

Naming Your Cat – A Difficult Matter

By: Virginia Wells

"The naming of cats is a difficult matter,
It isn't just one of your holiday games..."
– From *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* by T.S. Eliot

What's in a name? Everything – if you are naming your cat. The name you choose says as much about you as it does about your cat. Picking a name for your new addition is a difficult but important job. You will be calling your kitty many times each day and you will want a name that both you and your pet like and respond to.

As a general rule, pet owners tend to give their animals names they would give themselves or their children. Surveys show that more than half of all pet names are either human names or nicknames. Not so with cats. Cats are more often given traditional "cat" names, perhaps because they have a reputation for doing their own thing, and this tends to make them mysterious. As every cat "owner" knows, nobody owns a cat.

They're solitary creatures who will jump into your lap and snuggle and purr – if they want to.

Traditional names for cats once included Sooty, Misty and Felix, names that reflect either the cat's appearance or personality. Things have not changed that much. Today the most popular names for female cats are Sassy, Misty, Princess, Samantha, and Lucy, while Max, Sam, Simba, Charlie, and Oliver, hold first place for males.

Cat names arise from many popular categories. For example, movies and television have inspired such names as Casper, Pussy Galore, Buffy, Tony and Bada Bing, while the arts have given us Beowulf, Bronte, Desdemona, and even Ginger Spice. Anais, Chanel and Calvin materialized from the fashion world, and geographically speaking, Bangkok, Katmandu and Dakota are also on top.

The cat's breed, too, might suggest names. Persian cats are often called Babri (tiger), Pisho (pussy cat), Sefidi (Snow White) or Siah (black). Siamese cats inspire names like Isis, Athena, Sasha, Aries, or Ming Toi.

If you enjoy a drink now and then, how about Brandy, Sambuca, Merlot, Budweiser or even Southern Comfort? And if you've decided to double your pleasure with two cats, consider popular duo names like Kermit and Miss Piggy, Frank and Stein, Hansel and Gretel, Footloose and Fancy Free, or even the tried-and-true romantic couples Romeo and Juliet, Bonnie and Clyde, and Katherine and Spencer.

But let's not forget about the kitty's personality. Names that reflect the very nature of your pet may be the way to go. After all, we probably have a pretty good picture of a cat that's called Mayhem, Frisky, Adipose, Cuddles or Morpheus.

Choosing the Name

How do you go about naming your cat? You might want to observe your new kitty for a few days and see if the personality suggests a name. But, for a start, keep the following tips in mind:

- * Pick a name that you will be proud to call. Shadow or Molly might be less embarrassing than Kitty Poo Poo, Ooga Booga or HeyYou.
- * Choose a name that your pet will easily recognize. Animals often respond best to most two-syllable names.
- * Avoid names that sound too much like standard commands. For example, when you call Snowy, your kitty might only hear No.
- * Pick a name that will be just as appropriate for your cat once he or she is full-grown. A 14-pound tabby might seem silly with a name like Kitty or Baby.

One more thing to keep in mind: A name is important and you want to choose the right name for your new pet, one that you will like – and one that your cat will like, too. As T.S. Eliot's Old Possum reminds us,

"When you notice a cat in profound meditation,
The reason I tell you is always the same:
His mind is engaged in a rapt contemplation
Of the thought, of the thought, of the thought of his name..."