

Puppies & Kittens

SPECIAL SECTION 2011

DOGS vs. CATS

In this battle, your choice says a lot about you

Chandra Orr
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Are you a dog person or a cat person? It's a simple question, but your answer says a lot about you, according to a recent study published in the journal *Anthrozoös*.

A team of researchers at the University of Texas, led by psychologist Sam Gosling, found that those who define themselves as "dog people" are more extraverted, more agreeable and more conscientious than their feline-loving counterparts. Self-described "cat people," by contrast, are more open, more creative and less traditional but also more neurotic.

"There is a widely held cultural belief that the pet species -- dog or cat -- with which a person has the strongest affinity says something about the individual's personality," Gosling says.

Stereotypes have long pegged dog lovers as more social and interactive with a craving for adoration -- think pack leader -- while cat people often are seen as reclusive or loners with a sensitive streak -- think crazy cat lady -- but this research is the first of its kind to offer hard data on the two personality types.

"Dog people" -- based on how people identified themselves, not on what animals they actually own -- tend to be more outgoing and social, whereas "cat people" are more curious, creative and philosophical.

It's a notion with which pet lovers agree.

"There are dog people, and there are cat people; neither is nobler. They are simply different," says Peg Silloway, author of "The Cat Lover's Book of Days: A Year of Cat History, Lore, and Laughter." "Dog people enjoy the adoration and unquestioning loyalty of a dog. People who are always part of a group have the same pack mentality as dogs, so they enjoy having canines in their home. Cat people are comfortable with a creature who doesn't need them or anyone else but who is loving and loyal to a person who has earned its trust and affection."

"This research suggests there are significant differences on major personality traits between dog people and cat people," Gosling says. "Given the tight psychological connections between people and their pets, it is likely that the differences between dogs and cats may be suited to different human personalities."

In other words, the distinct temperament and daily needs of the pet play a big part in the equation. Dog lovers boast that canines are unwavering in their loyalty and affection and don't need litter boxes, while cat lovers brag that felines are independent, quiet and self-cleaning.

"Dogs are much more of an emotional animal in that they require



you to be their leader and to interact with them as such," says writer Kelly Meister, who has a blog, "Kelly's Critter Talk," about the human-animal connection. "Dog people seem to want more of an emotional connection with their pet. Independent-minded folks and those on the go are likelier to be cat people because cats are perceived as low-maintenance pets. It's possible that cat lovers prefer cats because the relationship is such an uncomplicated one; we often don't have a lot to give cats, in terms of time and energy, and they seem willing to take whatever we do offer without complaining."

Larry Kay, co-author of "The Love That Dog Training Program: Using Positive Reinforcement to Train the Perfect Family Dog," has a more lighthearted take on the matter. "If dogs and cats were politicians, then dogs would be loyalists and cats would be independents," he

says. "If dogs and cats were restaurant critics, then dogs would be gourmands -- good cheap eats -- and cats would be gourmets -- only the trendiest restaurants."

For Gosling's study, more than 4,500 volunteers were asked whether they were dog people, cat people, neither or both. Based on their responses to a 44-point assessment, participants were rated on five personality dimensions -- openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism, which in this context relates to emotional sensitivity and the ability to experience unpleasant emotions easily.

Forty-six percent of respondents described themselves as dog people, and 12 percent said they were cat people. Almost 28 percent said they were both, and 15 percent said they were neither. Dog peo-

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Chandra Orr
Creators.com

Your pup's paws are designed to take the brunt of what Mother Nature dishes out, but they still need a little TLC.

"Thankfully, pets' paws have evolved to survive quite a bit of action, and they are pretty low-maintenance. Amazingly, there isn't much you need to do to take care of paws," says veterinarian Justine Lee, author of "It's a Dog's Life ... but It's Your Carpet: Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Your Four-Legged Friend."

Canine paws provide cushioning and act as a natural barrier to infection, disease and parasites. They're built tough, but with walks, playtime and just bumming around the house, your pet's paws can take a beating. So pamper your pooch for healthy feet.

*Take It Easy

Watch where your dog walks. Those pads may be strong, but they're no match for broken glass, jagged rocks, frigid snow or hot pavement. If you wouldn't want to walk on it barefoot, chances are your dog won't, either. Likewise, you wouldn't run a marathon without training first, so let your dog ease into new exercise regimens.

"If your dog is not used to running a mile a day, don't suddenly take him out to run on pavement. The paws need to toughen up," says veterinarian Mark Newkirk.

PAW THERAPY

They take a beating, so pamper your pet's feet

Even typically hardworking dogs with healthy paws can have problems, so keep an eye on them. Minor cuts and scrapes can be treated with antiseptic, but if your dog shows signs of extreme discomfort or if the paw surface is burned, bleeding or swollen, schedule an appointment with your veterinarian.

"If a pet owner is exercising a dog a lot, some dogs will lose part of their paw surface; it erodes away. This does grow back slowly, but it can be painful," Lee says. "Often, removing the dead paw tissue that is falling off, cleaning the area and applying moleskin to the area can be helpful, but this should be done by a vet."

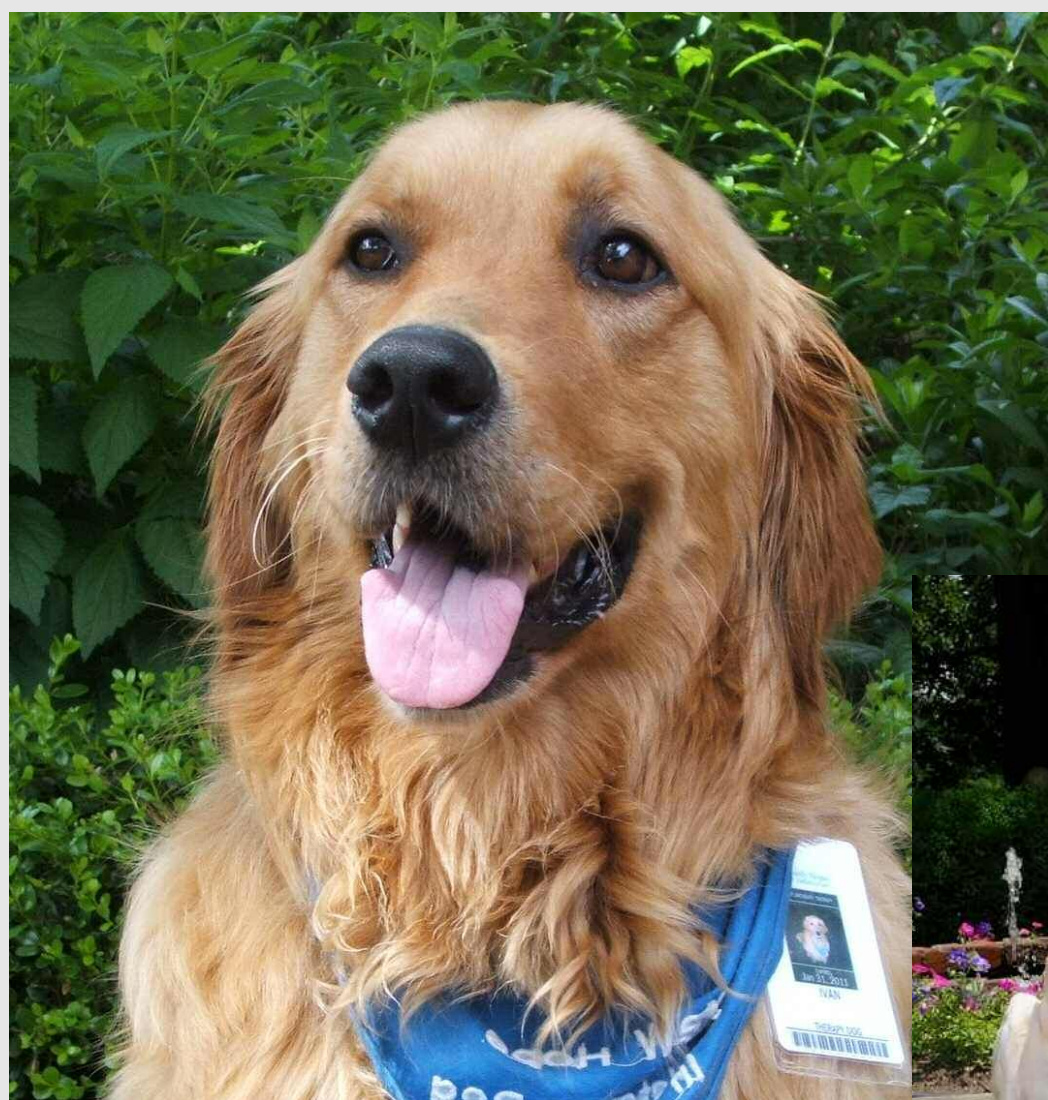
*Keep 'Em Clean

Wipe your dog's paws after each walk, and give his feet the once-over.

Check for cracked pads, debris between the toes, splinters, burrs and torn or ingrown nails. In the summer, be vigilant about cleaning abrasive beach sand from the paws. In the winter, remove ice, snow and rock salt, paying special attention to the areas between the toes.

"During cold and ice, people often use ice melters,





Ginny Frizzi
Creators.com

Therapy dogs have enjoyed a higher profile in recent years, but they are not a new concept. In fact, according to Mary Burch, the director of the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen program and an animal behaviorist, animals were used in therapy with people with disabilities as early as the ninth century in Belgium.

Therapy Dogs International, the oldest and largest therapy group in the United States, was founded in 1976. Since then, tens of thousands of dogs and their owners have been trained and volunteered in therapy settings.

"Therapy dogs are healthy dogs who are free from illnesses and parasites, although in some cases, they may have a physical disability," Burch says.

"Behaviorally, therapy dogs are under good control, and they are predictable and stable. At a minimum, all therapy dogs should be able to pass the Canine Good Citizen test, which is a basic test of good manners."

Therapy dog groups have their own tests that go beyond the skills on the CGC program's test. "Items related specifically to therapy settings are added to a therapy dog assessment," Burch says. For example, a dog needs to follow the command "leave it" when it walks by food or pills on the floor. "In settings with young children, the dog might be tested to see that it responds acceptably if an excited person rushes up and makes loud noises. In nursing home settings in which the dog will visit a group of senior citizens, the

THERAPY DOGS

Man's best friend gives a helping paw



dog is taught to 'go say hello.'"

If an owner aspires to have a puppy become a therapy dog when it is old enough (usually 1 year old), the American Kennel Club's S.T.A.R. Puppy program is a great way for the dog to learn the needed socialization skills, Burch says.

"We highly recommend certification from a well-organized group. This provides not only the opportunity for you to get to know others who are doing therapy work so you can do team visits and activities but also liability insurance for the dog/owner team while they are volunteering," Burch says.

Therapy dogs serve a variety of people and purposes. Last year, Family Hospice & Palliative Care added Ivan, a 2 1/2-year-old golden retriever, to its staff as a full-time therapy dog. Ivan, who works at Family Hospice's 12-bed Center for Compassionate Care, was trained by New Hope Assistance Dogs.

Rafael Sciuillo, president and CEO of Family Hospice, was responsible for adding Ivan to the staff. "I thought it was a piece that was missing, and a colleague told me about New Hope Assistance Dogs. I looked into it and thought Ivan would be a perfect fit," he says. "He helps complete our mission of providing compassionate care (and) contributes compassionate care for the patients, comforts vulnerable family members and is a valuable team member to the rest of the staff, which has embraced him."

Ivan, who makes daily rounds with the center's doctor, lives with and goes to work with Sciuillo. "He is like any other employee who has to go to work. In the morning, I say, 'Ivan, time to go to work now,' and he

gets all excited," he says.

Ivan's fellow employees walk and help to care for him at work, but like them, he goes home each evening. "As with any other staffer, work for him is stressful, and Ivan needs his space," Sciuillo says.

Ivan provides a calming effect, brings peace and joy to patients, combats loneliness, and often brings back pleasant memories, according to Sciuillo.

But people don't need to be ill to receive benefits from therapy dogs. Brandy and Val, two rescue dogs owned by Ilene Fine, are therapy dogs who work with autistic children in a reading program.

Fine, a longtime volunteer with children, became interested when she heard about a pet therapy program. "My interest was sparked because it involved kids. I didn't know whether Brandy and Val would be good therapy dogs, but both passed the test," she says.

According to Fine, there are many organizations across the country, such as the Delta Society, that train and certify dogs for programs. Many hospitals, health centers, libraries and even jails also are adding pet therapy dogs to their schedules. She suggests that those interested call around locally to find training programs, do an Internet search for pet therapy training showcases, or check out <http://www.charityguide.org/volunteer/fewhours/pet-therapy.htm>.

"Most programs require about 20 hours of training with a certification test at the end. From there, the program helps a team choose a program appropriate to them," Fine says.

SOCIALIZATION

Help your puppy get along with others

Diane Schindwein
Creators.com

If you want to be the owner of an all-around great dog, you need to start getting him socialized while he's still a puppy.

Socialization plays a paramount role in teaching a puppy how to grow up happy and well-adjusted, according to professional dog trainer Barbara Shumannfang. "There are two critical things to keep in mind when socializing a puppy," she says. "One is to make sure the puppy has pleasant exposures to dogs and people. However, it is not enough to expose the puppy to people and dogs; in fact, it can do more harm than good if it's not done properly."

Shumannfang, author of "Happy Kids, Happy Dogs" and founder of Top Notch Dog, also says: "Owners must ensure people are gentle, pet the puppy only one at a time, and feed treats, both home and away from home. They should not pick the puppy up or roll him on his back. The goal is for the pup to think people are wonderful, so they must choose the interactions carefully and make sure encounters are pleasant. If something goes awry, they need to remain upbeat and give the pup a break from the situation. I recommend my clients attend group class, as well as go on at least four short socialization 'field trips' a week."

Shumannfang says puppies should begin socializing with dogs and people at about 8 weeks old. "If the puppy is overly shy, try fewer people at a time or have visitors sit on the floor," she says. "Always let the puppy approach first to initiate the greeting so she is not overwhelmed."

Once a puppy is in your home and away from his littermates, you also should be careful when introducing new dog friends. "Choose an older, gentle dog rather than a rough puppy playmate," Shumannfang says.

Puppy owners also should take care when picking out puppy classes, says another professional dog trainer, Nan Arthur. "The ideal puppy class teaches puppies that they can be in a room with other puppies and focus on their pet parents first, before being allowed to interact with the other pups," she says. "When a puppy attends this type of class, it ensures success when pet parents begin



Sharon Naylor
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The day you bring home a new puppy or kitten is a joyful one for the members of your family, with the possible exception of the pet who already calls your home his own territory. Even a mild-mannered dog or cat can click into an instinctive mode that's not exactly friendly. Barking and growling on the part of the dog or hissing and scratching on the part of the cat are simply hard-wired responses to an intruding creature. The new puppy or kitten, greeted by such aggression, will experience stress and discomfort.

How do you introduce your new pet to your existing one? The process takes several steps, requiring patience and your full attention to both pets' needs.

Planning starts before you bring home the new puppy or kitten. As a

loving pet owner, you know your existing pet's tolerance for other animals. Take a closer look now, though, at the physical signs of your pet's discomfort. Get to know its posture when it's uncomfortable -- for example, yawning or licking its lips to soothe itself in a stressful situation. When you read your existing pet's warning signals, you can use those messages as you slowly introduce the new pet in their first, brief interaction sessions.

Pet expert Gary Loewenthal advises you to assess your existing pet's mastery of verbal signals, such as "come," "sit," "stay" and "no." A well-trained pet will be a better partner in this "getting to know you" process, listening to you and stopping immediately when you tell it to.

*The Initial Introduction

Loewenthal says, "Before you bring home the new puppy or kitten,

be sure your dog or cat has been well-fed and exercised." That way, it is not thrown into an interaction when it is hungry or hyper.

"The most important part of the process is that you must directly supervise both pets. There should be NO unsupervised direct contact," says Jenna Stregowski, About.com's dogs guide. "Remember to be safe while supervising your pets," because an agitated cat or dog might redirect aggression toward you mistakenly.

Put your dog on a leash or in a crate for the very first interaction so that any instinctive lunging or snapping can be controlled. A cat, too, is often best crated for that first glimpse of the new puppy.

Introduce the new pet to your existing pet from a distance. As one member of the family holds the new kitten, pet your leashed dog and speak soothingly to it. Keep plenty of treats on hand to reinforce good behavior as the dog or cat checks out its new housemate. Don't hold the new puppy or kitten right in front of your pet's face. Such closeness likely would feel like an attack to your pet, so a distance of at least four feet is advised.

Keep this interaction brief, avoiding your wish to rush through the introduction process. Allow pets to remain in their crates as their safe havens, and your family can play with them separately for your own bonding time; just don't play with the new pet in the sightline of your existing pet, who might feel jealous and confused.

"Your resident dog or cat should be given the advantage at first. When you bring the new pet home, confine that new pet to one room of the home, keeping the door to that room closed. Your other pet can have the run of the rest of the house," Stregowski says.

*Ongoing Acclimation

Enact the same "from a distance" introduction of your pets several times a day for several days, and assess their reactions and body language to assess their comfort levels. A baby gate is a great tool to keep pets safely apart yet able to see and smell each other.

As their comfort grows, bring your dog out of its crate and leash it as someone holds the kitten, and allow the dog to step closer to the cat. "Be sure that your cat has something to jump up onto if it wishes to get away from the dog," Loewenthal says. Expect some trial and error in these initial, supervised interactions. If either pet misbehaves, move back to the leashed-and-crated stage of the acclimation process, and allow them additional time to get to know each other from a distance.

Don't leave your pets unsupervised, thinking they're adjusted after the first few event-free meetings. Puppies and kittens will want to play with their new friend, and the larger or more aggressive dog or cat could injure the more fragile animal during their play.

Additional tips from Loewenthal:

--Place your pets' food bowls in separate locations so that they may