

Catch Up With Author Steve Duno

Learn more about the inspiration behind his book 'Be the Cat: Secrets of the Natural Cat Owner.'

By Stacy N. Hackett

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Author Steve Duno has written 17 books in the past 13 years. 1. What was the inspiration behind the book? Over the years I have found that certain people simply make better cat owners than others; I call them "natural" cat owners. They just seem to have an innate understanding for cats and apply this to everyday life at home. They have what I call "effective feline empathy." Instead of trying to turn their cats into proxy people, they turn themselves into proxy cats. The inspiration for the book comes from them; I wanted to codify just what it is about these natural-born cat owners that makes them so effective, then teach it to readers who might not have that instinctive understanding.

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

Creating the perfect outline is always the most crucial and painstaking part of writing one of my books. Once that is done, writing the book itself is a breeze.

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

Knowing that the book I'm writing will help cat owners bond or reconnect with their cats. This helps save the lives of thousands of cats who might otherwise be euthanized. I know; people have written me to tell me.

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

The feedback I get is almost always complimentary. Cat lovers seem to appreciate a book that lays out concrete steps to make life with kitty easier. A few owners do wonder if teaching a cat new behavioral info such as coming when called, sitting on command or simply a larger vocabulary is appropriate for a cat; I maintain that making your cat smarter can only increase confidence, making her happier and more adaptable.

5. What is your writing process?

Once I have the concept clear, I write a detailed outline, right down to chapter subheadings. Then I simply follow it like a road map. Doing it this way gives me the confidence to continue, even on days when inspiration is low. Of course, the finished product rarely reflects the original outline; along the way, things change and new ideas pop up. It's fun!

6. Do you have any other books?

I have published 17 books in the last 13 years: 15 pet related, and two on golf. Yes, golf! They include: "Choosing a Dog" (Berkeley, 1995) "Leader of the Pack" (HarperCollins, 1996) "Show Biz Tricks for Cats" (Adams, 1996) "The Everything Cat Book" (Adams, 1997) "Anti-Aging for Dogs" (St. Martin's Press, 1998) "Plump Pups and Fat Cats" (St. Martin's Press, 1999) "Caddie Sense" (St. Martin's Press, 2000) "Bad Dog!" (St. Martin's Press, 2000) "No Kitty!" (St. Martin's Press, 2000) "The K.I.S.S. Guide to Golf" (DK Publishing, 2000) "The K.I.S.S. Guide to Cats" (DK Publishing, 2001) "Every Dog's Guide to Living With a Neurotic Owner" (B&N, 2003, and Sterling, 2005) "The Only Cat Book You'll Ever Need" (Adams, 2005) "The Clever Cat Trick Kit Book" (Barnes & Noble, 2007) "The Amazing Dog Trick Kit Book" (Chronicle, 2007) "Be the Dog: Secrets of the Natural Dog Owner" (Sterling, 2008) "Be the Cat: Secrets of the Natural Cat Owner" (Sterling, 2008)

7. Do you currently own a cat or other pets? Tell us a little bit about them.

I am unfortunately in between great cats right now, though I do foster and rescue more than my share. My next cat will need to deal with two big German Shepherd mix rescues. The 9-year-old, Flavio, was a rescue who was severely abused, and the 2-year-old, Rico, is a rescue off of the Yakima Indian Reservation. He is a furry tornado.

8. Do your pets influence your writing?

The pets I have owned have always been the primary motivators for my books and articles. They have all been hard-luck success stories. What can I say? I'm a sucker for the tough cases. I keep saying I'll get a purebred pet one day, but it never seems to happen!

Stacy N. Hackett, a freelance writer based in Southern California, shares her home with two adorable Cornish Rex cats, Evita and Carson, and a playful orange tabby kitten, Jackson.

