

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAT

Cats' personalities are as varied as their colours. Make sure you adopt a cat that matches your personality and lifestyle. From lap cats to feline athletes, there's a match for you! Spend time with different cats, and ask questions about the personality of the cat you're considering. You can tell more about the personality of an older cat than a younger one.



Programs and services provided by the Ottawa Humane Society are made possible thanks to your financial support.

Please support the animals in our community.



Ottawa Humane Society

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Only 5%-7% of stray cats are claimed at the OHS, as most lack identification and can't be traced back to their owners.

WHERE SHOULD YOU GET A CAT?

Excitement leads to heartbreak when you obtain a kitten from a friend, relative or neighbour, only to find out that he's sick or requires hundreds of dollars of care at a veterinary clinic. Whether you opt for a purebred cat or a cat from a newspaper ad, you should make sure the cat you adopt is in good health. Beware of the "free" cat... make sure you obtain some form of health guarantee, or at least that the cat has been to a veterinarian and has a clean bill of health, along with up-to-date vaccines and deworming medication. Have your new pet seen by a veterinarian to make sure he's healthy.



One-third of all cats surrendered to animal shelters were obtained from friends, neighbours or relatives.

SHOULD YOU LET YOUR CAT OUTSIDE?

Your cat must be under your control if you let her outside. It's the law! City of Ottawa Bylaw Officers can pick up nuisance cats that bother neighbours. Free-roaming felines also fall victim to cars, catfights, wildlife attacks, animal cruelty, contact with parasites, viruses and more. Not only can these hazards increase your veterinary costs, but they can also lead to heartbreak if your pet becomes lost or injured, or worse, is killed.

Many cats that become lost are never found again by their owners. Always combine visual identification (break-away collar and tag) with permanent identification (microchip) for the best protection. This also applies to indoor cats, as they can escape!



YOU'RE READY FOR A CAT!

So, you've asked yourself important questions and know it's time to adopt a cat. Congratulations! As a result of planning ahead, you can expect many years of unconditional love and companionship together.

THINKING ABOUT A CAT?

Did you know that cats are the number one pet in North America? There are many reasons for their popularity as companion animals!



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WHY ARE CATS IDEAL COMPANIONS?

Cats are low maintenance compared to many animals. For example, cats:

- are fairly quiet
- can live in smaller spaces
- are independent yet affectionate
- need minimal exercise and training
- typically cost less than other pets
- can be left unsupervised **indoors** for longer periods than dogs

No matter how ideal a cat may be, it's important to ask yourself some questions **before** you adopt one. Why? Because although cat ownership provides many rewards, it also requires some time, as well as emotional and financial commitment. Too many cats are surrendered to animal shelters or abandoned because their owners didn't plan ahead. Here are some things to think about:

DOES YOUR LIFESTYLE ACCOMMODATE A CAT?

Although cats are fairly self-sufficient, they do require regular care and nurturing. Cats appreciate being loved and played with every day. They must have access to food, fresh water and a clean litter-box. Cats also thrive on routine. If you're away often or anticipate a major life-style change in the near future, you may want to postpone adding a cat to your family. A cat is a long-term commitment: a cat's average lifespan is 12 to 15 years. However, many cats live more than 20 years!



If you do have busy life but really would like a cat, you may want to consider adopting two cats, so that they can keep each other company when you're not home.



HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO OWN A CAT?

Cats are generally less expensive to maintain than dogs. But you should still budget for supplies and veterinary costs. You should also expect more medical bills as your cat ages. You can purchase pet insurance (\$25–\$30 per month) to offset many unforeseen health expenses. Here are some average costs you should plan for:

Supplies:

- microchip permanent identification (\$60)
- break-away collar and visible identification tag (\$15)
- municipal license (free in Ottawa if your cat is spayed/neutered and microchipped)
- food and water bowls (\$20)
- litter supplies (\$25)
- scratching post (\$50–\$100)
- safe toys (\$10)
- brushes and combs (\$10)
- leash and harness (\$15–\$25)
- clean-up products (\$10–\$20)
- cat food (\$15–\$20 per month)
- litter (\$10 per month)

One-time veterinary costs:

- spay/neuter surgery (\$150–\$200)

Annual veterinary costs:

- vaccinations and check-ups (\$75–\$100)
- regular dental care — especially important as cats age, to avoid serious health problems (\$500–\$800)

When you adopt a cat from the Ottawa Humane Society, some of these costs are covered by the adoption fee, including spay/neuter surgery, microchip, initial vaccinations and several weeks of pet insurance.



WHAT IS "NORMAL" CAT BEHAVIOUR?

Normal cat behaviour often includes activities that may be undesirable to owners. In fact, behaviour issues are the major reason cats end up at animal shelters. Young cats in particular (less than one year of age) are extremely active. Cats *do* become calmer as they age. However, if you enjoy a quiet and orderly environment, you may want to consider adopting an older cat.

Be ready to deal with your cat's behaviour issues early, so that you have the best chance of resolving them. Behaviours that are perfectly natural for your cat but which may bother you include:

- scratching furniture and carpets (to condition claws, and mark territory by leaving their scent)
- tearing curtains
- breaking objects
- jumping on counters
- eating plants
- inconsistent use of litter-box and house-soiling incidents (may be a behavioural or medical issue)
- night-time yowling, especially if not neutered (cats are nocturnal!)
- spraying (if not spayed or neutered)



Also, for an animal with such a great reputation for cleanliness, cats can be pretty messy on occasion — shedding, spilling food and water, vomiting hairballs and having various litter-box "accidents."

Talk to your veterinarian, do an online search, visit your local library or contact the Ottawa Humane Society for information on how to deal with any of these challenging behaviours.

