

The Right Kitten

Experiencing the empty nest syndrome? A kitten might be just what you need.

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Do Cats Benefit? Trends show that cat ownership is on the rise and the number of cats relinquished to shelters has dropped, but it's unclear whether the trend is tied to baby boomers filling their empty nests, said Nancy Peterson, companion animal specialist for the Humane Society of the United States. However, studies have shown that the age range of the main caregivers is between 34 and the upper 50s, she says.

Cats may benefit from bonding with boomers, Peterson says, because an emotional connection may motivate people to be quality caregivers.

One clear benefit for boomer cats is the amount of pampering they receive.

Boomers are more than willing to pay for professional cat sitters and luxury items such as Gucci cat beds and fur-lined cat posts, Vetere says. They're no longer worrying about big mortgage payments or writing checks for kids school supplies. So, there's a lot more disposable income and they're spending it on their pets.

The Next Generation Experts say it's unclear whether baby boomers started the trend of cats as children, but they agree that the boomer generation certainly won't be the end of it.

Feline practitioner Craig Tebeau, DVM, of The Cat Doctor Veterinary Center in Federal Way, Wash., says most pet owners view their cats as more than just animals. Most view their cats as little children, he says. It's not specific to baby boomers, Tebeau says. A lot of people from teenagers to seniors are taking better care of their cats.

And that's good news for the feline babies of this generation and beyond.

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