

Meet Author Clea Simon

Find out the inspiration behind her latest book, *Cattery Row*.

By Stacy N. Hackett

Author Clea Simon with her cat, Musetta. (Photo courtesy of Clea Simon) Why did you write the book? The simple answer would be, "Because I had so much fun writing my first mystery, *Mew is for Murder*, and I knew I wanted this to be a series." Also, I love cats — and I love mysteries! On a more immediate level, I'd heard of a cattery being broken into and cats stolen and that made me wonder: Why would someone steal pedigreed cats? So while I was pondering that question, *Cattery Row* was forming in my head.

Who or what was your inspiration for Theda Krakow and her cat? I have always loved spunky female amateur detectives, and I have a very opinionated cat named Musetta, so that was one inspiration. Plus, I wanted to work real cat-lovers' issues into a mystery setting. In *Cattery Row* I talk about breeding issues and why people breed pedigreed cats at all.

Do your pets influence your writing? Very much so! I make a point of observing Musetta. When I write about a cat in a certain situation — whether she is scared or poised to attack — I want to get it right. It certainly helps to have my inspiration close at hand.

What is your writing process? At the beginning, I start with the basic idea of the crime and the criminal, and I can usually have fun with that for a while. But at some point I have to settle down, and then I spend time figuring out the details, such as, "Who will Theda ask to feed Musetta if she takes off after the bad guy?" She wouldn't leave home without making plans like that — I know I wouldn't!

Were certain parts of the book more difficult to write than others? Which ones? I find it difficult to write about cats in jeopardy. It cuts too close to home to endanger animals, even in a work of fiction! But I think I have to put my cats in danger at times, to heighten suspense. But you can be sure that I'll never hurt a cat in any of my books.

Do you have any other books? I have three nonfiction books in print, including *The Feline Mystique: On the Mysterious Connection Between Women and Cats* (St. Martin's Press). This book looks at the cat-woman connection through history, mythology, art, pop culture and current true stories. I also have my first mystery, *Mew is for Murder*. Folks can read about my other books on my website.

What can we expect next from Theda Krakow? I am revising what I hope will be the third book in the series, *Cries and Whiskers*. I don't want to give away too much, but I will tell you that a feral cat rescuer runs into trouble. Musetta plays an even more active role. Her feline instincts lead to her making a heroic rescue!

Stacy N. Hackett is a contributing web editor for CatChannel.com and the former editor of *Pet Product News* magazine. She lives in Southern California with her husband, James, children, Kayla and Parker, and two adorable Cornish Rex cats, Evita and Carson.

In April 2007's CAT FANCY:
Get the discussion questions from this month's cat book club for *Cattery Row*.