



Cat Breeds 101: Information you need to know

Do you want the most loveable, huggable, and purr-worthy companion possible? If so, then a cat could be exactly what you're looking for — though not just any kind of kitty will do!

When it comes to cats, there is actually a surprisingly wide variety of breeds available. Each has its own characteristics that can influence personality, appearance, grooming needs and more. Doing your research means you can know what to expect when caring for your new furry-friend.



Cats in New Zealand

A huge 41% of New Zealand homes in 2020 had at least one cat in them - making them one of the most popular companion animals in the country.

While families may have their preferences over which breeds to take home, according to 2020 report, the majority of New Zealand cats are of a mixed descent. This is approximately 975,000 cats, or 80% of the companion cat population. Though, since 2015, the incidence of purebred cats has been rising, increasing from only 8% in 2015 to 13% in 2020.

Adopting a shelter cat

Adopting a cat is one of the most rewarding experiences you can have as a pet owner. Not only will you be saving a life, but cats can also make wonderful companions. A 2020 survey found that 28% of respondents said they had adopted their cat from SPCA or a similar rescue.

When adopting a cat, you are giving an animal in need another chance at life and also free up space in the shelter for another cat in need of help. Animal shelters typically have unwanted kittens or cats that were abandoned, rescued from abuse or neglectful situations, or surrendered by their previous owners for whatever reason.

Additionally, because reputable animal shelters will perform health checks, begin an animal's course of vaccinations, microchip and desex cats before adoption, you won't have to worry about these extra initial costs.

While some enjoy the playful charms of kittens, adopting an older cat often means you can enjoy all the joy of cat companionship, without the challenges that come with energetic kittens. Older cats can still form strong bonds with their owners and offer unconditional love – it's also important to give them space and be patient with them while respecting their boundaries.



Finding a reputable cat breeder

Some people may choose to purchase a cat rather than adopt. When looking for a reputable cat breeder, it is important to research the associated health issues and recommended health testing for the breed, and ask the right questions. If you are looking to purchase a purebred cat, you could start by finding registered breeders on the NZ Cat Fancy register.

While in the breeder's care, all kittens should have:

- received regular veterinary check-ups
- begun their initial course of vaccinations
- received regular deworming treatments
- been tested for any genetic abnormalities
- been weaned
- been socialised to people, other animals, and common sights, sounds, and experiences

When you've identified a breeder who meets these basic requirements, take the time to learn more about them and their methods. You should always view the kittens at the breeder's home before purchasing. It can be hard to walk away when faced with appealing kittens so here are some vital questions to ask before you go to view:

- When were the kittens born? Legally, kittens must be at least 8 weeks of age before they are offered for sale or rehoming.
- Will you be able to see the kittens with their mother? This is important to see the conditions they were raised in and check the mother's physical health and behaviour (i.e. is she friendly, scared, etc?)
- What are they eating? Legally, kittens should be fully independent before rehoming.
- Are the kittens desexed? SPCA encourages people to desex their companion animals before they reach puberty to avoid contributing to overpopulation of companion animals.
- Do they have vaccination, parasite treatment records and documents to show they have completed the recommended health testing for the breed? Signs of some inherited conditions may not become apparent until kittens are older, so it is important to document that both parents have been tested.
- How many litters do they have at any time?



Responsible breeding requires careful consideration of health, temperaments, genetics, and environment and life experiences to ensure that the animals involved are as healthy and happy as possible.

Important considerations if choosing a purebred cat

Unfortunately, some cats have been bred with extreme traits without taking into consideration their overall health and well-being, causing these breeds to be associated with painful or distressing conditions.

Brachycephalic breeds such as Persian, British Shorthairs and Scottish Fold, have been bred with flat faces, making them more prone to problems like breathing issues and eye infections. Some breeds may have painful genetic mutations (e.g. Scottish Fold) or may be predisposed to other health concerns, such as skin or heart issues. It is important to research the potential health issues associated with your chosen breed and ensure the recommended testing has been conducted to lessen the risk of these harmful traits being passed on.

Pedigree breeds typically have a much smaller gene pool for breeding than domestic cats and may be at increased risk of developing certain inherited disorders. Newer breeds are bred from even smaller gene pools and are at an even higher risk of developing inherited disorders. As these breeds are newer, there is also little known about potentially harmful inherited traits.

We encourage people looking to welcome a cat into their family to consider adopting an animal but recognise that responsible breeders can also play an important role in helping animals find loving homes.

Protect your furry-friend

SPCA Pet Insurance can help cover a portion of your eligible vet bills for accidental injuries and illnesses, giving you peace of mind that your furry-friend is protected. Love them, protect you!

For more tips and references, refer to the article on [SPCA Pet Insurance](#)



SPCA Pet
Insurance®