



Paw Prints

Jodi Schneider McNamee
Columnist

Cat personalities

You're looking to adopt a cat and wondering how to find the right feline fit for your household.

Horses have it. Dogs, birds, fish and even mollusks do, too: The "it" is personality, something that both you and your cat will share with each other nearly every waking moment.

But what, exactly, is personality?

According to Sander Van Doorn, PhD, a researcher at the Santa Fe Institute in New Mexico and one of the world's leading experts on the evolution of personality in animals, "Personality is a complex of behavioral traits that go together without obvious reason."

He also says that such traits are what help to characterize uniqueness among individuals. In other words, no two cats or humans think and behave exactly alike.

All animals are born with a unique set of DNA. And it is possible to know the genetics of purebred felines because a lot of cat breeds have been around long enough that their distinguishing characteristics or personalities are fairly constant.

For example, the Maine coon tends to be active and flexible while the Persian is loving and quiet.

The environment in which your cat was raised and now lives also can affect personality. If a cat lived under stressful conditions she might develop fears that a feline lounging in a lap of luxury might not develop.

But most likely the cat you might end up adopting will be a mixed breed, and she may have an unknown social background.

So here are the three ranks or personality types to help you choose the type of kitty that would fit best into your lifestyle:

The alpha cat gets the highest spot or certain claimed areas. They have deep roots in determination and confidence.

An alpha is a wonderful

cat, but she is not for everyone. She is the reason china cabinets have doors and kitchen cabinets have baby locks. If something is opened, unfastened or button pressed, it was an alpha who did it. Her boundless curiosity and intelligence makes her who she is; the experimenter.

The most likely ways alphas will catch your attention will be by doing something that got your attention the first time. She loves the spotlight. She not only likes to watch you doing things, she wants to join in. Alphas can more than handle busy households, and most other animals.

More than any other cat type, alphas need to be disciplined with persuasion. She wants to please you, but when something interesting moves across her sensitive radar, she forgets. Always full of energy, she will retain her kitten playfulness most of her life.

The beta cat is mellow, takes everything in stride and will cooperate once they know where they rank.

A beta cat will try to manipulate you with her talking; but some aren't big talkers, so she might try the "Lassie Move" where she will catch your attention and try to get you to follow her to the object of interest. She

wants to please you, so a few corrections is usually all it takes for her to leave things alone, but she has a lot of energy and playfulness, especially as a kitten.

Betas love companionship, whether it be respectful dogs or properly coached children. She is the most likely cat to meet strangers, especially if the guests are sensible enough to admire her.

If your business needs a "greater cat," look for a beta. This outgoing quality makes her especially easy to care for, because if the food dish is getting low or the litter box isn't being kept up, you will know about it right away. Betas are known as "supervisors." She loves to watch you do things.

The gamma cat is somewhat shy and hates to make a fuss. They are low-key and easy to get along with.

A gamma cat is sweet and mellow. She is somewhat shy, but once her trust is won, she will love your attention. She always has time for you. The challenge of the gamma is not immediately apparent. You must take time for her.

Gammas are teddy bears, so unassuming that she will not assert herself except in an emergency. It's up to you, as a responsible gamma pet parent, to keep tabs on her,



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Corduroy is a beta cat

making sure the water bowl is fresh and the food bowl is full.

A gamma cat must be protected in households with dogs or children, and then they can get along. The gamma cat will feel under siege in certain stressful situations, so keep an eye out for her.

When choosing a new cat or kitten, try to get a type that fits in with your existing cats. A younger beta will love an Alpha kitten, or another beta. A gamma would do best with an older beta, or another gamma. Alphas love everyone, but can overwhelm a gamma, or a shy adult beta.

Top Ten Reasons to Adopt a Black Cat...

10. You'll save money on their Halloween costumes.
9. You can always find them in the snow.
8. Holding a black cat is very slimming.
7. Black cats will match any décor.
6. A lint brush isn't required for a black-tie affair.
5. When you love a black cat, luck is on your side.
4. Black cats are like onyx, a beautiful gem.
3. Hey, they don't care what color you are!
2. Love knows no color.

And the number-one reason to adopt a black cat...

1. They are the least likely to be adopted.

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MARLENA, a petite beautiful green-eyed kitty with a beautiful black coat wants to come home with you!

Marlena is about 1-1/2 years old and is a domestic short-hair mix.

She is a little on the shy side but warms up quickly!

Stop by BrightSide to meet Marlena and her other black kitty friends.

Marlena's Animal ID #23068041

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