

Finding Your Feline Friend

Ready to add a new cat to your life? Consider these adoption options.

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To the RescueNonprofit animal shelters exist to place animals in homes and keep them off the streets. A typical shelter kitten is a mixed-breed stray with an unknown genetic history. Though some kittens may be there because of behavior issues, most were simply abandoned or got lost, and can easily adapt to your home and lifestyle. Purebred kittens occasionally turn up in shelters. Even those with past behavioral problems can usually, with a little effort, be trained especially if you adopt them at a young age.

Research, word-of-mouth and common sense are equally valuable tools at a shelter. Make sure walls and cages are clean and there is plenty of staff on hand to care for the kittens. Most shelters have a room where you can spend one-on-one time with a kitten before adopting it, and you should use that time to make the same observations of health and alertness that you would at a cattery.

The rule of not adopting out of pity is equally important at a shelter. Neglect should not be supported and, again, you don't want to wind up with a bad match just because you feel sorry for a kitten. The cost to adopt from a shelter should include an in-house vet exam, varying amounts of vaccinations, a license tag, and spaying or neutering.

The types of cats found at shelters vary tremendously. There are two basic types: socialized and feral. A socialized cat has been in contact with humans and is generally comfortable in their presence. A feral cat was born and raised on the streets, and is unaccustomed to human contact.

Even when [feral cats] are tiny, they'll bare their teeth and they'll hiss, said Bryan Kortis of Neighborhood Cats in New York. They may act quite fierce at first. In their mind you're a predator. It will take more work to win over a feral kitten than a socialized kitten, but the reward can be tremendous.

What it all boils down to is this: The kitten for you is the one you want. If you want a rescue cat, get a rescue cat. If you want a purebred, then get a purebred. This big, confusing plethora of different kitten options can be a fun journey of discovering your wants and your future kittens needs.