

Why you should adopt an older cat

By Nancy Weiler

Now that kitten season is winding down, older cats waiting patiently in shelters for adoption can now bask in the spotlight a bit more. While few things are cuter than kittens, we think there's plenty to purr about when it comes to older cats, especially senior ones.

November is Adopt a Senior Pet Month, so it's a great time to consider adopting a mature feline. Older shelter cats are just as loving, loyal, and delightful as young ones, but typically they're the last to be adopted. According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 3.2 million cats find their way into animal shelters every year. Some — about 90,000 or so — are happily reunited with their owners, and 1.6 million lucky cats are adopted. Sadly, that leaves 860,000 unlucky cats that end up being euthanized every year. Many of those are more than 10 years old and are tragically overlooked by potential adopters just because of their age.

How old is considered “senior” in cat years? Opinions vary slightly, but, according to the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, a 10-year-old cat is similar age-wise to a 53-year-old person, a 12-year-old cat to a 61-year-old person, and a 15-year-old cat to a 73-year-old person. Cats have been known to live into their early 20s. According to the “Guinness World Records 2010,” Cream Puff, from Austin, Texas, lived to be 38 years old.

Older cats may need a little extra TLC to live a comfortable life. Regular wellness exams, medication if needed, proper food, warm places to sleep, gentle grooming, easy access to things they enjoy, and lots of love will help your cat enjoy their golden years.

There are many reasons to consider adopting a senior cat. What you see is what you get. Their personalities are well-established, so you'll know if they're a good fit for your family, whereas a kitten's changes as it grows older. A senior cat has been exposed to lots of sights, sounds, and smells, so they will often settle into a new home more quickly. They need less supervision than a kitten and thrive on routine.

Originally transferred to Marin Humane from an overcrowded shelter, 9-year-old Zsa Zsa was adopted last year but recently returned to our care after her guardian needed to enter an assisted-living facility that doesn't allow pets. This beautiful brown tabby hasn't let her life changes get her down though. With her affectionate nature and soulful eyes, she's become a volunteer favorite. Sadly, she's been passed over several times by adopters in favor of a younger cat.

In honor of National Adopt a Senior Pet Month, consider adopting an older animal. Thanks to a generous cat lover, adoption fees on all felines over 5 months old will be waived until we reach 100 adult cats adopted.

To see animals available for adoption, visit marinhumane.org/adopt and for cat or dog behavior tips, visit marinhumane.org/oh-behave.

Nancy Weiler is a volunteer with Marin Humane, which contributes Tails of Marin articles and welcomes animal-related questions and stories about the people and animals in our community. Go to marinhumane.org, find us on social media @marinhumane, or email lbloch@marinhumane.org.