

Cat Is Unusually Small

CatChannel veterinary expert, Arnold Plotnick, DVM, explains why some full-grown cats look like kittens.

By Arnold Plotnick, DVM

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Q: I adopted a kitten last year, and now she is about 18 months old. The Humane Society claims she's a domestic shorthair. But, she only weighs 4 pounds, 13 ounces and is perfectly healthy! What breed or classification of cat would she be considered?

She's not much bigger than the day I got her at 8 weeks old. It's a little strange, but I love her to death! I love having a cat that will stay the size of a kitten.

A: Just because your cat is small doesn't mean that she is an unusual type of cat or a specific breed. She probably is a domestic shorthair that just happens to be very small.

Perhaps before you adopted her, she didn't receive adequate nutrition during the first few months of her life, and her growth was stunted as a result. Or perhaps she was the "runt" of the litter. I can't be sure. I would have your veterinarian confirm that she's perfectly healthy. Some congenital disorders (for example, a liver disorder called a portosystemic shunt) can cause small body stature. If your vet pronounces her healthy, then you've gotten your wish: a cat that looks like a kitten forever.

I had a cat named Ethel who was tiny her entire life. She often was mistaken for a kitten, even during the last two years of her life (years 19 and 20!), when she lived at my cat hospital.