

PET TALES

Which one?

Look beyond the 'cute factor' when picking a kitten

BY SUSAN and DR. ROLAN TRIPP
Universal Press Syndicate

When the weather warms up, so does feline romance. That soon means kittens who need new homes are suddenly everywhere. But with so many to choose from, how can you decide which one fits with your personality and lifestyle?

Work with a reputable shelter or rescue group to make sure the kittens you're considering are in good health and have had the benefits of gentle handling by staff and volunteers. Even kittens born wild can usually be tamed, but they need to be exposed to people early to grasp the advantages of being a member of a human family.

Faced with so many kittens, many prospective adopters choose based on looks alone. Some favor tuxedo cats, others red tabbies. Unusual markings can get other kittens adopted, such as "mustaches" or mittens, perfect symmetrical markings or pretty patches of rich, contrasting colors.

But personality counts, too, which is why when you're looking at choosing from a shelter full of healthy kittens, it's a good idea

to look beyond the markings to consider the cat within.

The feline personality ranges from the love-everyone attention-seekers to cautious cold-shoulder types. Remember that what you see in a kitten is a window into the personality of the cat that baby will become. Kittens are creatures of their genetics and of what they experience in the first 10 weeks of life. Sadly, a terrified or unfriendly kitten does not offer the best possibility of becoming a loving family pet. So for most people, it's better to choose from among the more promising contenders.

Based on years of experience, we've "categorized" kittens into five personality types, along with the kind of home each is best suited for.

- The activity junkie: Look at that kitten go! These crazy kittens are in constant motion and will likely become cats who are also busy-busy. Choose one of these kittens and expect an explorer who's always on the go. If you like an entertaining companion, this is the kitten for you.

- The me-now meower: Look at me! Pay attention to me! As cute as these kittens can



be, remember that if you like a quiet house, you might consider another baby. Cats are nocturnal, and the noisy, demanding kitten can become a middle-of-the-night alarm-clock cat. Still, many people love a cat who communicates.

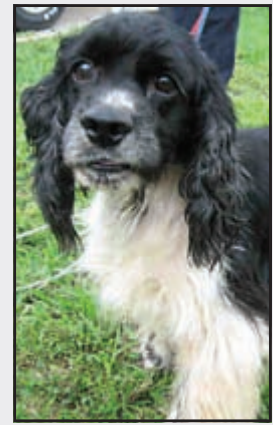
- The big-league batter: Your finger? It's a kitten toy! These kittens will reach between the gaps in their shelter enclosures to grab your fingers. These lively youngsters will crave play time with you and will use all the kitten toys you can offer. If you can't provide daily, regular play sessions with these tiny tigers, you may find these felines ambushing your feet.

- The purr machine: Love and lap time are what these babies crave. Touch them or even look at them and their motors start instantly. As adults, they will be happiest when near you and not happy when left alone. This type is an excellent choice for the person who's home a lot and wants an easygoing lap cat.

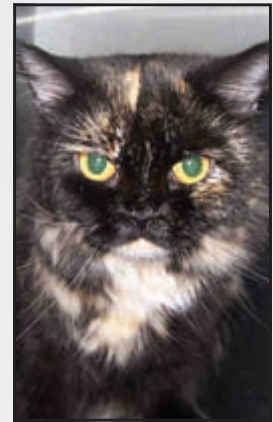
- The socialite: These friendly, take-it-all-in-stride youngsters are a good match for homes with children and other pets. The socialite eagerly approaches the front of the kennel to meet and greet you — tail is up, ears forward, looking for a finger to sniff. These kittens should mature into cats who aren't easily flustered by a busy household.

Of course, adopting is only the beginning. When you adopt a healthy, friendly kitten, you'll need to build on the good start, by teaching your kitten the house rules and how to play and scratch appropriately. Fortunately, this learning is fun for you both. ■

Pets of the Week



>>>Prince (361090), a handsome cocker spaniel, was confiscated from his owners for cruelty and is ready for a loving home.



>>>Blacky (401936), a Persian mix, was surrendered by her owners. She is just one of many beautiful, sweet cats in need of a new home.

To adopt a pet

There are many dogs and cats available at Lee County Animal Services, 5600 Banner Drive, Fort Myers. Call 533-7387 or visit the agency's Web site at www.leelostpets.com. Adoption applications may be downloaded from the site or completed at the shelter, which is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Please use the animal's ID number when inquiring about it. The adoption fee is \$65 for dogs and \$50 for cats.

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