

fabcats

up close and purrrsonal.....



PURINA

felix
paw print

REPORT OF THE
CAT PERSONALITY SURVEY

FAB
feline advisory bureau



BRUSHING TEETH HAS NEVER BEEN
SUCH A TREAT.

NEW *felix* 

DENTAPAW. WORKS A TREAT ON TEETH. (AND CATS).



fabcats

up close and purrsonal



The FAB Cats Up Close and Purrsonal report marks the beginning of the 2004 FAB Year of the Cat (sponsored by Purina) and certainly makes for interesting reading. Over a year in the making, it has revealed many new feline facts and figures. Using the data provided by the FAB/Felix survey we have explored the effect of the kitten's early environment on behaviour, cat-to-cat relationships, the effects of age and lifestyle on behaviour, hunting habits and differences in the personalities of breeds. Some of the results confirm current theories about felines; others reveal new information that helps us to learn more about the welfare, needs and behaviour of cats.

The FAB/Felix cat personality survey was published in *Your Cat* magazine, the *FAB Journal* and on the Purina and FAB websites. These sites and publications reach people who are keenly interested in cats and their welfare. On behalf of FAB, I would like to thank the 1800 people who took the time to answer the wide-ranging questions providing the raw material for the survey. Scientifically speaking, this self-selecting sample of caring and responsible breeders and cat owners may not represent the true spread of people who own cats. There were far more pedigree breeds in this survey than would be expected in the general population of cats and perhaps respondents would be best categorised as enthusiastic cat owners.

However, we can still learn much from the findings. The enormous job of scientifically evaluating the thousands of pieces of information from the original questionnaires and drawing conclusions from them, fell to epidemiologist Dr Vicki Adams at the Animal Health Trust. Her skill, expertise and patience in answering our many queries are gratefully acknowledged. Thanks also must go to Felix whose support and interest in learning more about our cats and how we can improve our care for them has made this report possible.

'A picture tells a thousand words'

The beautiful pictures in this report were kindly provided by Jane Burton of Warren Photographic and the breed pictures by Paddy Cutts of Animals Unlimited. Our thanks to them for their talent and their support for our charity. It is most appreciated.

Chief Executive of FAB
Claire Bessant



FAB **catfacts**

The Feline Advisory Bureau is a charity dedicated to promoting the health and welfare of cats through advancing standards of veterinary practice and of care provided by owners, breeders and catteries. FAB supports lectureships at veterinary schools and organises symposia where feline experts can share their knowledge with other veterinary surgeons, breeders and cat owners. One of its publications, the *FAB Journal*, carries scientific papers and news on all aspects of feline medicine and care. FAB also publishes a raft of information for cat owners on a range of feline health and behaviour problems. These are available on its website

www.fabcats.org

Top cats

Cats have pushed the dog off its top slot as man's best friend.



Moggies rule

Just over 90 per cent of all cats in the UK are non-pedigree, the black and white (like Felix), and the tabby being the most commonly occurring colours.

FAB SURVEY RESULTS

In the FAB/Felix Personality survey, 1853 surveys were received. Sixty per cent of those taking part owned moggies. Forty per cent owned pedigrees, with the Siamese and Burmese being the most frequently reported breed, followed by Persians. Most breeds were represented in the survey.



For thousands of years cats have lived with people. The Ancient Egyptians certainly placed cats in high regard - worshipping them as gods. But the feline has not always fared so well in this country. There have been periods of history when cats were persecuted - in the 13th century women who owned a cat were declared witches and burned.

At other times, when cats had become a scare commodity, they were highly valued as 'mousers' on ships, farms and in homes.

But it is in these enlightened times that the cat has really come into its own by providing companionship to millions.

The cat has never been so popular. Over the past 10 years numbers have increased dramatically. Cats in the UK



now outnumber dogs, taking the position of most popular pet with a population of just over 7 million as compared to 6 million dogs.

Changes in lifestyle have helped the cat increase in popularity. The cat's independent nature has proved advantageous. More and more of us live in homes where both partners work. We live in more urban environments. When space and free time are at a premium, the cat comes into its own. Surveys of the cat population undertaken by the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association have found that 92 per cent of cats in the UK are moggies - cats with no particular pedigree.

Cat numbers may be on the increase but according to the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF), the feline equivalent of the Kennel Club, the total number of pedigree cats registered with them changes little year on year. In the past 10 years the number of pedigree cats has wavered around the 30,000 mark.

Proportionately, the number of pedigree cats in the UK is, therefore, actually falling. While the total number of breed registrations

remains fairly constant there have been marked changes in the popularity of particular breeds. Ten years ago the Persian was by far the most popular breed, accounting for a third of all registrations. Now it accounts for only a sixth of registrations and has fallen into second place behind the British Shorthair in the popularity tables. The Siamese and Burmese are currently ranked third and fourth in popularity.

FAB SURVEY RESULTS

what's in a name?

To many people, choosing a name for their cat provides an opportunity to let the imagination run riot, the more exotic the name the better. Others choose to honour their favourite characters from books or films. This survey, however, found that the most popular names for cats are those that we would also be likely to give to our children.

While the traditional Tigger, Sooty and Jasper still recur with some frequency, the top three names for male cats in this survey were Charlie, Sam and Billy; for female cats Lucy, Poppy and Cleo. Many of the top cat names reflected popular names for children. The trend in feline names towards those more commonly associated with people could be a sign of just how important cats are in our lives - as important as children for many. In this survey there was also a greater range of names for female cats than male cats - the same can be said for girls and boys.

Like the pedigree racehorse, it was often the pedigree registered names that are most exotic or unusual - certain names being linked to particular lines of breeding: Tonkaholics Picka, Seetez Black Karinari. These cats were also likely to have pet names that are much easier to use on a daily basis. Abracacabra, Fishbone, Wacky Pie, Jyro and Marbles were among some of the more imaginative pet names from this survey. Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter and the Simpsons and other cartoons provided good sources of names with Frodo, Hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, Dumbledore, Hermione and Homer cropping up at regular intervals. Childhood influences were also apparent with names like Bag Puss, Bambi and Barbie Doll.

For many, appearance played its part in the naming process with Caramel, Blackie, Cotton Sox, Snowflake, Ebony, Fat Cat, Badger or Fluffy conjuring up a picture of the cat. Personality may have played its part for Loopy, Loco and Grumpy. Not every cat owner felt the need to take the time to find that unusual name for his or her feline companion. Three were simply called 'Cat'. One mysteriously, 'Dog'.

FAB Top 10 names

Male cats

Charlie
Sammy
Billy
Oscar
Oliver
Ben
Smokie
Tigger
Sooty
Leo

FAB Top10 names

Female cats

Lucy
Poppy
Cleo
Holly
Daisy
Molly
Tabitha
Misty
Amber
Chloe



abreedapart?

Are pedigree cats really that different to the ever popular moggie?

a

ll cats are beautiful

- be they pedigree or moggie (non-

pedigree). Over 90 per cent of our pet cats are moggies, but what of the pedigrees - what makes them different? Pedigree cat colours vary tremendously but unlike their canine counterparts, breeds do not show such a huge range in size. Some breeds may only come in a limited range of colours; may be a lighter build or their faces maybe flatter or more angular than others. It is often the differences in personality that make the breed stand apart - something we hope to explore later in this report.

There are about 30 breeds of cats registered with the GCCF. The most popular 20 breeds are listed here, starting with the British Shorthair, currently the breed with the highest number of registrations.

British Shorthair

The British Shorhair is a large cat with a sturdy body, heavy feet and small, neat ears and large eyes. The short coat is dense and crisp and comes in a wide variety of colours from solid (self) colours from black to red, to combinations of bi-colour (white with any of the self colours), colour pointed like Siamese, smoke, tabby in various colours and tortoiseshell. It is said to have a very friendly and affectionate temperament.

Persian

Known officially as the Longhair, the Persian has a medium sized, sturdy body, flat face and large round eyes that are in most cases copper-coloured or orange. The Persian's coat is long and luxuriant with a soft undercoat that requires regular grooming to keep it from matting. The Persian comes in an enormous range of colours and markings but it is often the chinchilla (with a white coat and emerald green eyes which look as if they have been outlined with kohl pencil) which comes to mind when we think of the Persian. Persians are said to be gentle, friendly and undemanding.

Siamese

Probably the most well known of all breeds, the modern Siamese has a long elegant body, fine legs and tail and a wedged shaped head with blue eyes. Siamese have short hair and come in a range of colour points from the well known seal point to among others chocolate, lilac, red and cinnamon points.



Because the mask, ears, stockings and tail (the points) are at a cooler temperature than the body, they are pigmented differently, being darker than the paler body. Siamese are intelligent, talkative and playful cats. They are often described as 'dog-like', because of their willingness to retrieve items, walk on a harness and even to learn tricks.

Burmese

Burmese have a short, shiny, dense coat that feels wonderful to stroke and comes in brown, blue, chocolate, lilac, red cream and brown, blue, chocloate and lilac tortie. Its body is medium sized and sturdy and it has a rounded head and wide set ears. In profile it has a firm chin and a distinct nose 'break', unlike the straight profile of the Siamese. The Burmese is said to be an outgoing and very energetic cat that likes human attention.

Bengal

A relatively new breed of cat, created by crossing an Asian Leopard Cat with a domestic cat, its coat resembles its wild ancestor with spotted or marbled markings on a paler background. The Bengal has a sleek, muscular appearance, with



hindquarters slightly higher than the shoulders and a thick tail, carried low. It has a distinctive voice and likes playing with water. Bengals are said to be very athletic, playful and confident.

Birman

The Birman is a long-bodied cat with a rounded head and blue eyes. Its long and silky coat comes in blue, chocolate, lilac, red, cream, tortie and tabby and has darker points on a pale body. All Birmans have white feet. Birmans are said to be intelligent, gentle and quiet cats.

Ragdoll

Ragdolls are fairly big with a strong body, large tufted paws, a bushy tail and blue eyes. The silky, medium length coat comes in various 'Siamese' colours and three patterns: Colour pointed, mitted (white paw tips and underside) and bi-coloured (colour pointed with white patches). This is a breed which enjoys being picked up.





Oriental Shorthair is intelligent and energetic and is said to become very attached to its owners.

Exotic Shorthair

The Exotic Shorthair has the same shape and body size of the Persian but with much shorter hair. This breed comes in all the colours of the Persian and has the same undemanding temperament.

Devon and Cornish Rex

The Rex cats have a curly or wavy coat, in which the fine hair has a rippled appearance that comes in any colour or pattern. The Rexes have a slender muscular body, long legs and a wedge shaped head. The Devon Rex has large and low set ears which give the breed a pixie-like appearance.



Rexes are intelligent, friendly and very playful.

Asian Shorthair

A relatively new breed, Asian Shorthairs are of medium build and resemble closely their ancestors, the Burmese, with a firm and muscular body and strong straight back. The eyes are set well apart and are full and expressive and may be yellow through to green. The Asian Shorthair was bred to be of Burmese type but with a wide range of colours. Asian shorthairs are said to be intelligent and curious but less demanding than Burmese.

Tonkinese

The Tonkinese was developed from a cross between a Burmese and Siamese and looks like a 'chunkier' version of a traditional Siamese. It has a fine, close-lying short coat that comes in brown, blue, chocolate, lilac, red and cream as well as various torties and tabbies. The Tonkinese is intelligent and interactive.

Abyssinian

The Abyssinian has short, close lying double ticked fur (each hair has at least two dark bands) giving it a similar appearance to that of a wild rabbit. As well as this traditional colour it now comes in sorrel, red, blue, silver, chocolate lilac, fawn, cream and tortie. The Abyssinian is said to have a very loyal personality.



survive the cold temperatures of Norway and has a strong, long thick waterproof coat and woolly undercoat that comes in various colours and patterns. It is renowned for its great climbing and hunting skills and is said to be independent but friendly.



Russian Blue

The Russian Blue is a medium sized to large cat with a beautiful soft double coat with the texture of velvet. It has an angled profile and whisker pads that stand out a little, giving it a very strong face. The Russian Blue is said to be quiet, gentle and affectionate.

Somali

The Somali is a longhaired version of the Abyssinian and comes in the same range of colours. It has a fine but dense coat that is very soft to the touch with triple banded ticking - each hair has six bands of colour. The Somali is said to be intelligent and lively.

Egyptian Mau

The Egyptian Mau is a cat of medium size and is long and graceful with obvious muscular strength. The coat of the Egyptian Mau is short, silky and fine and has a lustrous sheen. The random spotted pattern comes in bronze, silver and smoke. The breed is said to be loving and playful.



Korat

The Korat is of medium size and is muscular and athletic. They are similar to the Russian Blue in appearance, but have a single rather than a double coat, are more rounded in shape and have peridot green rather than emerald eyes.

The wide set eyes are large and appear to be large in proportion to the face. The Korat has a quiet, sweet nature but is very intelligent and playful.

Balinese

The Balinese is a semi-longhaired Siamese with a silky coat. Its body is long and slender, the head is wedge shaped and the ears may be tufted. The Balinese is said to be less demanding than the Siamese but similarly lively and intelligent.

What did our survey find?
Turn to pages 10 and 11 to find out.

Maine Coon

One of the biggest breeds of cat with long legs, a strong body and long head and squarish muzzle, the Maine Coon has a heavy, thick waterproof coat and a bushy tail. The fur is thicker around the neck giving the cat a distinctive ruff. The coat may be of various colours and patterns. Maine Coons are said to be playful and friendly.



Oriental Shorthair

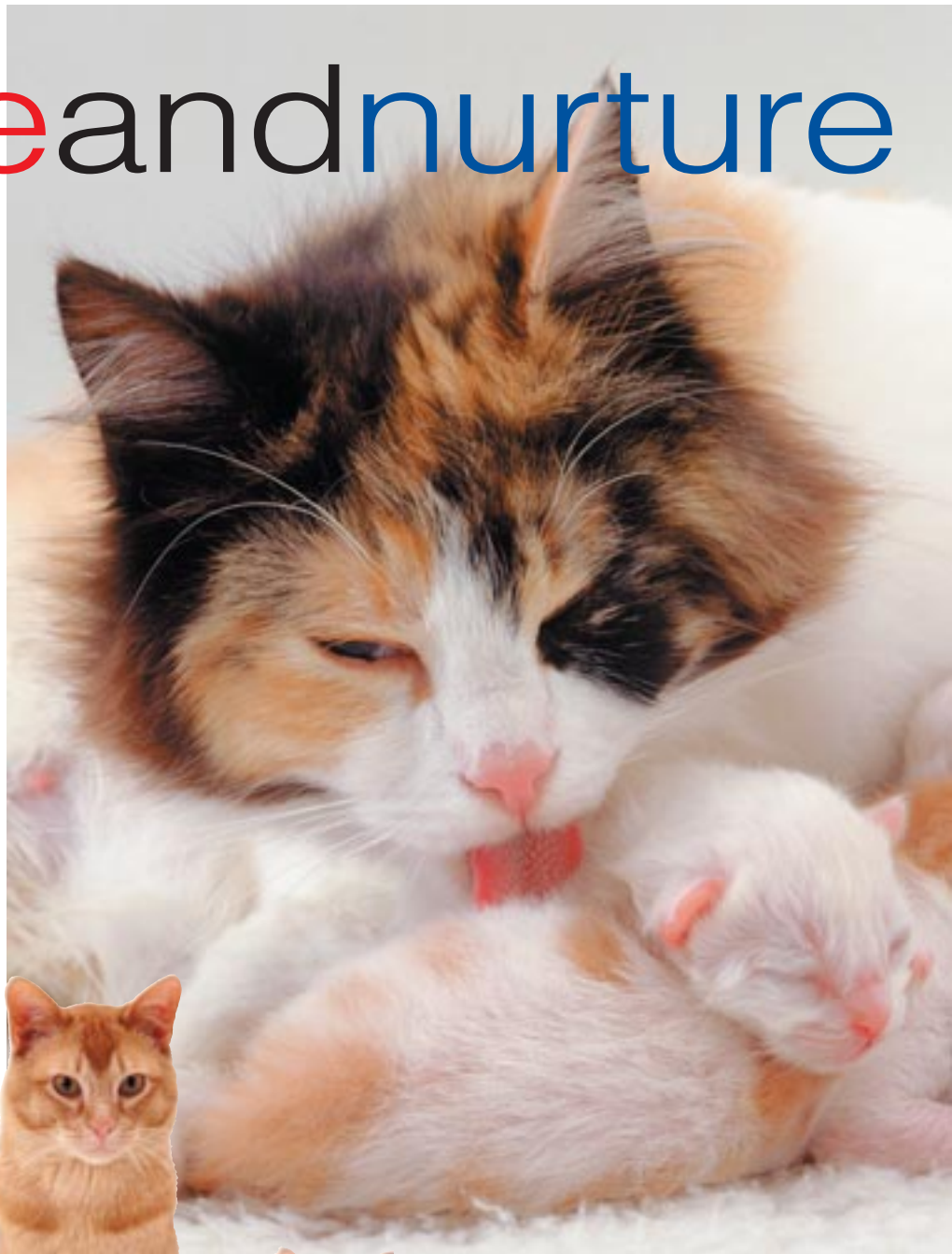
Oriental Shorthairs have the long, slender body shape of the Siamese, but have a solid coat pattern instead of the darker coloured points. They come in a variety of colours from solid (self) colours to smoke and shaded. The

Norwegian Forest Cat

The Norwegian Forest Cat developed to

nature and nurture

Just as in people, a cat's personality will be a mix of inherited traits and its early life experiences.



a

appearance, personality and behaviour are

unique to each cat through a magical combination of nature and nurture: the effects of genetics, development in the womb and the kitten's experiences in the first weeks of life.

Parental influences

Much of a cat's personality will be inherited. Even with little (if any) contact with its offspring, the father's personality has a direct effect. It has been found that kittens born of sociable, affectionate and outgoing fathers are more likely to have these characteristics, whereas a kitten



Red Burmese Ozzie and his red female kitten who is seven weeks old. Friendly fathers are likely to have friendly kittens.

fathered by a nervous cat may reveal similar characteristics as an adult. The mother's genetic influence is equally important. Kittens will also learn behaviour from her as they grow.

Pedigree cats often show particular behaviour traits because they carry many of the same genes and are selected for breeding, depending on looks and behaviour.

Environmental influences

A kitten must experience as much as possible of domestic life in the first few months of life in order to be able to take

Once a nervous feral, Silverpaws is now very demanding (like a child!) and insists on being picked up when you come in the door - by jumping on you!

Moggie, about 2 years old.



Perry hates other men (especially in trainers) ever since he adopted us. He has accepted me as a friend and follows me around all the time.

Moggie, estimated 10 years old.

everything in its stride. Research has shown that the key time when a difference can be made as to how a kitten interacts with the rest of the world occurs before eight weeks of age. Kittens brought up in an unstimulating environment with little human contact for this crucial time are less active and interactive and may always be wary of new sights, sounds and people. Indeed, kittens not given human contact or treated cruelly at a young age may

FAB SURVEY RESULTS

early days

Nearly half of all the cats in the FAB survey came from breeders: 90 per cent of these were pedigrees and 10 per cent moggies. Over a third came from rescue centres. Only 5 per cent of cats obtained from rescue centres were pedigrees. In fact a cat obtained from a rescue centre was 187 times more likely to be a moggie than a pedigree!

Almost two-thirds of owners had kittens which had been given unrestricted access to the whole house before eight weeks of age. A third had access to one room or an outdoor pen. A small number (69, all but one being moggies) were in a feral colony up to eight weeks of age. Only 149 owners reported that their cats had been hand-reared as kittens and a third of these were pedigree cats.

Effect of influences

Cats raised with only one adult were 1.8 times less likely to enjoy attention from strangers. Birmans and Burmese enjoyed attention from different people. Generally, adult pedigree cats like the Norwegian Forest Cat and Siamese were twice as likely to enjoy attention from strangers when compared to moggies. Indeed, Birmans, Tonkinese and Bengals were three times, and the Korat six times, more likely to enjoy attention from strangers.

Cats raised with children were nearly three times as likely to enjoy attention from familiar children than cats not raised with children. Burmese, Norwegian Forest Cat, Siamese and Tonkinese were reported to be particularly fond of familiar children.

In this survey, cats that came from a pet shop were over five times more likely to be aggressive or bad tempered compared with cats that came from a breeder. Cats that came from a rescue centre were more likely to be nervous compared with cats that came from a breeder. Cats that came from a pet shop were also more likely to be destructive compared with cats that came from a breeder. Feral cats were almost 3 times more likely to be nervous than cats raised in a house.

Cats that were hand reared were twice as likely to be more demanding than cats that were not hand reared.

Cats that were hand reared were twice as likely to be more talkative than cats that were not hand reared - males being 1.5 times more likely to be more talkative compared to females.

Advice

If you live in a house full of activity, with children, dogs and other cats, then you will need to find a kitten from a similar environment or a confident kitten happy to cope with new experiences. If you want a less independent cat, you can also choose a breed like the Burmese, Birman or Siamese, that likes to be around people.

Choose an outgoing confident kitten which has been well socialised in its early weeks of life.

never be comfortable in close contact with people.

Feral cats, for example, born in the wild and missing any human contact before about eight weeks of age, will be likely to shun human company, be nervous and prone to hiding. A kitten brought up from birth in an environment with numerous people, dogs and other cats will usually take this as 'the norm' and accept the presence of different species in its new home.

Although they are littermates and have never been separated, they have very different personalities - Thomas is always alert, active and nervous, Gerry laid back, placid and more demanding of my attention.

Siamese, 6 years old.



breeds and personality

Different personality traits are often attributed to different breeds.

as every owner knows, all cats are individuals, each with a unique character. Certain personality traits are, however, associated with particular breeds. These traits have developed as breeders have selected those animals with a certain look or personality most fitting a particular pedigree, to mate.

A cat's personality will not only be affected by the genes it inherits but also by its experiences in early life. How well the kitten is socialised (experiences contact and handling with people and other animals) in the early weeks of life, will have a huge effect on its personality and behaviour in later life in relation to how it interacts with people. Likewise a kitten brought up in a stimulating environment experiencing the sights and sounds of everyday life is much more likely to have a confident approach to new things in its life and to take changes and challenges in its stride.

Breed traits

In general, it is said that:

- ◆ Persians and British Shorthairs tend to be more laid back about life and are less demanding of their owners than Burmese, Siamese and Orientals.



- ◆ Burmese, Siamese and Orientals often become very attached to their owners and are sometimes seen as more intelligent than other breeds, probably as a great deal of their attention is focused on joining in with people. These breeds, and this is especially true of the Siamese, tend to be very vocal and meow for attention.
- ◆ The semi-longhaired breeds are usually a little less demanding. The Birman, for example, a mix between Persian

and a Siamese or Oriental, is said to be livelier than the gentle Persian but less excessive in vocalisation than the Oriental. Semi-longhairs like the Ragdoll and Norwegian Forest tend to be relaxed, easy-going friendly cats.

- ◆ Devon and Cornish Rexes are renowned for their energy and playful behaviour.
- ◆ Abyssinians are said to be independent and energetic cats.
- ◆ A relatively new breed, the original Bengal had a shy nature akin to that of its Asian Leopard Cat ancestors. Successive generations are however becoming more friendly and playful.

Coat colour and behaviour

We looked at the moggies in the survey to see if there were any obvious behaviour which was aligned to coat colour. Black, and black and white cats, accounted for nearly 40 per cent of all the moggies taking part in the survey. Ginger cats in the survey were found to be less nervous and more active when compared to black, and black and white, cats. Indeed, black, and black and white, cats were found to be less confident and less interactive than ginger, tortie and tabby cats. This is an interesting finding as it fits in with a survey carried out at Edinburgh Veterinary School on lower urinary tract disease in cats, which found that black and white cats seemed to suffer more from the problem which is thought to be associated in some part with stress.

While certain traits are associated with certain breeds it is worth remembering that not all cats of a particular breed may show them. Personalities vary both across breeds and within them. Gathering up all the statistical information in the survey some characteristics did come through (see box).



He chews on my hair at every opportunity - always purring

Chainy, Moggie, 1 year old

Sherlock is not very aggressive - more grumpy. He doesn't like to do what he doesn't want to do. He especially gets cross if you have to move him when he is comfy.

Birman, 8 years old

He enjoys anything which brings him into contact with humans.

Charlie, Burmese, 3 years old.

He has to sleep with his head around mine. He constantly demands attention.

Keo, Tonkinese, 5 years old

FAB SURVEY RESULTS

breed differences



Forty per cent of cats taking part were pedigrees. The top three reported breeds were Siamese, Burmese and Persians. Most breeds were represented in the survey but some with too few numbers to draw conclusions from. The survey asked owners to score behaviour in their cat and in the following categories:

Nervous behaviour

Moggies of all ages were found to be twice as likely to be nervous of new people and things than pedigrees. Most dramatic differences were seen in Norwegian Forest Cats (11 times less nervous than moggies), Ragdolls (five times less nervous), Burmese (three times less nervous) and Tonkinese (three times less nervous).

Confident behaviour

Interestingly, the Bengal was found to be eight times more confident than moggies and the Burmese two times more confident. The Birman, Burmese, British Shorthair, Maine Coon, Norwegian Forest Cat, Oriental Shorthair and Siamese became more confident with age than moggies.

Interactive behaviour

Several breeds showed a higher rating for interactive behaviour than moggies. The Bengal and Korat were three times more interactive and the Burmese and Tonkinese were twice as interactive. The Birman, Burmese and Norwegian Forest Cat were reported to become more interactive with age than moggies did.

Bold behaviour

Pedigrees as a whole were rated nearly twice as bold and demanding as moggies in the survey. The British Shorthair and Maine Coon cats were reported to have experienced a personality change with age, becoming more demanding.

Active behaviour

Pedigrees in general were rated more active than moggies with the exception of the British Shorthair which was less active. The Bengal was said to be six times more active than moggies, the Tonkinese five times, the Burmese four times, Somali three times, Oriental three times and the Siamese two times more active.

Aloof behaviour

Pedigree cats were rated two times less likely to show aloof behaviour than moggies, although this was not significant for individual breeds.

Aggressive behaviour

Pedigrees in general were two times less likely to be bad tempered or aggressive when compared to moggies.

Vocal behaviour

Siamese were the most vocal breed. Siamese, Bengal, Burmese, Oriental Shorthair and Tonkinese were all more likely to be frequently vocal than moggies. The British Shorthair was less likely to be vocal. At mealtimes the Oriental Shorthair, Siamese and Tonkinese were rated as more vocal compared with moggies, whereas the Abyssinian, British Shorthair and Korat were all less likely to be vocal. The Birman and Siamese in the survey were reported to become more talkative with age than moggies.

Grooming

Half of the cats in the survey were said to like being groomed. Birman, Burmese, Oriental Shorthair, Siamese, Tonkinese and other pedigrees were more likely to enjoy being groomed than moggies. Hair coat length did not seem to affect whether a cat liked being groomed or not. In our survey 82 per cent of moggies and 63 per cent of pedigrees were short-haired.

pleasure and play

Play helps fulfil basic instincts giving pleasure to cats and humans alike.

Brian insists on being on my chest with a paw either side of my neck padding, especially at night time or in the morning. Even if pushed away many times, he will persist.

Also drools!
Moggie, 4 years old.

play is an important part of learning the skills of adult life. Through play kittens learn how to recognise body language in other cats and respond appropriately, they develop their natural hunting skills and learn about their environment. For the indoor adult cat play is essential to provide exercise, to relieve boredom and to prevent the development of behaviour problems. Play is also an important way to build the bond between pet and owner that gives pleasure to both.



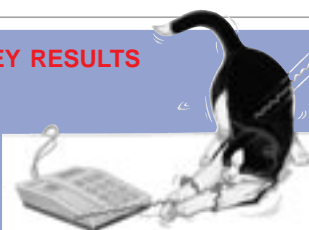
He will eat socks or tights
- clean or worn. He
steals them, kills them
and drags them around.
Bover Boy, 3 years old, Siamese

Very jealous and
possessive of me
- not resolved ...
reciprocated!
**Nelson, Moggie,
12 years old.**

FAB SURVEY RESULTS

fetch!

Forty-four per cent of cats taking part in the survey



played fetch. As might be expected, this survey found that younger cats (aged 5 years and less) were more likely to play retrieving games compared with cats 14 years of age and older.

Thirty cats in the survey would fetch almost anything. Balls and toys were the most frequently reported fetched items, with paper balls and string close behind. Feathers, beads, cotton reels, elastic bands, ear plugs, leaves, socks and brushes among the more usual items that cats would retrieve.

Burmese, Siamese, Tonkinese, Somali, Ragdoll and Rex breeds were more likely to play retrieving games than moggies.



Predatory behaviour

All cats possess innate hunting skills but they cannot become efficient predators and hunt successfully without refining these skills. Stalking, pouncing and batting in play all have the aim of improving hunting skills, vital for survival in the wild. Kittens may entertain themselves for hours with simple toys, grasping, poking and tossing them in the air. Playing with objects pulled on a piece of string helps to sharpen the cat's reactions and are a great favourite. Many cats will enjoy playing with owners to such an extent that they retrieve toys just like a dog in a game of fetch.

Company

The aim of a cat's body language is to let another cat know its intentions in a given situation and to avoid conflict and injury. In their play kittens hone their communication skills and often exaggerate the movements of body language that are more visible in

pleasure and play

Duncan carries a piece of fur material around meowing. Has done so since he was a kitten.
Moggie, 4 years old.

subtle form in adult cats. The hunting, courtship and mock fights seen in kitten play may not be observed in a peaceful household of older cats. The cat uses its whole body to signal its feelings but the main areas of communication are the eyes and ears, as well as the body position.

Cats may be solitary creatures by nature but they can still enjoy the company of others. Some cats take delight in teasing the family dog; others in the security and shared warmth of curling up with a furry companion. Cats love to sleep. They find the softest part of the sofa to

sleep on, they like to take the warmest position in front of the fire, find the sunniest window sill or lounge in hammocks over radiators.

Grooming

A kitten will groom itself and its littermates from five weeks old. This natural behaviour is essential for coat health, temperature regulation and social contact. Grooming also acts as a displacement activity in cats. It seems to reduce anxiety as an individual goes through the familiar, comforting and physically pleasurable routine. This may

Chemical pleasure

Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*), also known as cat mint, is a source of great pleasure for many cats. This herb contains a chemical called nepetalactone that has mild hallucinogenic effects on the cat's brain. Its soporific or excitatory effects are short-lived, non-addictive and harmless. Cats that do respond to the chemical can go into a trance like state for up to 15 minutes. Many cat toys are stuffed with dried catnip to encourage play. However, only about half of all cats respond to the chemical in it. Those that do, will meow and rub, chew and roll over a toy stuffed with it.



Shiro is extremely noisy until he's cuddled - then he goes into a trance like state. You can cuddle him as long as you want. He never tires of it.

Siamese, 6 year old,
indoor cat

Tiger Tim has a mad half hour on 28-30 hour intervals lasting 20 minutes. She travels round three rooms like a motorcyclist on the wall of death.

Moggie, 1.5 years old,
indoor cat



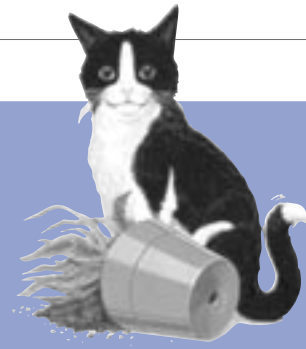
Pushkin loves playing with water. Especially dripping taps.

Birman,
2 years old.

FAB SURVEY RESULTS

pleasure

Cats in the survey found pleasure in a wide variety of ways. Eighty per cent were reported to react to catnip. Some were happiest when they were getting attention from their owners, others from climbing curtains or playing with dripping water.



be one of the reasons why cats love to be stroked by humans.

A cat communicates its pleasure at human contact by rubbing itself against us or by emitting a contented purr. Kittens can purr while they feed and queens may purr when they enter the nest to reassure kittens. All cats purr at the same frequency, about 25 cycles per second. How they produce this sound is still a puzzle to

scientists. Many believe that the sound arises from the lungs and throat.

Adult cats may also show pleasure by 'kneading' with their paws. This behaviour is carried over from kittenhood where it is used to stimulate the flow of the queen's milk. It also explains why cats often drool while they are kneading or purring on our laps.

He loves to wreak havoc. We have had to forget net curtains and accept it.

Wolfie, Cornish Rex,
3 years old.



She will retrieve whatever she finds - including rubbish in bins.

Gracie, moggie
5 months old.

hunting

Millions of years of evolution created a near perfect hunter in the cat.



domestication has done little to alter the basic instincts of the cat to hunt, to dull its superb senses and reflexes or to change its fluid physique. The cat was once valued for its hunting abilities, now this is probably the least appreciated of the cat's talents. Not all domestic cats are supplied with food by man. Many feral cats survive through hunting and what they can

The fun is in the chase!

Willie, Moggie
3 years old.



scavenge. Their natural abilities are honed with practice and patience. But cats also enjoy hunting. Well-fed cats may still choose to hunt. Turning off the hunger control does not necessarily turn off the desire to hunt.

Younger pet cats usually start hunting insects and worms. As they become more confident and able to use their skills they progress to voles and mice. From about a year old some will hunt very enthusiastically. However, this enthusiasm does not usually persist at the same level after about three years old. Some cats do keep it up, but many older cats become less enthusiastic and prefer to sleep in the sun or watch the birds through the window.

Cats employ different hunting strategies. Some cats move around looking and listening for potential prey. Others like to sit and wait at a likely spot. If something appears, the cat waits until it has moved a little distance from the burrow entrance, to increase its chances of success, before moving forward and pouncing.

Birds on a bird table may require a

Saving wildlife

Cat owners can help reduce the number of prey killed by:

- **Keeping cats indoors from dusk until after dawn.** Many of the cat's potential prey are nocturnal (for example, rodents and rabbits). Keeping them in an hour before sunset and for an hour after sunrise will also help to reduce the hunting of feeding birds.
- **Bells on collars.** The sound of a bell may give away the movement of the stalking cat and alert prey species to its presence. There are still debates on the safety of collars for the climbing cat. If a collar is to be worn, the FAB recommends one that pops open so the cat will not be strangled if the collar gets snagged on tree branches or nails.
- **Feed the birds.** Use a bird table and put it somewhere where the cat cannot easily jump on to it. Feeding birds gather in larger numbers and this provides greater safety - there are more eyes to see the cat.

Chelsea cleared the fish pond next door.

**Moggie, female,
10 years old.**



Mice he catches – frogs he herds unharmed into the house

Brian, 4 years old, moggie.

Results on estimate of prey affected

Based on the findings in this survey the Mammal Society's estimate of cats killing 2000 million mammals, 55 million birds and 10 millions reptiles and amphibians is likely to be an overestimate. The Mammal Society watched a group of active hunters, counted prey and multiplied the figures to account for the entire UK cat population. This does not take into account influences on the natural hunting behaviour of the cat such as the age range of the population and the frequency of hunting activity, the number of urban versus rural cats, the proportion of cats that are indoors with no access to mammals and, to a much lesser extent, the breed differences. Many cat owners are also nature lovers who will try their best to reduce successful hunting.



sit-and-wait strategy; birds feeding off the ground may require a stalking approach. The cat uses all of its sophisticated control systems to glide over the ground without attracting attention with sharp or large movements. It may slip in a couple of runs if the bird hops out of sight and then freeze if the subject of its gaze turns around to look in that direction. Some cats don't bother to hunt birds. Catching a bird as it takes off requires special skill. Others become expert in this three-dimensional challenge.

Special senses

Cats' senses help them to detect prey. Sight and sound are key. Smell is rarely used in hunting. From a very young age the cat uses its senses to maximum effect, learns how to approach different types of prey and how to get close enough to be effective in its final pounce.

Sight

Cats' eyes have special adaptations to allow them to see in almost total darkness and to spot movement. They are able to see in one sixth of the light

we humans need. While cats see less clearly than us, their binocular vision is still very good, allowing them to judge distances well. They probably see the world in muted blues and greens.

Hearing

The cat must be able to hear and identify sounds of its prey from quite a distance away, be able to pinpoint the likely position of the prey and then get close enough to it to grab it quickly. Cats can hear sounds in a considerably higher range than humans. Rodent communication occurs within the range of 20-50 KHz, well within the cat's range of 200 Hz to 100 KHz. The upper range of human hearing is 20 KHz. To pick up these high frequency sounds and also the low frequency sounds caused by movement, cats have evolved large ears which can swivel.

Bringing home prey

Female cats bring prey home for their kittens. Feeding kittens and bringing live prey home for them to practise their hunting techniques on, is all part of motherhood.

FAB SURVEY RESULTS

hunting

Of the 1376 cats that were reported to go out, hunting behaviour was reported in 1374 (69 per cent) of them. 183 of the 444 cats that were kept indoors still honed their hunting skills by catching insects. Seventy-one per cent of owners reported that their cats caught more than one kind of prey when hunting. Some seemed to prefer to hunt certain kinds of prey including just birds (6.3 per cent), rodents (5.8 per cent), rabbits (0.1 per cent), insects (11 per cent) and frogs (2.3 per cent).

Frequency of hunting

Only a quarter of cat owners in the survey said their cats hunted regularly. Based on their observations and 'offerings', 43 per cent of owners taking part said their cats hunted only rarely or occasionally.

Town cats or country cats?

Cats living in rural homes were almost twice as likely (1.9 times) to hunt compared to cats in urban environments.

Effect of breed

Moggies were one and a half times more likely to hunt than pedigrees. Birmans and Persians were reported to be particularly significantly less likely to hunt than moggies.

Effect of age

Young cats were significantly more likely to hunt than older cats. The peak years of hunting were between four to seven years of age. Hunting activity also decreased with age. For example, 6-to 7-year-old cats were found to hunt significantly less than 2-year olds. Cats aged 8 and over were up to 60 times less likely to hunt than 2-year olds.



Heidi used to hunt mice and voles but we rarely have offerings now

Moggie, 12 years old.

silentsignals

The cat's wild ancestor, *Felis sylvestris* is by nature a solitary animal; 'domestication' has enabled our pet cats (*Felis catus*) to choose to be sociable if they wish and depending to some extent on their early experiences.

Tango doesn't play much with other cats. He keeps himself to himself.

British Shorthair, 2 years old.



a

s much of cat communication is designed to keep other cats away, long distance communication using scent marks is very important. Cats send and receive myriad messages by smell. Indeed, social communications between cats are based largely on scent. Cats have scent glands all over their bodies but primarily concentrated in several areas such as around the face and lips, at the back of the neck and above and below the tail.

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Scent is spread in a variety of ways:

- ◆ **Grooming** spreads scent from the glands all over their coat. Other cats allowed close enough will recognise the scent.
- ◆ **Rubbing** against objects and people deposits scent.
- ◆ **Bunting** - leaving scent from glands located around the lips on sticks and other objects of cat height.
- ◆ **Spraying urine** with other secretions from around the anal glands. This is usually sprayed backwards onto vertical surfaces, especially by male cats to mark territory.
- ◆ **Using urine and faeces** as scent marks.
- ◆ Leaving scent from **glands in the feet** on scratching posts.
- ◆ **Grooming other friendly cats** and mixing each other's smell to form a group scent common to a particular household.

The right combination of scents is vital to the cat's sense of wellbeing. New smells in the home from furniture, new carpets, animals or people can disturb the familiar scent pattern of the house and lead to anxiety in the cat. A sudden change in the 'smell status' of the house can be enough to trigger indoor spraying in some cats.



He has become a wonderful, affectionate, loving cat since he has been on his own. Before that he was a recluse.
Paddy, Burmese, 12 years old.



She flirts with every cat she can find!
Fluffypants, moggie, 2 years old.

Nice to humans - not nice to other cats!
Zoe, moggie, 13 years old.

Body language

When cats do get together, subtle body language, the flick of a tail or an averted gaze, will send an obvious signal to another cat.

A relaxed cat sits with ears pricked while a frightened cat will flatten its ears. Tail movements can indicate agitation. Body posture also shows feeling.

A fearful cat will make itself small and unthreatening and sit stock still until the

adversary leaves. To frighten away a stranger it may try to make itself larger by fluffing up the fur on its back and tail and arching its back, growling or spitting. A confident swagger with its tail held high, meowing gives a very positive greeting often reserved for its owner.

Territorial cats

Both male and female cats are territorial.



FAB SURVEY RESULTS

cathouseholds

Eighty per cent of the cats in the survey lived with at least one other cat. A quarter lived with only one other cat, half lived in households with up to three other cats. One hundred and eighteen cats (7 per cent) lived in households with 10 or more other cats.

In the 403 two-cat households, only 10 per cent of cats did not get on with their housemate. In the larger cat households (over 10 other cats), the majority of cats got along well, with only one or two individuals failing to get along with any of the other cats.

A fifth (359) of those taking part said their cats would never play with other cats. A slightly smaller number (293) loved playing with other cats. Most were somewhere in between.

In the survey males and females showed no difference in the way they accepted new adult cats or kittens, of the same or different sex.

going to the dogs

Contrary to popular belief, dog and cats can be



great companions, greeting each other, resting and even playing together. This kind of relationship is usually the outcome of a broad early experience and good socialisation in both parties, and careful introductions. Indeed, is often easier to introduce a

puppy to a cat's household than to bring in a new kitten or cat.

Just over a fifth of cats (392) taking part in the survey lived with a dog. Of these over half were said to be friendly to the dog, a third ignored the dog and just over 10 per cent (46 cats) were said to be wary, fearful or aggressive towards the dog. Unsurprisingly 70 per cent of all cats were said to be show fear or be aggressive on meeting a strange dog, 20 per cent would ignore the dog and 8 per cent (66 cats) were friendly to a strange dog.

Overall the survey found that a cat that lives with a dog is two-and-a-half times less likely to be wary, afraid or aggressive to other dogs.

When scent trails, staring matches and aggressive body language fail to drive off an intruder a fight may follow. The entire tom is more likely to roam further and less likely to back down from a fight as he challenges others males for territory and mating rights. It is thought that a female cat is more tolerant of related females than strange females on her territory.

growing old gracefully

Cats are difficult to age – their poise and beauty often conceal the ravages of age for many years.

Considering their small size, cats can live a long time. A well cared for cat will commonly live to 15 years of age, some to 18 or 20. A wild or feral cat will have a much shorter life expectancy: the life expectancy of a feral tom could be as low as 2 or 3 years.

Signs of ageing

Cats are difficult to age just by looking at them. They grow old very gracefully. It can take a closer inspection to detect a less sprightly step and dulling of the coat. Some middle aged cats may gain weight for the classic 'middle age spread' but the older cat – over 10 years

Over the years he has become more nervous and bad tempered with our other cats.
Humphrey, 6-year-old moggie



Ageing your cat

When asked to compare a cat's age with a human's, many people simply multiply the cat's age by 7. However, this does not really equate well with the life stages of the cats. It is more accurate to count the first year of a cat's life as equivalent to 15 human years and a 2-year-old cat to be 24 in human years. Thereafter each cat year is equivalent to four human years. Thus a 12-year-old cat would be $24 + (10 \times 4) = 64$. After age 16 each cat year is more like three human years. A 20-year-old cat would be old indeed at $24 + (14 \times 4) + (4 \times 3) = 92$.

She is not hunting now. She would rather have catnip!
Merjo Tressidea, 10-year-old Persian

STAGE	AGE	
	CAT	MAN
Birth	0	0
Weaned	2-3 months	9-12 months
Adult communication	4 months	2-4 years
Puberty onset	6-7 months	11-13 years
	12 months	15 years
Fully grown adult	14 months	18 years
Maturity	2 years	24 years
	3	28
	4	32
	5	36
	6	40
	7	44
	8	48
	9	52
	10	56
Retirement?	11	60
	12	64
	13	68
	14	72
	15	76
	16	80
	17	83
	18	86
	19	89
	20	92
	21	95
	22	98
	23	101

old – tends to lose weight.

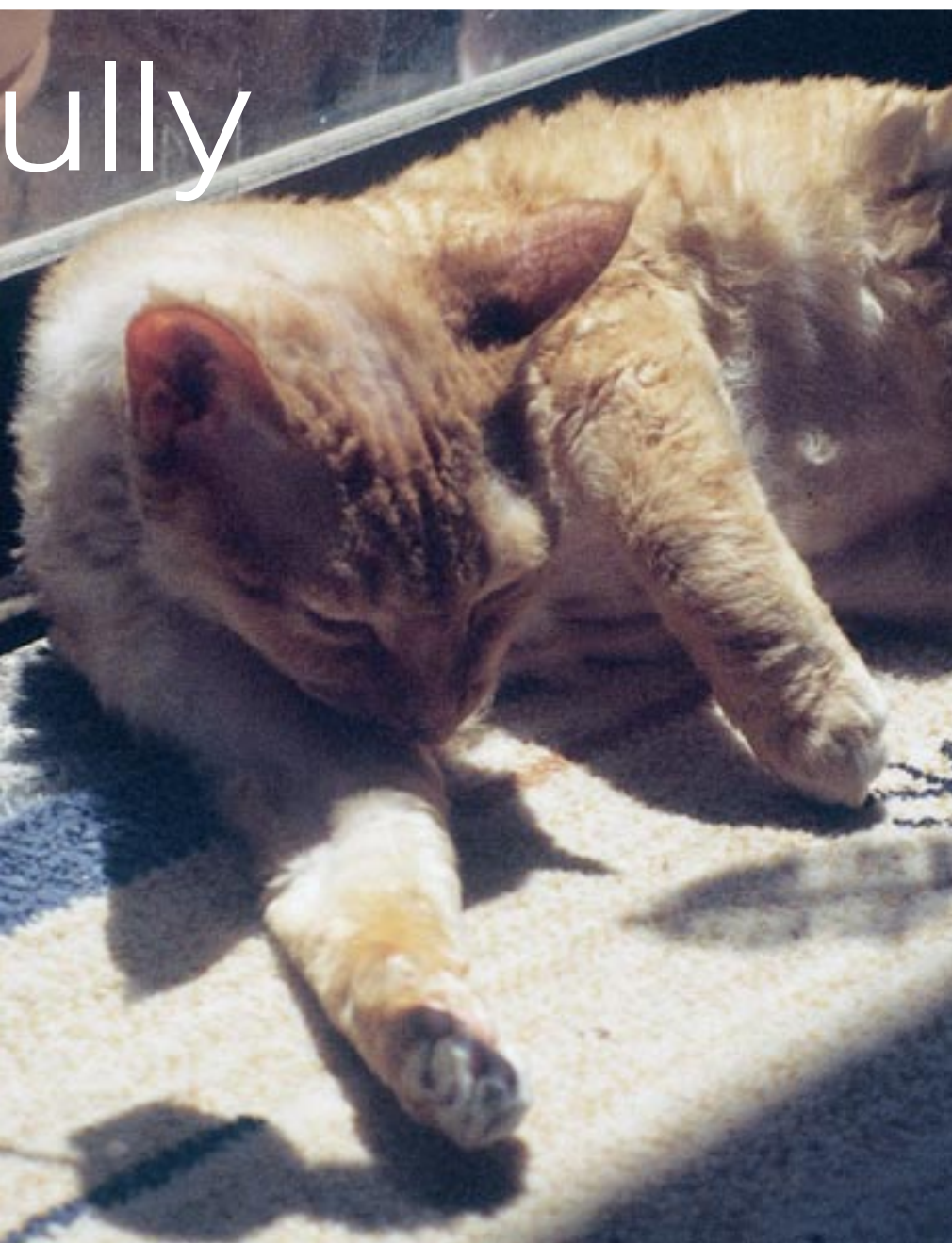
It is often the mouth that gives the cat's age away. Older cats that have not had regular dental care will often have an accumulation of tartar on the teeth. Tooth loss through gum disease is very common in the older cat. A painful mouth is also a common cause of weight loss in the older cat.

Older cats are generally more laid back about life, less bothered by sudden noises or inquisitive children. They may not move with the same fluidity as they did in their prime but there may be little to give away their real age.

Body clock

Although cats may seem ageless until 10 or 12 years old, the cat's body tends

ully



The older he gets the more fussing he wants.

Keiko, Siamese,
11 years old.

FAB SURVEY RESULTS

age

Age and activity

The whole spectrum of ages was represented in the survey.

Older cats were found to be significantly less active than 2 year olds. As to be expected, the amount of activity decreased in line with age: cats 4-5 years of age, 6-7 years, 8-9 years, 10-11 years and 12-13 years were 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 times, respectively, less likely to be active than 2 year olds.

Interestingly, cats that were active as kittens were 5 times more likely to be active as adults than cats that were not active as kittens.

Personality change

Two thirds of owners taking part in the survey said that the personality of their cat had changed with time. The changes were also more marked with age. Owners of cats aged 10 and 11 years were 1.7 times more likely to report that their cats had experienced a personality change and owners of cats aged 14 years and older, twice as likely.

The changes observed were in rank order: more confident (596 cats), more interactive (502), more talkative, less nervous (416) and more demanding (367). Almost equal numbers were reported to be less and more bad tempered and less and more aloof with age.



Hasn't caught birds for at least six years now – still catches moths.

Esme, 14-year-old moggie.

to start to slow down at about 7 years of age. The circulation system is not so robust, so the surface of the skin receives less oxygen. This, combined with a drop in oil secretions from the sebaceous glands, hormone changes and less active grooming, make the cat's coat look dull and spiky. In extreme old age there may be hair loss. Less efficient circulation means that the blood supply to muscles drops and the cat tires more easily. The old cat tends to lose muscle volume and tone, is less flexible and can suffer from stiff joints.

The cat's senses, like our own, dull with age. A loss of taste buds may reduce appetite. There may be thickening of the

lens in the eyes or development of cataracts that impair vision, although this is much less common in cats than in dogs. The ear also becomes less sensitive.

The digestive system becomes less efficient at absorbing all the nutrients the animal needs. Older cats adapt to this by eating little and often. Special geriatric diets are also available with more vitamins and supplements, such as essential fatty acids, which will help the skin and coat stay younger for longer.

With age kidneys lose some of their ability to concentrate urine and cats may need to urinate more often. Toxins may build up in the body as kidney function

fails. As the bladder becomes less elastic and cannot totally empty each time, the cat is more prone to bladder infections. As hormone production drops, the older cat may find it more difficult to keep warm. This is probably why cats become so expert at finding the warmest cosiest place in the house to sleep.

foodforthought

Even the quietest cats may call for their supper.

a good diet is essential for health whatever a cat's age. Responding to the demands of a hungry pet by giving them a meal they obviously enjoy plays an important part in developing the bond of trust and friendship between cat and owner.

Getting the balance right

Just like children, cats may not always want to eat what is best for them. They need a balanced yet palatable diet that suits their particular stage of life - be it an active, growing kitten, a pregnant queen or an elderly tom. Cats' digestive systems are geared for a diet high in protein, low in carbohydrates. They need the right balance of fats, vitamins and minerals too. The correct levels of vitamins in a diet can help increase the cat's natural defences against disease

and infection. Controlled levels of certain minerals help kidneys function at their best. Kittens need high energy food for play and growth. Senior cats, aged eight and over, find it increasingly difficult to digest food and need diets with extra vitamins, minerals and more digestible protein to maintain health and combat the effects of ageing. Commercially prepared pet foods from reputable manufacturers have been designed to meet the special nutritional requirements of the cat whatever its lifestyle or life stage and take the worry out of feeding.

When your cat reaches maturity, his bodyweight should stay fairly constant. Middle aged cats can be prone to weight gain through decreased exercise levels. Older cats tend to be thin. Eating problems in the older cat are commonly caused by dental or gum disease, however many other diseases may cause weight

Feeding facts

- ◆ Because an eight-week-old kitten's stomach is only the size of a walnut and he needs plenty of energy, he will need to be fed little and often. About five small meals a day.
- ◆ Cats do not have a sweet tooth. They have no taste buds for sugar.
- ◆ Changing diets quickly will cause stomach upsets. New diets should be phased in gradually over seven to 10 days.
- ◆ Cow's milk can upset a cat's stomach. Specially prepared cat milk containing reduced lactose is more digestible.
- ◆ Unlike dogs, cats cannot be vegetarian. There are a number of nutrients found only in meat required to maintain health. Healthy 'vegetarian' cats are eating out!
- ◆ Cat food should never be served cold from the fridge. The best way to serve canned cat food is at room temperature. If necessary you can add a small amount of warm water to release an aroma that will appeal to your cat.
- ◆ Chewing dry foods or providing your cat with treats helps to keep his teeth and gums healthy.
- ◆ Fresh water should be available at all times – even if your cat seems to prefer stagnant pond water!





FAB SURVEY RESULTS

feeding habits

Purina Felix, sponsor of the FAB survey, asked several questions relating to feeding habits and found that nearly a third of owners taking part fed only dry food to their cats, 13 per cent fed only wet food and the remainder (over half) fed a mixture of wet and dry food. Half of those taking part fed cat treats on occasion and a fifth bought cat milk.

The survey found that cats that were generally vocal were 9 times more likely to be vocal at mealtimes compared to cats that were not generally vocal.

For more information on feeding and cat care call the Purina Pet Care Service, freephone 0871 230 2325, www.purina.com or www.catslikefelix.co.uk.



loss. Any excessive weight loss or gain or a sudden or prolonged loss of appetite should be checked out by a veterinary surgeon.

Making food fun

Cats in the wild spend many hours looking for food. A feral cat needs to catch about eight mice a day to meet its needs. With only one in 15 hunting attempts being successful that is a lot of expended energy. By providing food twice daily, or ad libitum, a cat is denied much needed stimulation and activity, particularly if they never go outside.

Food can be used to encourage exercise and provide fun and stimulation for your cat. If it tends to gain weight easily then some of the normal daily food ration should be used for play to help prevent obesity. There are a number of ways to use food to encourage play:

- ◆ While watching television try playing fetch with kibbles (pieces of dry cat food) or treats.
- ◆ Hide kibbles around the house so your cat can search for them. The first time you may have to show him where they are. This makes the game a chance for you to interact with your cat.
- ◆ Use timed cat feeders, containing small amounts of food, that pop open around the house at different intervals during the day or night.
- ◆ Make holes in an old plastic drinks bottle big enough for kibbles to pass through. Attracted by the aroma of the kibbles, your cat will roll the bottle and be rewarded with food.

in or out?



Is it dangerous to let cats outdoors? Do indoor cats suffer from boredom?

While the majority of cat owners in the UK give their cats

freedom to come and go as they please, an increasing number are deciding to keep their cats indoors completely.

With the advent of cat litter in the 1950s, cat owners began to keep their cats in for their own safety. Indoor cats do indeed live longer, physically healthier lives than outdoor cats. However indoor cats are also more likely to suffer psychologically and develop behavioural problems than those allowed out. The very timid cat may find life outside too stressful and prefer a quiet life indoors; the active cat may suffer if kept indoors. The risks and strains of the indoor or outdoor life need to be considered for each individual cat.

Outdoor lifestyle

An outdoor cat has plenty of opportunity to display the full range of natural feline behaviours from socialising and patrolling territory to the stalk and pounce of hunting. The outdoor cat gets more exercise and is less likely to develop behaviour problems. But there are risks to the outdoor lifestyle.

- ◆ Injury - Road traffic accidents kill hundreds of cats every year. Dogs, other cats and humans can also inflict injury.
- ◆ Poisoning - Cats are at risk from garden chemicals or poisoned prey.
- ◆ Disease - Contact with other cats, especially fighting, can lead to infection.
- ◆ Infestation - Fleas and other parasites can be picked up from the environment.
- ◆ Loss - Cats can be shut in buildings, driven away, stolen or adopted by others.

Risks of the outdoor lifestyle can be minimised by:

- ◆ Keeping cats indoors at night and feeding at 'rush hours' to keep them off the roads during the most dangerous times.
- ◆ Vaccination and regular worming to limit infections and infestations.
- ◆ Neutering to reduce the tendency to roam large distances and cross roads. Neutered cats are also less likely to suffer fight injuries.
- ◆ Fitting a collar (with a snap open safety catch) carrying the cat's name and address.

This cat seems to understand that she needs a magnetic tag on her collar to come in and comes home with the collar in her mouth when it comes off.

Benny, moggie, 11 years old.

Snail does not like being shut out from the room I am in. She will scratch and wail and will open the door by jumping on handle. I leave all doors open now.

Moggie, 4 years old. Indoor cat.

He used to be destructive before being allowed out. No problems now.

Coquito, Tonkinese, 3 years old.



- ◆ Microchipping gives the opportunity to find a lost cat's owner.

Indoor life

Keeping a cat permanently indoors away from all the potential hazards of the outside world may seem like an ideal solution. There will be no complaints from neighbours about cats using their garden as a litter tray, no dead prey on the carpet and little risk of catching some infectious disease. However, the safety benefits have to be weighed against the particular needs of the cat. Indoor cats tend to have more behavioural problems



related to anxiety, (such as indoor toileting problems) than outdoor ones and they are more likely to become obese because of lack of exercise. They may fear even small changes to their world and can become over-dependent on their owners.

There are also practical problems in keeping the indoor cat:

- ◆ Damage to the house - Furniture and carpets may be scratched excessively.
- ◆ Preventing escape - Doors and windows have to be kept shut or covered at all times. An escaped

indoor cat will have no street skills and may become easily lost.

- ◆ Household hazards - An active indoor cat will explore more crevices in the house than an active outdoor cat. Boredom and curiosity can be a dangerous combination for kittens with washing machines, toilets, medicines, cleaners, wiring and wobbly shelves to explore.
- ◆ Poisonous plants - Outdoor cats nibble on plants and herbs. Denied these, indoor cats may turn to household plants, some of which are poisonous to cats.

FAB SURVEY RESULTS

in or out?



Three quarters of the cats taking part in the survey (1374 cats) were allowed to go out. Of these, a third could go where they pleased and a fifth (21 per cent) could go to a fenced garden or pen. Nearly half (46 per cent) of the cats allowed out in the day, were kept in at night. A few (45 cats) who were given free access to the outside world never went out. Nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of the 441 cats who were not allowed to go out had never been allowed out. Owners reported that only 8 per cent (36 cats) who had never been out, still tried to get out. However, a third of all cats who had been allowed out but were no longer allowed to do so, still tried to go out.

Advice

Some cats adapt more readily to an indoor lifestyle than others. It is easier to opt for an indoor cat right from the start than to convert an outdoor cat to an indoor one. It may be wiser to let an active outdoor cat continue to have a happy but risky life outside than to have a long and miserable one inside.

The key to keeping an indoor cat content is to provide opportunities to display the normal repertoire of behaviours.

- ◆ Toys and games - Cardboard boxes, paper tents, fishing rods, balls, and various cat play centres will help keep your cat stimulated.
- ◆ Company - Two kittens will be company and entertainment for each other.
- ◆ Scratch post - A scratch post will be satisfying for the cat and put less stress on furniture.
- ◆ Stimulation - Regular visitors when the cat is young not only provide stimulation but can prevent them from becoming hypersensitive to change later in life.

Best of both worlds

A fenced-in garden or a purpose built outdoor enclosure could provide your cat with sights and smells of the outside world and give some variety to his life without exposing him to many of the outdoor risks.

ain't misbehavin'

Many feline behavioural 'problems' are simply the expression of natural behaviour.

While most cats are well behaved creatures (one of the reasons they are such popular pets), some exhibit behaviour that owners find distressing. Most of these behaviour 'problems' could actually be defined as 'natural behaviours in the wrong place'. For example, spraying is acceptable to owners if it is done outside in the garden - the same behaviour indoors is seen as a problem. Likewise claw stropping or scratching is fine on a tree, but not on a settee!

Canine behaviour problems are more numerous and often more serious than feline ones in that they can produce serious injury or accident. Canine problems tend to be caused by a communication breakdown between man and dog. Cat problems, on the whole, tend to be caused by environmental factors such as reactions to other cats coming in to the house, changing the furniture or carpets, or a change of routine such as bringing home a new baby. Nervous problems are often based on the cat's experiences (or lack of them) in its first few weeks of life.

APBC results

In 2002 members of the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors treated 1807 dogs with behaviour problems and 714 cats. Twenty-nine per cent of the feline cases related to indoor toileting, 22 per cent to indoor marking, through spraying and scratching, and 12 per cent aggression to people. Fears and phobias triggered by a sight or sound made up 10 per cent of cases.

Overgrooming, vocalisation at night, frustration at being confined, and timidity made the remainder of cases. In its annual report the APBC states that inappropriate toileting behaviour was more often seen in females, while males were most commonly referred for spraying indoors; social aggression towards cats in the home was seen more frequently in females than males and fear of sound; and of visual stimuli were also more prevalent in females than males.

Information on APBC - www.apbc.org.uk
tel 01386 751151



Alice gives out mixed messages. She will appear to be enjoying being petted and then suddenly become aggressive and lash out.

Alice, moggie, 9 years, old.



A sudden change in character or behaviour of a cat can be related to illness. The first course of action in dealing with a behavioural problem should be to have the cat's health checked by the veterinary surgeon.

The most common problems experienced by cats owners are those of urine or faeces being deposited in the house. Others include aggression or extreme nervousness. Some behaviour problems can be tackled fairly simply by preventing cats coming into the household or removing something which is causing distress; others are much more complex and will need time spent on both the investigation and the solution. We do not have enough space here to do that - the FAB website (www.fabcats.org) has advice on the common behaviour problems. If further help is needed then it may be time to consult behaviour experts such as a members of the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC) to help address the problem.

FAB SURVEY RESULTS

strange behaviours

Of the 1853 cats taking part in the survey, owners reported that 1389 had experienced a behaviour problem at some time in their lives.

While there was no evidence on any individual breed exhibiting more problems than any other type of cat, owners of moggies were 1.4 times more likely to have reported a behaviour problem compared with owners of pedigrees.

Behaviour problems included inappropriate indoor toileting and spraying (325 cats), overgrooming (158 cats), aggression to people (103 cats), aggression to other cats in the house (201 cats), overbonding with owner leading to separation problems (107 cats), destructiveness through scratching (75 cats) and inappropriate sexual behaviour (34 cats).

Cats that were not allowed outside were one and a half times more likely to exhibit indoor toileting problems than cats allowed out.

Cats that didn't go out were 2.2 times less likely to show indoor spraying compared with cats that did go out and males were 2.8 times more likely to show indoor spraying compared with females.

There was also a wide range of problems in individual cats, from eating wool or stones to 'stroke and bite' syndrome. The Siamese was the most common breed for which wool eating was reported.

Male and female behaviour differences

In the FAB survey the following behavioural differences were observed between male and female cats:

Males were one and a half times more likely to be more talkative than females.

Males were one and a half times more likely to show aggression to strange cats outside than females.

Males were nearly three times more likely to show indoor spraying than females.

Females were over one and a half times more likely to show excessive nervousness compared with males.

Males were seven times more likely to show inappropriate sexual behaviour than females.



While still strongly attached to me the second cat has proved a useful distraction.

Phurr, Somali, 6 years old.

Terrible wool eater, from a kitten.
Gets through a cat hammock every six weeks.

Button, Siamese, 6 years old.

cat vacations

Cats are not the best of travellers. Most will be much happier in a cattery than undertaking a long car journey to a strange territory. But choose your cattery with care.

many people become **anxious** at the

thought of leaving their beloved cat in someone else's care while they are away, some to the extent that they feel quite unable to go on holiday. But there are excellent boarding catteries available.

If the cattery has been FAB Listed, it indicates high standards of cat accommodation and care. Without FAB approval you will have to check out the catteries for yourself. Make an appointment to have a look round. If the cattery proprietor refuses to let you see the premises then go elsewhere.

Catteries are generally classified as outdoor (having an outdoor run for the cats) or indoor (having no outside run). FAB prefers catteries with outdoor runs. Most cats enjoy having access to outdoors; it also helps to ensure there is good ventilation and airflow to help prevent the spread of disease. While totally indoor catteries may seem cosy, the shared-air situation means that bacteria and viruses can remain in the cat's environment.

Good cattery design should ensure that:

- ◆ The cat accommodation has a separate enclosed sleeping area with its own individual exercise run. This should be of appropriate size, warm, dry and secure.
- ◆ There is no possibility of cats within the cattery coming into direct contact with each other. There should also be no direct contact with any animal outside of the cattery.
- ◆ Only cats from the same household are boarded together.
- ◆ Adequate ventilation and air flow are present to minimise the danger of spreading air-borne diseases.

- ◆ There are gaps between units (minimum 0.6 m) or, if the units are joined together, sneeze barriers. Full height barriers are essential to prevent cats sneezing on or touching one another.
- ◆ Cats have an interesting view to stimulate them, a scratching post and plenty of washable toys to play with.
- ◆ Cats have a shelf in the run for resting and sunbathing.

Housing which offers any opportunity for cats from different households to come into contact with each other (or each other's faeces) increases the potential for spread of disease and should be avoided. This includes catteries where lots of cats are kept together in large pens and those which use a common area as an exercise run. Cat cages without runs should also be avoided – cats need space to exercise and move around.

The sleeping areas may be a full-height house (like a small chalet which houses the cat's bed and litter tray) or a 'penthouse' (a box raised off the ground). The latter is accessed by a solid ladder or ramp and the litter tray is usually placed outside, underneath the house. Each house should be insulated, lined with an impervious material (ie, fibreglass, or melamine coated hardboard) and enclosed to facilitate heating, but still allow the cats free access to their run through a cat-flap. All units should be individually heated so that each cat's requirements can be catered for.

Be aware that elderly or disabled cats may find the access ladder or ramp to penthouses difficult to climb.

Good cattery management

- ◆ A good proprietor should:
 - Ask for lots of information about your cat - name, age, sex, breed (if



applicable); any special markings; its eating habits; its likes and dislikes; any particular foibles. The proprietor should also ask if your cat is long or short-haired. There may be an additional charge for grooming long-haired cats.

- Insist on up to date vaccination and to see a current vaccination certificate (remember to take the cat's record of vaccination with you).
- Ask for your cat's medical history and the name and number of your regular vet. It may be necessary for the cattery vet to contact your own vet in an emergency. You may also be asked to sign a consent form in case your cat requires medication during its stay.
- ◆ If your cat is already on medication check with the cattery to ensure they are prepared to administer it. All medicines must be carefully labelled. There may be a small charge for administering these.
- ◆ Does your cat require a special diet? Discuss this with the proprietor – if it is a prescription diet you may have to provide this.
- ◆ You will need to leave a contact name and telephone number for your destination or a friend or relative who can make decisions on your behalf - and make sure your contact is informed!



FAB SURVEY RESULTS

travelling cats



In the FAB Survey nearly half of all cats (48 per cent) were said to hate car travel. A few (16 per cent) were said to positively enjoy travel by car. A tenth never went in a car at all. Pedigrees and younger cats (up to three year olds) were all more likely to enjoy travel than moggies.

Car safety

Cats should not be allowed to roam loose in a car while it is in motion. A travel basket or box will help to make the cat feel more secure and ensure that it does not escape when the door is opened or distract the driver.

The Pet Travel scheme

Cats that are resident in the UK can travel abroad to certain countries and return without having to spend six months in quarantine provided that they follow the rules laid down in by the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS). Anyone planning to take a cat abroad should give themselves plenty of time to complete the procedure. Your cat may not enter the UK under PETS until six months have passed from the date that your vet took the blood sample to confirm successful vaccination against rabies. Only then is the PETS certificate valid. A returning cat that fails to meet all the PETS rules will have to be quarantined.

See the DEFRA website for details:

www.defra.gov.uk

Check list

Most importantly:

- ◆ Do the cats have individual sleeping accommodation?
- ◆ Do the cats have individual runs?
- ◆ Is there a gap or full height solid barrier between cat units?
- ◆ Is there a safety passage?
- ◆ Are the units clean? Is each unit individually heated?
- ◆ Have you been asked about vaccination?

But also:

- ◆ If also a kennels, do the dogs disturb the cats?
- ◆ Are the surroundings neat and tidy?
- ◆ Is there a separate kitchen for food preparation for cats?
- ◆ Were you made welcome?
- ◆ Have you seen the cattery's licence?
- ◆ Is there a shelf for cats to sit/lie on?
- ◆ Is there a scratch post in the run?
- ◆ Is there an interesting view for the cats?
- ◆ Do the cat units have the cats' names on?
- ◆ Is there any smell?
- ◆ Do the litter trays and bowls look clean?
- ◆ Do the cats in residence look contented?
- ◆ Have you been asked about your cat's diet?
- ◆ Have you been asked about your cat's health?
- ◆ Does the proprietor seem well informed?
- ◆ Does the proprietor seem caring?

For more information on:-

Choosing a boarding cattery
 Starting a boarding cattery
 FAB Listed catteries
 FAB Boarding Cattery Manual
 FAB Boarding Cattery Standard
 see: www.fabcats.org

Cattery

OF THE YEAR AWARD



If your cat stays in a great cattery why not nominate it for 'Cattery of the Year' which is being launched in February 2004. See www.fabcats.org for details or the February issue of *Your Cat* and the *FAB Journal*.

fabcats

up close and purrsonal

what does it all mean?

Owners love their cats – the owners of over 1800 cats whose personalities are recorded in this survey are, by definition of them taking the time and effort to complete the long questionnaire, very enthusiastic about their cats. So while we may not be able to say that all cat owners in the UK are like this, the results from these enthusiasts do tell us a great deal. Interestingly a much greater proportion of owners of pedigree cats completed the survey (40 per cent of our cats) than are represented in the population as a whole (about 10 per cent).

Dispelling myths

However, this has proved very useful and the results dispel many of the myths about pedigree cats – they are often considered aloof, somehow elite or even aggressive – many times I have heard reference to Siamese cats as being aggressive, usually by people who have never owned one or even really met one! The reality couldn't be further from the truth. The survey also gave us results in large enough numbers for some breeds to be able to generalise about them with some confidence. If your breed is not mentioned it is not because it lacks a personality but because there were probably too few questionnaires for us to really feel that we could sum up some aspects of the breed on the numbers received. Our respondents were also very responsible owners – 96 per cent of moggies and 80 per cent of pedigrees (ie, those not being used for breeding) in the survey were neutered.

Early experience

Most of all, the report points us in the direction of the importance of the early weeks of cats' lives. For moggie owners these weeks may be a complete mystery – many owners got their cats from rescue organisations, others took them in when they appeared on the door step, and others took them on as older cats. What we do know is that it is the responsibility of pedigree breeders to socialise their cats – most do not rehome kittens until they are at least 12

weeks old because they vaccinate them before they go to their new homes. Thus a good breeder will know the importance of getting their kittens used to people, activities in the home and new experiences. A good breeder will also look at the temperament of his or her cats and take this (and not just colours, markings or body shape) into account when deciding which cats to breed from. As in all walks of life, there are good and bad breeders – if you are choosing a kitten then make sure it is well socialised and you stand a good chance of having a confident, person-loving cat which wants to join in with your life – as our survey shows. (FAB has an information sheet on Choosing a pedigree kitten on its website – www.fabcats.org).

For some issues of early life, such as hand-rearing of kittens, where anecdotally we have heard that such kittens can be difficult, results have given a hint that this might be true - hand-reared kittens come across in the survey as more demanding. The result that cats from rescue organisations seem to be more nervous should not be surprising either – they may have had difficult early weeks, some may be almost feral and others may have suffered cruelty. This should point us in the direction of careful matching of cats with new owners and the importance of socialisation of kittens in the rescue situation – such aspects are already being addressed by good rescue organisations.

The finding that kittens which have experienced strangers, children and dogs in early life and are therefore much more relaxed around them in their new homes again comes as no surprise, but it is good to see that socialising early does work. Cats from pet shops were found to be much more bad-tempered than from other sources – FAB and many organisations feel that kittens should not be sold from pet shops but be seen in a home environment or a good rescue organisation where they are more protected from danger of infection and their care can be overseen better.

Lovely moggies

Sixty per cent of our survey is dedicated to good old moggies; be they black and white (39 per cent of the survey); tabby (24 per cent), ginger (13 per cent), tortoiseshell (12 per cent), other colours (10 per cent) or white (2 per cent). And they surprised us too - when we thought that interesting behaviours such as retrieving were restricted to some of the more interactive pedigree breeds like the Siamese, many moggies too showed they were happy to join in with their owners this way. As the saying goes – beauty is only skin deep. But for cats, pedigree or moggie, beauty also shines in their graceful movements and beautiful shape. Add to this intelligence, charm and a little mystery and we should not be surprised that cats are such popular pets.

Thank you

Thank you again to those who took part in this questionnaire and to Felix, our sponsors. Thanks too to *Your Cat* magazine (www.yourcat.co.uk) for its continued support of our work.

We have answered some questions together – we will be asking more!

Claire Bessant,
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cats...



everything you wanted to know but didn't know who to ask!

cat disease: cat behaviour: boarding catteries:
advice for breeders: information for owners...
and much more



working towards a healthy future for cats
www.fabcats.org

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