

Getting a Cat From Rescue

Introduction

Finding a cat which will fit into your personal lifestyle is more important than choosing a cat merely on its looks. Size, looks, colour, breed or sex are relatively unimportant. What matters is the cat's behavior. Adult cats are relatively fixed in the way they behave. You cannot fundamentally change them. Kittens are less fixed. These are the steps to take.

Step 1

FIND A RELIABLE CAT RESCUE ORGANIZATION

Never, ever, buy a cat purely from a selling website like Ebay or Gumtree. People who sell cats like this may not be honest and a good breeder would never do this. You may well be getting a cat/kitten that is sick or difficult to manage.

A good cat rescue charity will be able to answer most of your questions and will be honest about the cat. How do you know if it is a reliable rescue? Good cat rescues will do the following:

- do a home check; vaccinate their adult cats before adoption; neuter their adult cats before adoption. If the local cat rescue doesn't do this, find one that does.

Step 2

LOOK ONLINE

Don't just look at the photos, read the accompanying words. Kittens will adapt to a home. Websites usually indicate what kind of home an adult cat needs. Look for a cat that has lived in the same kind of home as yours. Avoid any cats that need a quiet home, are described as nervous, or unsuitable to home with children, if you have a busy home with children. Think about hair length – do you have time for daily brushing of a long-haired cat? If you want a specific breed, consult this website about breed hereditary disease, www.icatcare.org/advice/cat-breeds/inherited-disorders-cats before a final choice.

Step 3

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK

Does the rescue know about the cat's previous home or is it a stray? If it is a stray the rescue charity will know nothing about its earlier life. If it was handed in do they know *anything* about the cat's kittenhood? Quite often rescues do not know about an adult cat's early life. This is a pity, because the first eight weeks of a cat's life are when it learns to be relaxed around humans, dogs and other cats. Cats that have met dogs, when they were kittens, are usually relaxed about dogs in later life.

Was the cat originally a feral kitten? If these kittens are socialized later than 8 weeks, they often remain nervous in later life. How much does this matter to you? How much time do you have to give to socializing the kitten?

Step 4

VISIT THE CAT OR CATS THAT SEEM RIGHT

Never ever adopt a cat that you haven't visited and met in the flesh. Check for yourself. Take your children and dog with you. You may also see the cat in a foster home. Ask the fosterer questions that you asked before. Some fosterers (not all) know more about the cat than central office does. Does the fosterer have a dog or children? If so what has she/he observed about the cat's reactions to these?



Step 5

INTERACT WITH THE CAT

If the cat is in a pen, ask if you can go in with it. If this request is refused, find another rescue charity. Does the cat come towards you in its pen or retreat? How does it respond to your children? If the cat runs and hides, this is not a fully confident cat and you may need a confident one for your lifestyle.

Dogs.... If the cat is in a pen take your dog *on its lead* to the front of the pen, to see how the cat reacts and how your dog reacts. Or, if the fosterer allows, take your dog in the house *on its lead*, to meet the cat. *Only do this if the cat is said to be confident around dogs. Doing this to a nervous cat would be cruel.* A few cat rescuers will tell you that the cat will be more confident outside a pen: this is only sometimes true. If you have a busy home, children and pets, you cannot afford to take a chance on this.

Step 6

DO NOT TAKE THE CAT IMMEDIATELY. GO HOME AND THINK.

The danger is that you will "fall in love" with the cat you have seen even though it is unsuitable. It is important not to let your heart rule your head. Nervous kittens may always be somewhat nervous. A cat's behavior is relatively fixed in adult life so you will not be able to change an adult cat.