

Tri-Valley Herald (Pleasanton, CA)

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Summer perfect time for adopting pet kitten or two

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THIS TIME of year, about the time when kids get out for summer, kittens are out also. In droves. This is the time of year animal rescue organizations refer to as "kitten season." However, while our kids may have numerous summertime activities planned, kittens only have three places to go: to a loving home, to an animal shelter where they will likely be euthanized in a week, or out in the wild, where their chances of surviving more than two years is, on average, very slim, and where their quality of life will likely be poor. June is Adopt a Shelter Cat Month, and I encourage you to do what you can to help by considering adopting a kitten or adult cat from an animal rescue group or shelter. Because cats are such prolific reproducers, having that kitten spayed or neutered is paramount.

A cat's normal gestation period (i.e., the length of time their pregnancy lasts) is about two months. And after being born it only takes about six months for those kittens to reach the age where they can reproduce a third generation of kittens, and then in six more months, those grand-kittens are reproducing. And so on.

The geometric proliferation of cats is one reason that spaying or neutering even a single cat is so important.

Consider the following: although estimates vary on the exact number, somewhere between 4 million and 10 million dogs and cats are euthanized every year in animal shelters because there are not enough homes willing to take them in.

That is a tragic number. And while adopting a single cat or kitten won't make a noticeable dent in the statistics, that single adoption will save the only life that one kitten has and will add a completely new dimension to your life.

So then what if you already have a cat? Well, as I tell my clients: the best toy for a kitten is another kitten.

The good news is that cats can get along with other cats as well as dogs.

When adding a new cat or kitten to a home that already has a cat, it's a good idea to keep the new one away from the current residents for a few days.

Be patient.

After several days, supervise interactions between the animals for periods of increasing length. Most cats will soon learn to accept each other, and some may quite possibly become the best of friends.

How do you pick this new addition to your family? As you walk by a few cat cages at the shelter, you'll notice that some cats meow for special attention, while others simply lie back and look disinterested. The truth is there are as many personalities of cats as there are cats at the shelter.

Ask an adoption counselor for assistance when you wish to spend some time with individual cats. But regardless of individual personality, look for a kitten who's playful, active, alert, and comfortable while being held and stroked.

Cats can have long, fluffy coats or short, dense fur, and the choice between the two is primarily a matter of what you feel you can comfortably manage.

You'll see more short-haired cats because they are more common. Keep in mind that long haired cats require frequent grooming to remain matt-free.

Cats with short coats also benefit from brushing, though they do not need it as frequently. Most cats enjoy a regular brushing and look forward to this as part of a daily routine with you.

An adoption event will be held June 24 at Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center and Urgent Care in San Ramon from 10 am-4pm.

The Center is located at the intersection of Norris Canyon Road and Bishop Drive in San Ramon, across from Toyota in Bishop Ranch Business Park.

Present at the event will be Tri-Valley Animal Rescue, Valley Humane Society, Feral Cat Foundation, Community Concern for Cats, and the Tri-Valley SPCA.

I strongly encourage anyone considering adopting a kitten to come to the center and see if there is a cat or kitten there for you.

And remember that you're making a commitment to love and care for your new pet for his or her lifetime, which could mean 10, 15, even 20 years.

So choose your new best friend carefully and be a responsible pet owner. In no time at all, you'll know how wonderful sharing your home with a cat or kitten can be.

Like the old Italian proverb says: "Happy is the home with at least one cat."

Dr. Franklin Utchen has been practicing veterinary medicine in San Ramon since 1989 and currently co-owns Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care. His special interests include Orthopedic and Soft Tissue Surgery, Internal Medicine, Emergency/Critical Care, Dentistry, and Anesthesiology/Pain Management.

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