

Myths About Senior Cats Debunked

Consider sharing your life
with an older cat.
You won't be disappointed!

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7 Myths Debunked

1. Senior cats will be sick
2. Senior cats in shelters are there for a reason
3. They are grumpy
4. They are boring
5. They won't be good with kids
6. They won't adjust well to a new environment
7. They will pass away soon

Health issues

Some people think that adopting a senior cat means signing up for years of medical emergencies and expensive veterinary care. While it's always wise to be prepared for an emergency, there's no reason to expect one just because of your cat's age. Many cats, just like many people, do not experience a serious illness in their advanced age.

Additionally, many shelters and rescues classify cats aged six or older as seniors. These cats are still young in relation to a potential lifespan that can extend to 20 years.

Overlooking a senior cat because of the potential for health problems simply doesn't make sense.



DAWS often cares for older cats that are looking for loving homes. When looking to add a feline companion to your family, consider adopting an older cat. Visit our website or stop by the shelter to find the perfect senior pet.



They are in the shelter for a reason

Potential adopters visiting shelters are often skeptical of senior cats (or even young cats who are long-term residents) because they assume there must be something wrong with an animal that has been homeless for so long. They wonder *why* no one else has wanted this cat. Ironically, this creates a self-fulfilling prophecy wherein the cat continues to be passed over, increasing the skepticism of each subsequent adopter.

The truth is that cats end up in shelters for all sorts of reasons, and a disheartening amount of them have *nothing* to do with the animal itself. Cats are often surrendered when their families move to no-pets-allowed housing or get a new pet that doesn't like the cat (so much for "I was here first"). Sometimes cats are returned because they are marking outside the litter box or behaving aggressively, but these behaviors almost always boil down to human error (not enough litter boxes, used hands as toys, made the cat feel threatened, etc.). Besides being former pets, a tremendous number of cats in shelters were strays or [community cats](#) before entering the shelter. Cats in shelters have done nothing wrong to end up there.

Furthermore, the length of time a cat has been in a shelter is often not indicative of a problem (and if it is, a reputable shelter will be honest with you about it). Some cats don't show well because of the stress of living with so many other cats; they may appear aggressive, standoffish, or boring when really they're just trying to get by! Adopters often pass on wonderful cats because it's hard to imagine how friendly they'll be once they have a home of their own. Finally, for many senior cats, the "reason" is just their age! (Good thing *you* know better now than to pass over senior cats.)

Senior Cats make great pets!





They are grumpy

Some people seem to think that cats naturally turn surly with age, and this is simply not true. Most cats actually mellow with age, and become *more* interested in snuggling and other human affection. If a senior cat is displaying a bad attitude or bad behavior, it is likely due to an underlying condition (e.g., if a cat scratches during petting sessions, it's more likely the person touched a sensitive, arthritic joint than it is that the cat is "just mean"). Cats have their own personalities, and some are more aloof than others, but "crabby" behavior is almost never just that. Most of "bad" behavior is simply a response to something in the environment.

They are boring

If by boring you mean that a senior cat won't destroy your house or keep you up all night, then yes, they're very boring. But if you mean they won't like to play, won't appreciate your attention, or won't have an interesting personality, then you couldn't be further from the truth! Senior cats still do love to play, often want more lap time than younger cats, and tend to have a more developed sense of who they are and what they like. Having a kitten is like watching the Indy 500 all over your living room; having a senior cat is like a nuanced conversation with a long-time friend.

Not good with kids

For those who believe the myth that senior cats are boring and crabby, it follows pretty easily that they also believe a senior cat wouldn't be good around children. Barring the possibility of a neurological disorder, however, cats don't act out for no reason. When there's a problem between a cat and a child, it's almost universally the case of the *child's* behavior eliciting that response from the cat. This doesn't mean that the child is being "bad," however. Children often don't realize that cats are living beings with their own needs, comforts, fears, and desires. As a result, the way kids approach, play with, and handle cats is often inappropriate and frightening to the cat, prompting the animal to defend him- or herself.

Therefore, the more important question to ask when adopting a senior cat (or any cat) isn't "Will this cat be good to my child?", but rather, "Will my child be good to this cat?" All children should be taught to treat cats and other animals with respect and kindness. They need to learn to approach, play with, and handle cats gently. They should learn the basics of cat body language so they can recognize when the cat wants to be left alone or wants an interaction to end. Parents should also teach their children a few basics of cat anatomy and explain which behaviors could result in injury to the cat. By teaching children to be kind, gentle, and respectful of the cat, parents ensure that the cat will be kind, gentle, and respectful of the child.

Won't adjust well

You don't get to be an 11-year-old cat in an animal shelter without surviving some upheaval in your life. Be patient when bringing a new cat home, and introduce him or her to your house properly, and they'll be fine!



They will pass away soon

Many people do worry that it'll be too painful to adopt a new cat and then lose them so soon. Losing a pet is incredibly painful, with some experts even comparing it to the loss of a child. It is valid to consider this when choosing a new companion. However, in addition to the fact that a six-year-old "senior" cat could easily live up to 15 more years, even those that are nearing the end of their lives are worth adopting.

Consider this: you will probably outlive every pet you'll ever have. It might be in 2 years or it may be in 20 years, but you will have to say goodbye (for this lifetime, anyway) eventually to all of your pets. What's the cut-off? Why say, "I'll say goodbye in 15 years, but not in 5?" When you go to a shelter and fall in love with a cat, wouldn't you rather he or she spend whatever time he or she has left in your home rather than in a cage?

There's no easy way to face your beloved pet's mortality, but it seems doubly cruel to use that mortality as a strike against a homeless cat. After all, it's the life in our years, not the years in our life, right?

Danbury Animal Welfare Society offers a Senior Cats for Senior People Adoption Program. The program matches cats aged six or older with loving pet parents aged 60 or better. To learn more visit daws.org/seniors-seniors-program

