

Sunday Column – The Purrfect Companion
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I'm a shameless dog person but I really do love cats too. At PAWS Humane my coworkers and I share our space with an office cat named Bjorn. This little guy manages to charm his way into the hearts of everyone he meets. He is a special needs kitty with a bad ticker who we will love forever and will care for as long as he graces our presence.

As cat fanciers already known these astonishing animals possess an array of super powers. With 200 million scent receptors in their nasal cavities cats are hard to beat when it comes to sense of smell. A few dog breeds, such as bloodhounds, can top that but in most cases the average cat wins hands down against the average dog.

Our feline friends have superior night vision. They also can hear high pitched sounds up to 1.6 octaves above humans and 1 octave above dogs. A cat can jump as high as seven times her own height from a stand still. She can also survive a fall of several stories.

Cats are remarkable creatures and should not be underestimated. Yet we do. We adopt them and place them in our homes under lock and key so they will be safe. Those who don't, expose them to a million forms of calamity, most notably being hit by a car and exposure to feline leukemia, which top the list.

There is a growing movement of cat lovers that are pushing the envelope with their courageous, talented and intelligent pets. "Living Nine Lives to the Fullest, Adventure Cats", by Laura J. Moss, greatly expands the realm of possibility for kitties. She opens the book with a story about a cat she cared for as a volunteer at her local humane society. She was asked to snap a harness on an orange tabby and take him for a walk.

At first she balked at the idea of walking a cat thinking he would not tolerate the indignity of a harness and leash. The ginger, on the other hand was ready to go, leading her on a trek through a pet store, where he was awaiting adoption, and straight to the cat food isle.

The premise of the book is that cats love adventure but it generally is not safe to let them out of the house unsupervised. So, why not take them along when you go for a walk around the block. How about a hike in the mountains? How about surfing? Nanakuli, the Hawaiian surfer cat, is one of the stories highlighted in the book. We assume cats hate water but that isn't necessarily always the case.

If this intrigues you be sure to check out Moss' book. It is full of ideas about activities you might try with your cat, training tips, and helpful hints. The information in the book has been distilled from the real life experience of the cats themselves, as told through their human companions.

Cats are easy keepers. If you think a dog is a little too much for you then maybe a cat is just the pet to suit your lifestyle. In fact a cat may be the "purrfect" companion .

Bobbi Yeo lives in Opelika, AL. She is the CEO of PAWS Humane in Columbus, GA, an animal shelter and veterinary clinic offering low-cost spay/neuter and other services to the public. Email her at byeo@pawshumane.org with your comments and story ideas.