

Is My Adopted Cat Happy Being Indoors?

CatChannel expert Marilyn Krieger, CCBC, discusses ways to battle boredom — and perhaps find a companion cat.

By Marilyn Krieger

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Q: We adopted a 2-year-old longhair cat from a local shelter who we named Kath Mandu. Originally, he was found wandering in a nearby town with a bad open wound. No one has any idea how long he was outside. He now is in great health and is strictly an indoor cat, never allowed outside, though he does want to go outdoors. We are considering another cat for companionship and want to get him a kitten. Instead of another shelter cat, we would like to get a breed cat instead. We are considering a Norwegian Forest Cat. We are basically new to the world of cat ownership. Sometimes Kath Mandu looks bored, and other times, he's like a new kitten racing through the house. We need some advice.

A: Kath Mandu will live a longer, healthier life as an indoor cat. The key to his indoor happiness lies in making the indoors more fun and desirable than the outdoors. The inclement weather helps, since being inside where it's dry and warm wins hands-down over the cold, wet and miserable outdoors. Environmental enrichment and regular scheduled activities will also help keep him amused and busy. Tall cat trees next to secure windows, interactive toys, horizontal and vertical scratchers, window perches and tunnels are a few items that will help keep him entertained. Also, engaging Kath Mandu in activities he loves at the same time every day will provide him with something to look forward to. I am a big advocate of clicker training. Clicker training will give Kath Mandu a focus, is challenging and fun, and will help strengthen and build the bonds between you.

There are many factors to consider when bringing home a new cat friend. Research the breed and the individual personalities of cats you are considering acquiring. Keep in mind the possibility that Kath Mandu might be a cat who wants to be king of his castle and doesn't appreciate the finer points of having a new cat friend. Energy levels are another important consideration. The cats should have similar activity needs. A cat that enjoys hanging from chandeliers and playing incessantly would not be a good match for a cat that has more limited play needs. I also recommend finding a cat who is used to living with other cats, and has a more mellow disposition. A younger spayed female or an easygoing neutered male may be a good choice of friends for Kath Mandu. Besides Norwegian Forest Cats, check out Maine Coon cats for a potential buddy for him.

Whenever bringing a new cat into the household, make sure that the new cat is confined away from the resident cat. Introductions can take a month or longer and need to be done very slowly. Kath Mandu has been the reigning king and he may not readily accept a stranger into his realm.