten ever was. That's the only way to give yourself a good chance of detecting all possible hazards.

Kittens can and will climb. They will jump almost impossible distances and they will squeeze almost through gaps which are obviously too small. They will bite or claw at anything to find out what happens.

So, they may get caught in that loose thread on the arm of a chair or in a curtain which could cause serious injury. That balloon left over from your last party would be irresistible to its claws and it could become a choking hazard or cause damage to its eyes. Any small objects might be tasted or swallowed. Sharp objects and so on!

You may think that something is safe just resting on a shelf. But, what if the kitten climbs on it; would the extra weight cause the item to slide off and pull the kitten to the floor below at the same time?

Cords and rubber bands might catch your kitten around some part of their body and cause injury. Some are caught in blind cords every year.

Threads, twine, plastic in various forms can all hurt or choke a curious kitten.

Loose doors of any size can slam on a paw or do even worse damage.

Keep them out of garages and workshops at all times.

Make sure they cannot "play" with electrical cords or fittings.

Don't use clumping cat litter for your kitten's litter box ever.

You can use blank newsprint but never use any printed newspapers. The ink is likely to be toxic and will get on their fur. They will naturally try to lick it away. They can also get more on themselves if the newspaper becomes wet when they urinate or spill some of their drinking water.

What do Cats Cost?

The cost of having a cat as a pet involves more than the money. But, the impact on your budget is something you need to work out in detail before you make any decision.

I think that most cat owners have at some time probably put off some other purchase to get something for their treasured feline, but no-one can do that all the time.

You need to work out what you will pay in money and other ways, such as missing social engagements to take your pet to the vet, through the years you will have together.

This section will help you with some of the most important factors.

The Purchase price is just the Down-payment

The purchase price is only the first installment. Most cat owners put a higher value on the enjoyment and interaction they get from their cat than the financial cost to their budget but they know it can be quite high and some expenses can occur with little warning.

A "free" kitten from a neighbor that did not have the foresight to get their female cat de-sexed could become a larger financial investment if it becomes ill because the owner didn't have their cat immunized against the common diseases which all cats need protection against.

The cost of regular vet visits must be budgeted for. A sick cat needs prompt treatment if it is to have the best chance of recovery without ongoing effects from the illness.

Most veterinarians require that customers pay for treatment at the time of the visit to the surgery. This has become routine because of the high rate of owners who delay or just don't pay when the emergency has passed.

Pet Insurance

Insuring your pet is a popular option. I will show in this section that it is not a perfect answer for the rocketing cost of vet care for your pet.

But, it can help, especially if you find it difficult to put aside some money regularly in a fund to pay your pet's inevitable veterinary expenses and not use the money for other purposes.

Pet insurance is worth careful consideration. Please don't rush to make a choice.

It can be a significant expense and you need to take the time to study the various offers so that you and your pet get the best possible cover for your needs.

If you just decide to buy the cheapest policy or the one which is promoted through association with your favorite animal-related good cause, you may waste money and not get the level of cover, or particular features in the cover, which you expected.

In some areas, Veterinarians' associations offer Pet Insurance under their brand. Many animal-related good causes also have similar offers.

But, these organizations do not have the experience or expertise among their staff to manage the requirements of the insurance or those who buy it.

All these organizations supply coverage through one of the regular insurance companies which pays them a commission on the amount of premiums paid to their branded product.

The policies available from the non-insurance related organizations may be the same as some of the associated insurance companies regular offerings or have some adjustments which could increase their value to some cat owners.

The value to you and your pet depend more on the actual terms of the policy than the brand on the insurance package you buy.

You must be sure you understand the terms before you sign the contract. Get a written explanation of anything which is not clear to you and make sure that it is signed and dated.

Some items which you should check are:

Exclusions: The policy may not allow for payment for any treatment related to pre-existing conditions. That may include effects of injuries or illnesses which the cat had before the policy came in to force. This might also include medical conditions related to anything which it may have inherited from its feline parents.

Some policies may exclude treatments for certain conditions altogether or until the policy has been in force and premiums kept up to date for a certain period.

When cover starts: You may expect the cat to be covered from the moment you pay the first premium but some companies don't start the cover until they have got all the paperwork and the money is in their bank account. That may be a difference of days or weeks.

Limitations: Policies may only cover a percentage of the cost for each service and have limits on the amount which the company may reimburse you for certain services in each year.

You need to check the policy documents for the details and get answers in writing about anything which you don't like or don't understand before you sign the policy.

When you will get your re-imburement: The company may not start their process for releasing money to you or the service provider until they have got confirmation that you have paid the bill.

This could involve you making a substantial payment or making temporary credit arrangements with your vet (if available) while you wait for the payment.

The payment from the insurance company may take weeks rather than days. It is worthwhile to get feedback from other clients of the company you are

thinking of using, especially some who are not referred to you by the insurance representative.

Any concerns or problems in this area can have serious consequences. So, make sure that you check everything about any policy you think of getting very carefully before you sign.

Check with your local authorities about the reputation of the insurance company which is the original issuer of the policies. This is a rapidly growing area and you can expect that some companies will be better resourced and have more experience in the field than others.

Most countries have "cooling-off" periods built into most types, but not all, financial contracts.

This may give you the opportunity to opt-out of a policy which you feel you were not fully informed about within, say, thirty days. But, that means you have to start the process of looking for a better policy all over again.

Good Luck!

Risks and Precautions with Pet Foods

Many brands of prepared pet foods have been recalled over the last several years, despite the best efforts of the manufacturers. I believe that most of them have improved their production systems and checks.



Sometimes the problems were detected quickly and the problem minimized but that was no consolation for those pet owners and their animals which suffered.

Some problems were linked to constituents that were sourced from other companies and even other countries. The more links in the chain of production, the more potential risks which

needed to be guarded against.

Information: If you give your cat any processed food, you need to check for any recall alerts or information.

The best source is within those sites belonging to the government, but some individuals also run sites which offer information in this area.

My resources section at the back of this book has some information about related sites.

I believe that all cat owners should ask their government departments and representatives to ensure that proper checks are carried out on food and also on ingredients which are imported to be used in the preparation of manufactured pet foods in their country.

If the ingredients were subject to reliable checks at the source or on entry to our country, the risk would probably be much easier to detect and prevent than it is after the ingredient has been processed into the final product.

After the melamine tainting of pet foods which were sold in the U.S.A. and other countries a couple of years ago, some countries made such checks mandatory. But, authorities in at least one country were still discussing what checks should be required more than a year later!

Feeding Your Cat

The first thing which you need to ensure is that your cat has easy access to clean water at all times. Cats often like to play in their water bowl. That can cause two problems. They might spill all the water and not have any to drink or they might cause damage to the area around the bowl.

Make sure that you check the level and quality of the water in their bowl regularly. Get a heavy bowl which is hard to upset and deep enough that not much water is likely to be tipped or scooped out.

We can't afford to take any short-cuts when we are deciding what to feed our pets.

This section will give you the best advice I have from my experience, advice from knowledgeable friends and vets as well as a lot of reading.

But, you must also watch your cat for signs that it is getting sufficient nourishment from the food you provide.

Another problem is that not all cats require the same amount of food for proper nutrition. If your cat is very active, it will need more than if it is a "couch-potato".

Any energy it produces but does not use will probably convert to fat and you need to find other activities so that you don't have an obese cat. That can be the start of more health problems.

All cats need a proportion of meat-based products in their diet to ensure that they get taurine (a vital amino acid).

Your vet can advise you about the best current advice for ensuring that your cat gets the nutrition it needs in line with their knowledge of your lifestyle and the cat's history.

Don't leave any food out for any length of time after your cat stops eating it. Twenty minutes would be a suggested maximum but even reduce that period in hot weather or if it starts to change in appearance. The food might become contaminated, attract vermin or lose its nutritional value sooner in some circumstances.

Any food material which has changed in appearance from what you expect should be thrown out.

Some foods which are okay for your cat may be bad for other pets you have. Make sure that they don't sample each others' food.

Milk

Cow's milk is not recommended for kittens or cats.

It probably surprised you that cow's milk is not recommended for most cats? But, research confirms that many cats are lactose-intolerant and suffer diarrhea, which is sometimes severe, if they drink it. Some cats can handle it but probably can get along without it. You might give them a little as an occasional treat if you are sure that they won't suffer any consequences.

Prepared Foods

I suggest that you ask your vet and cat-owing friends for recommendations if you want to use prepared foods.

If you are concerned about the possibility of contamination of prepared foods, watch your government's sites and any reliable private sites for warnings and follow-up information.

One cat owner rotates the brands of prepared foods which she gives to her cat to ensure them more variety and also partly to reduce the risk she sees in only buying one brand.

Feeding Your Kitten

All kittens need **cat** milk.

Other types of milk are not likely to be as good for its continued health and development.

Like human babies, kittens get particular essential nutrients in the milk from their mother which cannot be provided by us, even in the form of supplements.

If you have a kitten which has lost its mother and there is no other safe source of cat's milk available, you should be able to get a safe substitute from your veterinarian.

Commercially-prepared food which is advertised for cats **may** be okay for a kitten for a limited time if the kitten has been weaned after getting milk from its mother through the first several weeks of life.

But, your kitten will probably get a better start in life if you buy a quality brand of prepared kitten food for it.

The kitten still has some development and growth to go through, like a human child at the same stage.



Canned kitten foods will contain extra minerals and other ingredients which may not be available in adult cat food because they don't need them as much.

Although kittens are unlikely to eat more than they need (that is a potential problem with some adult cats), you can but should not leave dry kitten food out and uncovered.

It could be contaminated or scattered around the floor. Then you would have the extra work of cleaning it up and replacing it.

You should not put it back in the kitten's bowl if there is any chance it might have contacted dirt, cleaning chemical residue or other materials which might harm your pet.

Choosing Your Vet

The most important person in your new cat's eyes, apart from you, will be the vet you choose to care for it.

Equally important is that veterinarian's business and support network.

If you don't already have a preferred vet you use, ask everyone that you know is a cat owner or had a cat in the recent past about their experiences.

You should visit the premises of any vet you are seriously considering using to check the way the staff treat you and other clients as well as the animals.

Ask questions about some aspect of the service. You'll get a good idea of how they will be to deal with when you and they are under pressure.

Find out about the facilities available for pets which have to stay on their premises overnight or longer and the level of charges which might be involved. Is there someone on the premises to keep an eye on the animals and alert a vet if any problem develops?

After Hours Service

One factor which can be very important is how they deal with after-hours calls. Many vets use a separate service which specializes in after-hours work.

The location of the other service, how easy it is for you to get a house call after hours or how convenient it is if you have to take your pet there are factors which are just as important as the cost of their services.

Expect that out-sourced after-hours service will be fairly expensive and you may have to provide either cash or a verified credit card before you can get attention for your pet.

Keeping Your Cat Healthy

Here are some simple and low-cost or free preventative measures which will help keep your cat healthier, your vet bills in check and save you time and stress.

Prevention is an important factor with human health and also with our pets.

One good thing is that our cats are naturally focused on staying clean.

This is only a problem if they get something nasty on their fur and get sick from trying to lick it off. So, we must be careful to keep them away from such substances at all times.

Vet visits are essential but you can minimize them by sticking to a schedule and making sure that your cat has the required vaccinations at the right time.

Some are required every year without delays or the protection your cat gets may have gaps.

But, some injections may be available which combine protection for specific different risks or provide protection which lasts more than one year.

As vaccines are being improved or replaced from time to time with more advanced types, which can be less or more expensive than the earlier treatments, it could be worth checking each year with your vet about any changes which might save money or number of injections with your pet.

Unless you are going to use your cat as commercial breeding stock, you should have it desexed.

This can have health benefits for the cat, reduce the possibility of trouble with other cats, your neighbors and regulators, and make it easier for you and your cat to interact with the other members of your household, both human and other pets.

Check your cat regularly for parasites, skin problems and other conditions. This can help you to deal with any problem at an early stage and reduce the severity of any treatment which your cat might need.

Check its teeth and claws for any potential problems as well. Keeping them in good condition will help the cat enjoy every day and can reduce the vet bills you get substantially, especially later in its life.

These examinations also encourage the cat to trust you more. That can be a great help if you have to examine the cat if it is actually hurt.

Always get professional advice before using any sort of treatment on your cat. Some have been found to have serious drawbacks. Even natural "remedies" contain chemicals – they may just be in a different form to manufactured equivalents but they can have equally powerful effects.

Avoid smoking near your pet. Second-hand smoke can be a serious problem for your cat or other pet because it may be on your lap or somewhere very close to you when you're having a relaxing cigarette.

Take Care with these Foods etc.

Alcohol: A serious mistake which many people make is to feed their cat or other pet some of whatever they are drinking. They may think that the poor animal looks "cute" when they have some sort of reaction.

But, the owner may actually be causing severe pain and pressure on their pet's system. Even small amounts can cause lasting impairment or even death. One dose is all it might take.

Caffeine: Very small amounts such as in some pain-relieving drugs and some medicines can cause serious symptoms. Cats can also die from it.

The associated substances found in some health drinks are probably just as dangerous to cats. Always just give them plain clean water.

Candy and other treats for humans: All treats for humans should be kept away from cats and other pets of all ages. Their systems are not the same as ours and they would probably not choose to eat most of these "treats" if we did not deliberately encourage them. So, we must accept the responsibility of keeping them healthy even if we risk our own well-being by over-indulging in them.

Canned Tuna: Canned tuna which is sold for people to consume may not be good for cats. The products which are not designed for cats should not be a large part of your cat's diet, but may contain important additives which cats need that are not included in the products for humans.

Chives: May cause stomach upset for your cat of any age.

Chocolate: Chocolate contains caffeine and theobromine. Both are poisonous to cats and harmful to some other animals, such as dogs. Cats are unlikely to eat chocolate unless someone pushes it at them. Never do that!

Dairy Products: Don't give cats or kittens any at all ever.

Dog Food: Your cat may have no problem from occasionally just tasting something in the dog's bowl but it should be prevented as much as you can. Dog food will not provide your cat with many essential ingredients of its diet

which are routinely include in prepared cat food. Without them, your cat will not maintain good health or be able to resist disease as much.

Eggs, Raw: Raw eggs should not be eaten by cats. It may contain harmful bacteria, interfere with their digestion and cause skin problems.

Fish, Raw: Raw fish may contain harmful bacteria. It may also have an enzyme which will prevent the cat getting an essential supply of Thiamine. This can cause serious symptoms and eventually death.

Garlic: Will upset your cat's stomach.

Grapes: Make sure that your cat cannot get any grapes at all in any form. A small taste might cause symptoms and death may result.

Liver: Avoid feeding any liver to your cat at all.

Meat, Raw: Raw meat may contain harmful bacteria.

Meat Scraps: Meat off-cuts which are high in fat can be dangerous for cats because their systems are not used to handling processed meat and they cannot handle fat well at all. Any bones or bone pieces in the meat can cause blockages or cuts to the mouth and intestines of your cat. Play safe and throw them out instead.

Milk: Cow's Milk will cause diarrhea in adult cats. Some kittens may show no symptoms of distress if given cow's milk but it will not be as good for their development and health as cat's milk and could cause upsets or problems which might not show until later in their lives.

Onions: Don't give your cat onions in any form. Be careful that no onions or onion-based ingredients are used in preparing anything which your cat might be given. They can cause serious problems.

Raisins: Raisins have the same serious risks to cats as grapes. They can cause serious injury or even death.

Saying Goodbye

All pet owners realize that there will be a time when they must lose their pet. It is inevitable but that does not make it any easier.

It may be because of a sudden crisis like an accident or other misadventure, or just that their friend cannot enjoy its life any more.

It's understandable that some owners delay the appointment with their vet, but that may cause them more regret in the future that they didn't act sooner. When it is suffering in a way that cannot be cured, we have to focus on what is best for our companion, not just ourselves.

Your vet will provide the most comfortable experience for your pet that they can. The normal procedure is to relieve any suffering as quickly as possible and then give a sedative which stops their heart quickly without them feeling anything.

Some people feel unsure how they should react. The impact on our own emotions can be very deep, After all, we have shared some of the best moments of the years we had together and the pet has probably done its best to help us through some of the disappointments we had during that time also.

It has been a real friend and it's natural to miss them deeply.

Give yourself permission to grieve and don't let comments or actions of anyone else stop you doing that in your way.

When to get a new pet?

You may feel a bit lost and want to get a new pet to fill the void, but make sure that you are really ready to welcome a new pet.

They won't replace your previous cat. They will make their own mark on your life and in your emotions over time.

Accept them as they are and don't be concerned about mistakes they make at the beginning. Don't compare them with your other cat and just give your new companion time to adjust so that you can have a wonderful life together.

Toilet Training and Cleaning-up

Cats are fairly clean animals because animals which left traces of their scent in the wild might scare away the creatures they hunted or attract some which hunted them.

Most kittens are trained by their mother and will adapt to a litter tray without much need for coaching.

But, you can reduce the number of accidents and ensure that your new pet is fully trained by going through this training sequence just to be sure.

Confine it to a room which does not have anything which might be damaged by some stray cat waste. That usually means a bathroom or laundry. But, you must remove or lock away anything which might cause injury or sickness to your kitten.

Get a plastic litter tray and put some clean litter in it.

Do not ever use clumping litter with kittens.

Make sure there is no other area where it might be able to bury its waste, such as a pot plant.

You can encourage the kitten to "do the right thing" by gently picking it up after its meal and putting it in the litter box.

Don't become angry about any accidents it has or try to punish it. If you do, you will make the cat less trusting and more stressed when it has the need to go in future. That's likely to cause more accidents and delay you making a strong connection with your pet.

Check with your vet about cleaners which are safe to use for cleaning the litter tray and any area which is fouled.

Are Cats Safe as Pets?

Cats can carry certain diseases which can affect humans.

So can other humans.

The actual risks are usually considered less serious or easier to control or prevent than folk wisdom might have you believe.

Many families have felt they must get rid of a faithful and much-loved cat when the wife becomes pregnant or there are young babies in the home. There is some potential risk to babies and other people with immature or damaged immune systems. But, the risks to mother and unborn child can probably be guarded against without giving away your beloved pet.

Keeping babies out of direct contact with cats and kittens and only allowing young children to have closely supervised play with them is only common sense anyway.

That should not mean they cannot share the same house.

In fact the risk of the child hurting the pet is probably higher in most circumstances.

Anyone with a damaged immune system should especially avoid contact with kittens, but cats also may carry cat-scratch disease (bartonellosis).

If you have a pregnant woman or young baby in your household, please get current professional advice about the level of risk and what precautions they need to take.

The possibility of a cat being a carrier of any dangerous disease can be reduced by keeping it indoors, preventing fleas and keeping direct contact with any person whose medical status is a problem to a minimum.

Cats which are able to catch and eat wild animals and birds may get salmonellosis which can seriously affect some humans. Keeping your cat on a processed food diet and making sure that all its meat is well-cooked will lower the risk of infection a lot.

Humans that may be at risk should always get another member of their household to clean and handle litter boxes. If they must do the cleaning themselves, they must wear gloves and wash their hands thoroughly afterward.

Again, that's no more than common sense than which I do routinely anyway.

Preventing fleas being hosted on your cat will reduce any risks from associated diseases and parasite problems.

Normal hygiene such as always washing hands and wearing gloves when handling plants and soil will also help.

Ringworms are a fungal infection which can be transmitted from a cat's skin to the floor of the home and then contact and infect a human, particularly a child because they are more likely to be on the floor.

The cat will get the blame but the usual cause is the crowded state of the home and surrounding area.

Keeping the area clean and regularly inspect the cat for any scaly grey patches on its skin will help to reduce the chance of infection.

Toxoplasmosis is probably the parasitic infection which is of greatest concern to most families.

Cats become infected through consuming infected animals or birds or something which is contaminated by an already infected cat.

The parasite will be dropped in the cat's feces for about two weeks. It becomes mature after a few days and may survive as a potent threat in the feces and contaminated materials exposed to it for months.

Standard hygiene and preventing contact with the infected material will reduce the chance of infection significantly.

Don't let pregnant women or people with reduced immune systems handle the cat's litter box at all.

Rabies is a serious viral infection which can be spread by a bite from a cat. In many jurisdictions, rabies injections are mandated for all cats and other species which may carry the disease.

These precautions may help to reduce the risk of many of the above threats and others to your cat.

Keep it indoors at all times.

Avoid wild or stray animals and birds.

Do not let your cat lick anyone or anything used with the preparation or eating of food.

Get vet attention at any sign of symptoms.

Use appropriate, safe flea and tick prevention methods.

Give it only processed or fully cooked food.

Include an annual rabies vaccination and a fecal examination for it with its other vaccinations.

Hypoallergenic Cats

These are not a breed. Hypoallergenic is a term which is used to indicate that a particular type of cat is believed less likely to cause people that are allergic to cats problems than most other cats.

They have less hairs than most other cats, some have almost none.

The allergen which often causes the reaction insusceptible people may be on a ca's fur but it is also found in their saliva.

The allergen may also be spread by dry flakes of the cat's skin (with allergen attached) being blown around. So, it is possible to come into contact with the allergen even if there are no cats in a particular household.

Toys for Your Cat

You may not realize that the biggest problem with many toys which are made for cats are actually designed mainly to appeal to cat owners.

The best toys for cats are often cheap or even free.

Toy mice and three inch rubber balls (with or without bells in them) are among my cat's favorite toys.

Make sure that there are no bits where your pet might catch a claw or loose pieces which can fall off or be pulled away with its teeth or claws.

A small safe object dangling on a cord can be intriguing for a while.

Please make sure someone is watching the cat in case it catches a claw or the weight falls off.

A sun catcher, suspended well above the cat's reach will keep it amused while it chases the moving and changing reflections on the floor for quite a while on a sunny day.

Some Toys are Really Dangerous!

Balloons should never be allowed near any pet. A breaking balloon can cause serious eye injury. Pieces of balloon are a serious choking hazard for small children as well as pets.

Do not use bells which are open-mouthed or have gaps in their cover. The clapper inside some bells can be pulled out or even fall off after some time being played with. Both the clapper and the small bit of twisted wire which kept the clapper in place within the bell could get in the cat's mouth and cause serious injury or even worse!

Don't give it wadded paper, newspaper, or foil. The ink from the newspaper may be poisonous and can get in the cat's mouth and on its fur.

Foil is also a choking hazard because the cat, even a very young one, will quickly start tearing strips of foil off the wadded bundle.

Rubber bands are a choking hazard and also can get caught around part of the cat's body.

Quick Tips

These are a few suggestions which I could not put in the other Chapters. They are worth reading and doing and they cost nothing (or very little).

Lifting a Cat.

I believe the best way to lift a cat is to put one arm under its chest and the other hand behind its back legs.

Now lift and you will be supporting the cat well.

Many people hug it with one or both arms around its chest and let its back legs hang down.

This will put the spine and maybe other parts of most cats at some risk because there is so much of the animal's weight which has no support!

This can be very dangerous.

Grooming

All cats appreciate being gently groomed but it is essential to groom your long-haired cat every day.

If they are not groomed, you get more loose fur on your furniture and clothes. But, their fur becomes matted and can become so bad that the cat has to be tranquilized so the fur can be shaved away!

The risk of skin problems increases.

Save yourself and your pet from problems with a daily brush. It's not only a good way to check their general health, it's a great excuse for some quality time together.

Most Important tip in this book!

Unless you are a professional cat breeder, please get your cat desexed at the age your vet recommends.

Keep your cat safe indoors.

Your cat faces a few hazards indoors which I've mentioned earlier in this ebook.

But, outside can be a real dangerous jungle, especially if it roams off your property.

Some people will take extreme measures against any cats on their property. These include Pigeon racers (and some other bird breeders) and gardeners.

My uncle was a keen gardener. He trained their family cat to walk along the paths between his garden beds and let it use a spare bed as its toilet. It was known and welcome at all the neighbors' gardens because it kept birds away and never touched the plants.

But, even if it was trained like that, I would not let mine roam these days.

Gardens are dangerous!

Although I mentioned my uncle let his cat in his garden, it's not a very safe place for cats (or most other pets). Most sprays and other chemicals are poisonous and even some which are not labeled as poisons, including snail baits which may be labeled pet-safe can cause serious effects.

Get Ready for a Great Adventure

I hope that you got some ideas and some necessary alerts which will help you to get greater enjoyment and memories with your new cat.

I have enjoyed writing the book and doing it has helped me recall many wonderful half-forgotten memories of our previous cats.

Every cat is different. Every cat is a friend you haven't met yet.

Enjoy the journey with your cat and spread the word how wonderful they are!

Barbara Ford

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