

Catch Up With Authors Marty Becker, DVM, and Gina Spadafori

Learn more about the inspiration behind their book "The Ultimate Cat Lover: The Best Experts' Advice for a Happy, Healthy Cat."

By Stacy N. Hackett

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Marty Becker, DVM, can be found on his Idaho horse ranch when he's not speaking or on TV. 1. What was the inspiration behind the book?

Cats are the most popular pet in the United States and Canada, yet they do not receive the same level of care as dogs. There seems to be this idea that cats can take care of themselves, and that isn't right. Cats that do not receive the best care don't live as long, and their lives aren't as healthy. We wanted to achieve two things with this book: Celebrate the cat with wonderful true stories and gorgeous color pictures, and encourage people to think about the nuts and bolts of providing better care for the pets. After all, a healthier, happier cat will be a more loving companion.

2. How did you choose the other stories for the book?

It's hard to describe, really. Although a story well told will naturally rise to the top, we knew we could fix most basic problems with the writing. The stories we sought were those that touched our hearts or shared something special that made us stop and reflect on our lives with cats. The stories taught us, inspired us or conveyed what we wanted people to know about the gifts cats bring to our lives. We had so many submissions, but those stories that were truly special, that had something special to say, jumped out at us and stayed with us.

3. What was the most difficult part of writing the book?

We both find writing about pets, sharing our love of pets, to be something of a calling, so whatever difficulties we have generally involve competing commitments. Our weekly syndicated newspaper feature always has to be done. Dr. Becker's regular appearances on "Good Morning America" require him to travel across country, as does his speaking schedule. ... Finding time to work on the book was difficult! However, we liked the idea for this series — which includes volumes for dogs, horses and birds — and we had stories we wanted to share. So we made the time, because it was important to us!

4. What was the most rewarding part of writing the book?

We loved working with people who had great stories to tell and pictures to share, knowing that we'd be giving them an audience of cat lovers who would appreciate both the words and the images. We also enjoyed working with the many experts who contributed their guidance in the "Must Know" section of the book.

5. What type of feedback have you received so far?

Very positive. We offered "free samples" of the book on our web site — a selection of the best parts from the book — and thousands of people took us up on the offer. At Book Expo America, we had long lines of people wanting a signed book. Most importantly, we've had many cat lovers tell us they enjoyed the stories and found the "Must Know" sections helpful and educational.

6. What is your writing process?

We begin by talking with each other and with the experts. We pride ourselves on offering our readers the most cutting-edge information, no matter which media we're working in: print, television, Internet or radio. Once we've completed the interviews and conducted the research, we plan how to present the information. It doesn't help anyone if we present this great information in a way that isn't interesting. So we work on a style we call "edutainment" — the best information, presented in a way that's interesting and will leave our fans wanting more.

7. Do you have any other books?

We have written more than 20 books together, as individuals and with other co-authors. (Becker is co-author of "Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover's Soul." Spadafori wrote the first three books in the "... For Dummies" pet-care series) Together we've written eight books (soon to be nine), with more in the works. Two of our books, "Chicken Soup" and "Why Do Dogs Drink Out of the Toilet" made the New York Times bestseller list. We're proud of our work, of course, but more than anything else we're pleased to be able to share this information with other pet lovers.

8. Do you own a cat or other pets?

Do we ever! Becker lives on a horse ranch in Idaho, and his four-legged family includes cats, horses and dogs. Spadafori lives in Sacramento, Calif., on a suburban micro-farm with cats, dogs, a caique parrot and a flock of hens.

9. Do your pets influence your writing?

They always have and always will. We never stop learning, and we never stop looking for ways to share our love of animals with others. In this way, they can have their lives made more joyous through the strength of what Dr. Becker calls, "The Bond." We love our pets; indeed, we love ALL pets, and that love cannot help but influence what we do.

Stacy N. Hacket shares her Southern California home with two Cornish Rex cats, Carson and Evita, and Jackson, an orange tabby.