

Showing the Household Pet

Good grooming practices can improve your cat's chances to be named Best Household Pet.

By Bridget Cohen

Showing a household pet can be exciting, enjoyable and habit-forming. Friendships formed around a judge's ring are an important part of the appeal of showing a cat, but winning provides an even greater enticement. Cats that win may be awarded ribbons, trophies (such as the Morris Award, sponsored by 9 Lives Cat Food) or other prizes. In associations that register household pets, the cats may win points that, when added to the points won at other shows, may lead to national household-pet titles. Many people who breed and exhibit purebred cats first caught the "cat-show bug" when they showed their household pets.

Most cat shows have a household-pet category for showing unregistered cats. The cat shows are most often sponsored by local clubs affiliated with national registry associations (see "About the Registries" on page 22. To find a show where you can enter your cat, check with a local cat club, or read the "Show Calendar" department in CAT FANCY. "Show Calendar" provides the name and address of each show's entry clerk. You can receive a show flyer and an entry blank by writing to the entry clerk. Watch for the listings of fun matches, too, which are often shows devoted solely to household pets.

As a general rule, any neutered or spayed cat, or a kitten not less than 4→

Photo: Dorothy Holby

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continued

months of age, that is in good health may be entered in the household pet class. Most associations require that cats not be declawed. Contact the sponsoring club for details, or obtain current show rules from the association's main headquarters.

Preparing Your Cat

If you are thinking about entering your cat in its first show, you might wonder how to prepare your cat for the large show hall reverberating with noise. How can you help the cat adjust to people staring at it through the bars of the benching cage? Most importantly, how can you prepare the cat to be handled by a stranger—the judge?

Ann Beachum, a veteran household-pet exhibitor, shares her training techniques. Ann is the owner of Breanne, a household pet who has won the Morris Award numerous times and placed in the Happy Household Pet Cat Club's annual awards.

"Lots of love is first on my list," Ann explains. "Most important in a show environment is that a cat know you

About The Registries

A CAT SHOW is usually sponsored by a club affiliated with one of the major registry associations. In the "Show Calendar" department, beginning on page 76, you can learn the date of each show and the city where it will be held, followed by the name of the sponsoring club and the initials of the association that the club is affiliated with.

Out of the seven North American cat registries, six allow household pets to be "registered" or "recorded," making the cats eligible for national titles awarded by the association. In all of these associations, however, registration is not a prerequisite for showing, nor will any penalty apply in the course of competition because a cat is not registered.

To find a cat club or a show near you or to inquire about how to register a household pet, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to one or more of the following addresses. If writing to a registry across the American-Canadian border, enclose

international reply coupons in lieu of postage. The coupons are available from the post office.

- **American Cat Association,**** Dept. CF, 8101 Katherine Ave., Panorama City, CA 91402.
- **American Cat Fanciers Association,**** Dept. CF, P.O. Box 203, Pt. Lookout, MO 65726.
- **Canadian Cat Association,** Dept. CF, 52 Dean St., Brampton, Ontario, Canada L6X 1B7.
- **Cat Fanciers' Association,*** Dept. CF, 1309 Allaire Ave., Ocean, NJ 07712.
- **Cat Fanciers' Federation,*** Dept. CF, 402 McKeige Ct., Donelson, TN 37214.
- **The International Cat Association,**** Dept. CF, P.O. Box 2684, Harlingen, TX 78551.
- **United Cat Federation,**** Dept. CF, 5510 Ptolemy Way, Mira Loma, CA 91752.

*registers household pets

**registers household pets and allows declawed pets to be shown

love it; then it will trust you." Ann once told a judge who had finalized her cat, "We love her very much."

"I can tell that," the judge replied. "It shows."

Ann has additional suggestions for new exhibitors. "Spectate at a few shows before entering one. Observe how the judges handle the cats. Then go home and handle your cat in t



To help your cat get used to the touch of a stranger, invite friends to handle your cat.

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same manner—not once, but every day, so your cat becomes used to the routine.”

A cat should become accustomed to a stranger handling it before it goes to its first show. Joy Fischette, owner of Boo-Boo, winner of a Morris Award, suggests, “Have your neighbor come over, take the cat out of the cage and hold it up, look it over, put it down, touch various parts of the head and body, and then pick it up and put it in the cage again.”

Because it will be caged at a show all day, your cat or kitten must learn ahead of time to accept confinement. Using a cage or carrier, train your cat by confining it for short periods of time. Feed the cat in the carrier to create a pleasant experience. Gradually increase the amount of time the cat is confined until you are certain the cat will accept the required daylong benching.

Some cats may not take to confinement because of a traumatic experi-

ence in the past, which is the case for many cats rescued from the street or turned in at—and later adopted from—animal shelters. These and other cats that may fear strangers or loud noises may not tolerate being shown. Such cats are probably best admired in their own homes.

“The personality of your household pet is of great importance [to the judges],” explains Ann Beachum. “If the cat was physically abused when it was younger, it may never be able to tolerate a show-hall environment. Make sure your pet is capable of coping with stress before entering it in a show.”

Although many formerly abused cats cannot tolerate being shown, some cats that have not always received love and proper care adjust to show business and go on to win. Ann Beachum’s 15-year-old household pet, Shandy, has been going to shows since he was 7 years old. “Shandy was neglected from the time he was born in the woods,” Ann says. “When he was 3 weeks old, he and his two sisters were taken away from his mother and locked outside in a wire-

For Household Pet Owners

WHETHER OR NOT you show your household pet, you may want to consider joining The Happy Household Pet Cat Club. Membership is open to the owners of mixed-breed cats and to the owners of pet-quality purebred cats.

For more information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the Happy Household Pet Cat Club, Dept. CF, Dorothy Lewis, 260 Corral Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94086.

bottom cage for three months. The kittens were fed table scraps twice a week and given rainwater in a rusty coffee can.”

Ann eventually rescued the kittens from their situation and took them to a veterinarian. The kittens were in very poor condition. “The veterinarian thought I could never raise them,” Ann continued. “Each kitten weighed about 12 to 14 ounces and had fleas and worms, anemia, nutritional deficiencies, ear mites and eye problems. Needless to say, I raised them all and—

Show Personality

THERE IS more to a show cat than just its appearance. Show personality counts heavily in your cat’s final placement. Judges love purring or playful cats. They are wary of cats that growl or tense up while being examined.

Owners can help condition a cat so it will be behaved at the show hall. Happy show cats will not have to go through two very stressful days; instead, they will seem to do their best to coax the judges into thinking they are beautiful in every way.

Begin conditioning a cat for the show hall while it is young. Radio, TV and vacuum noises should be part of the kitten’s environment. It should get used to baths and the hair dryer, too. Have neighbors and friends handle the kitten to get it used to strangers. Throw a party, blast the stereo and invite your friend with a half dozen children to your house. Let your kitten know that noise does not mean danger.

Next, teach your kitten to love car rides. Take your kitten with you when you drive to the post office or go on other short errands. Every week, your kitten should go for a car ride. Put it in the carrier, and fasten the seat belt to the carrier in case you should have

to stop the car suddenly. In warm weather, remember never to leave your kitten in the car because it may suffer heatstroke.

As a last step in the conditioning, take your kitten to the shopping mall, where it will hear screaming children, speaker announcements and other “people noises.” To avoid attention, use a small carrier with a cover. Just walk up and down the mall.

The more conditioning you do, the better behaved your kitten should be at show time. Once your kitten becomes an adult, do some conditioning on a regular basis.

Because judges use feathers or tassel sticks, play with your kitten using these toys. Judges also like to hold cats high in the air, so do this often with your kitten. Using treats or special attention, you can also teach your kitten to pose on a small table. This helps at picture-taking time as well.

Use your imagination in conditioning your kitten. Each cat and owner is different. —Sandy Baugh

This article is reprinted from the June 1987 issue of “The Silver Lining,” the newsletter of The Franciscan Silver (Persian) Fanciers.



Photo: Chanen

A cat that has been properly conditioned will be well behaved in the show hall.

SHOWING continued

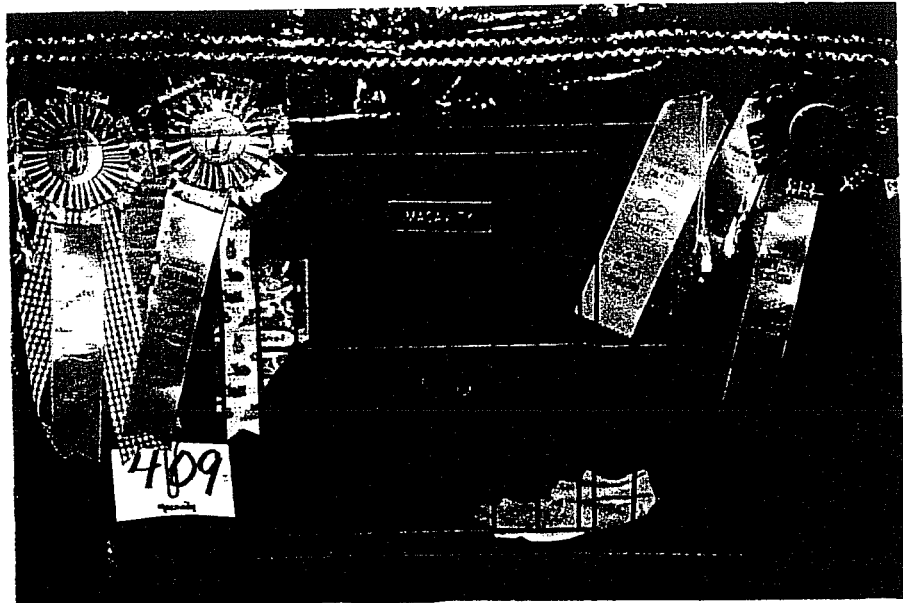
never regretted for one minute the sleepless nights and trips to my veterinarian."

Shandy has gone on to do very well at the shows. People who show cats they have rescued from poor situations will probably tell you that a win is not only an acknowledgement of a healthy, attractive cat; it is also a kind of reward for the love they have offered and their hard work on the cat's behalf.

"Shandy never wins the big ones, but he always makes me proud of him," Ann explained.

Before entering a show, your cat should be used to traveling in the car. "Make sure your cat is a good traveler," says Ann. "Some shows we enter require a two-hour car ride. Start several weeks before a show. Take your cat on short car rides while it is confined in the carrier. If your cat is content in the car, it will arrive at the show hall calm and ready for the day's activities."

Nearly every household-pet exhibi-



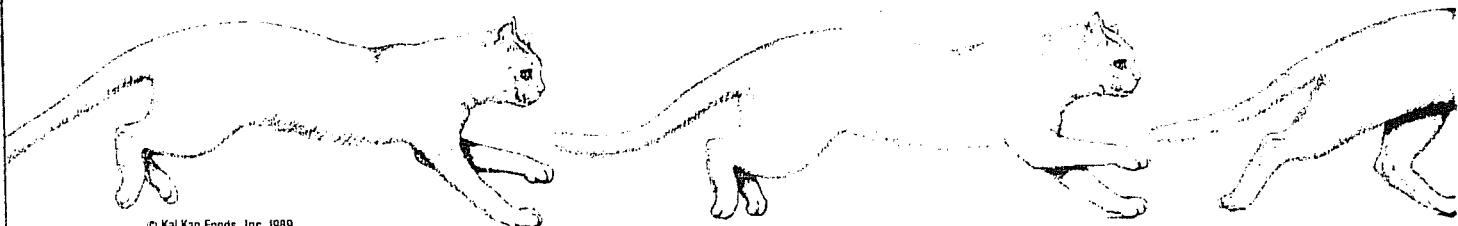
Your cat's cage will need a covering of some kind. Some owners sew cage curtains; others clip towels or sheets to the cage bars.

tor agrees that diet is of the utmost importance in producing a healthy coat on a cat. Exhibitors do not, however, always agree on what the content of the diet should be. Some people supplement the diet with vitamins;

others feed particular food items in addition to the cat's regular food. All agree that a regular diet of commercial cat food is essential; table scraps alone do not provide all the nutrients necessary for good health.



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Cats going to shows must be free of all parasites, including fleas. They should be well groomed and have clean, unmatted coats, as well as clean ears and teeth free of tartar. A cat's claws should be clipped to protect anyone handling the cat from being scratched. Your cat must have received all its vaccinations against contagious diseases and be in good health.

Other Preparations

Once your cat has been prepared for the show, gather other items you will need to bring with you. You'll need curtains (towels or bed sheets work well) for the benching cage, which is provided by the sponsoring cat club. The curtains are used to decorate the cage your cat will be in most of the day and to provide a secure environment. Take clothespins, clips or safety pins to hang the curtains. Bring a mat or small blanket to place on the table under the bottomless cage, and for your cat's comfort, bring a bed, a water dish and a food dish. Check with the show manager to see if litter and litter pans will be supplied at the show. If not, you'll need to bring these

items, too. And don't forget grooming tools for last-minute touch-ups.

Be prepared to wait long periods of time between judging rings. You might want to pack that novel you've been meaning to read. Dress comfortably. And because vendors are common at most cat shows, don't leave your checkbook at home; you might see something you'll want to buy.

Show Time

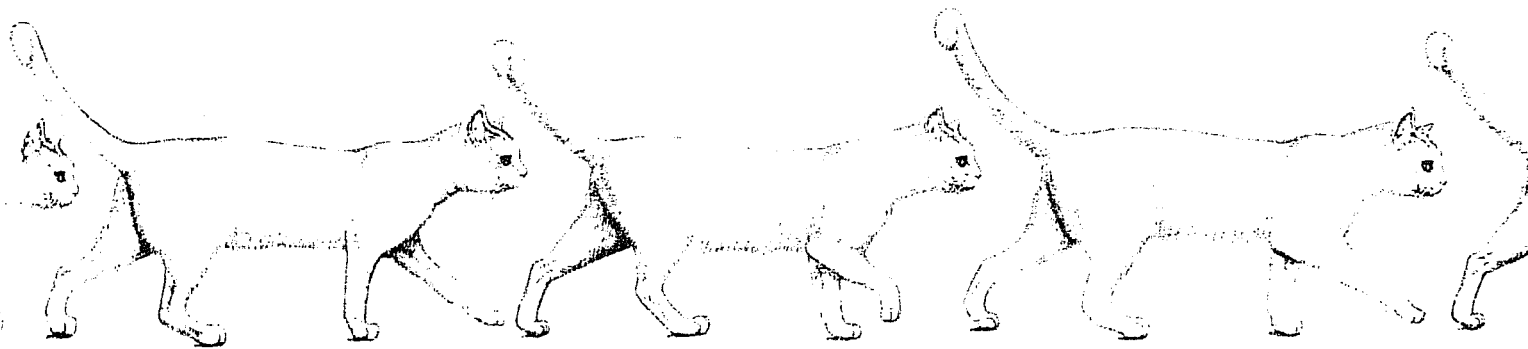
On the day of the show, arrive early enough to check in and set up your benching cage. While you are waiting for judging to begin, give your cat attention and reassurance. Once the judging begins, be attentive to the announcer. When you hear your number called to a ring, take your cat out of its benching cage and carry it promptly to the judging ring. You'll see your cat's number on one of the cages behind the judge's table. Put your cat inside the cage, reassure the cat softly and then find a seat from which to watch the judging. The judge will examine all the cats, send the cats back to their benching cages and then call the finalists back to the ring.

Winning household pets are selected on appearance and personality, as well as the individual preference of the judge. Household pets are usually judged in several rings at a show, each time by a different judge. Hence, your cat has several chances to be named Best Household Pet. The winners receive rosettes or other prizes in each ring where they final.

At the end of the day, many clubs present the Morris Award, sponsored by 9 Lives Cat Food, to the top-scoring household pet in the show. In addition, some clubs offer special awards, such as naming a king and queen of the household pets. The Buccaneer Cat Fanciers of Tampa, Florida, have presented Mr. and Mrs. Claus awards to selected household pets at their annual show in December.

Win or lose, you are likely to catch the cat-show bug at your first cat show. You will make friends with people who share a love of cats, and you will probably learn something about cats that you did not know before. In addition, you will experience the excitement of showing a household pet.

Who knows? Your cat could win the next National Morris Award. 🐾



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