

## Helping Cats Who Hiss and Hide:

Assessments,  
Behavior Modification  
and Re-Homing Strategies  
for Shy and Fearful Cats

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Director, Maddie's Fund® Animal Care Center  
November 14, 2013

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### 118 Hoarded Cats Euthanized in Controversial Action by SPCA

Kevin Nichols | Feb 17th 2009 | 22 Contributions


Like Be the first of your friends to like this.



Catster.com: Please share my VD with me!

Last week, our Catster friend Snickers (right) alerted us to the story of cats rescued from a gruesome cat hoarding situation in St Anthony, Minnesota.

The cats were found living with Stanley and Cheryl Saladis in a 500 sq ft mobile home, and the stench was so bad that the fire department was called in to evaluate the ammonia levels and ventilate the home before rescuers could enter the trailer. The floorboards had rotted from standing urine.




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<http://www.insideabridge.com/tag/humane-society-rescues-over-70-cats-and-kittens-from-hoarders-in-camper/>

## **Humane Society Rescues Over 70 Cats and Kittens from Hoarders in Camper**



Posted on 08 March 2013. Tags: [Bremerton cat hoarding case March 2013](#) [Humane Society Rescues Over 70 Cats and Kittens from Hoarders in Camper](#)

On March 1, the Kitsap Humane Society's Animal Rescue and Enforcement (KARE) unit rescued 46 cats and kittens from a couple hoarding them in a camping trailer. The couple has approximately 30 more felines that KHS plans to return for but could not take at the time because of capacity limits at their facility in Silverdale. KHS is asking the community for help in adopting the cats and kittens as soon as possible.



In mid-February, the Bremerton Police Department received an anonymous complaint about a large number of cats housed in a camping trailer. KARE made multiple efforts to contact the owners. On March 1, with the owners' compliance, officers took 46 cats from the trailer, with the intention of returning for the rest. Bremerton ordinance dictates that residents own no more than four animals.

Dr. Jen Stonequist, Director of Shelter Medicine at KHS, examined the cats and said that most of them are in relatively good condition and sociable. "Some had minor medical issues which are being addressed," she explained. KHS spayed or neutered all of the cats aged eight weeks or older and will after the younger kittens once they reach eight weeks.



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## **ADOPT ANNIE, THE LAST OF THE HOARDING CASE CATS!**

Hello, world! My name is Annie, and I don't mean to brag, but I'm a smart cookie and a VERY brave girl! You see, I spent the first two years of my life in a tiny trailer with 96 of my siblings and relatives and some people, too. It was very difficult for me when I lived there, and I didn't get to learn that I was lovable, how to be loved or that there could be enough food and attention for me in that place. Then, one glorious day, the nice people at KHS came to rescue me and all of the other kitties! They took us to a place they called "the shelter", and it was a BIG change for me. I finally had enough food to eat, and a clean place to sleep, but I still wasn't so sure of people. They kept trying to touch me or pick me up and I wasn't used to all that ... I made angry faces and growled because I thought that they might try to take me back to that trailer, and because I didn't know how to respond to kindness. I watched as all of the other kitties from that awful trailer went to homes, but I didn't want to be put in a carrier or even be looked at, because I was still so very scared and unsure.



AUBREY HEAL PHOTOGRAPHY



<http://www.kitsap-humane.org/adopt-annie-last-hoarding-case-cats>

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## **Fearful Cat Study**



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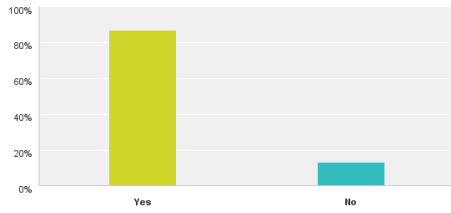
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## Study Participants

**Q1** Have you ever owned and/or fostered a cat who was extremely shy and/or fearful (for example, the cat hid for 24 hours or more after first obtaining him/her)?

Answered: 1,221 Skipped: 10



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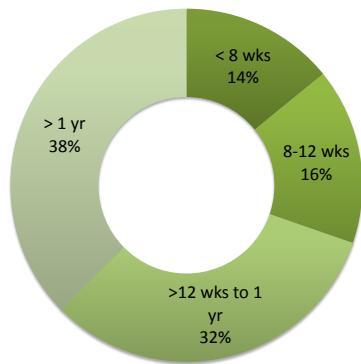
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## Age of Cats in the Study



N=781



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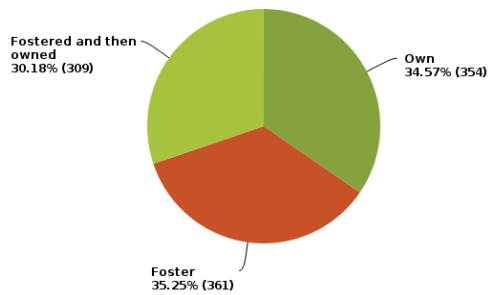
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**Q2** Did you own or foster the cat?

Answered: 1,024 Skipped: 211



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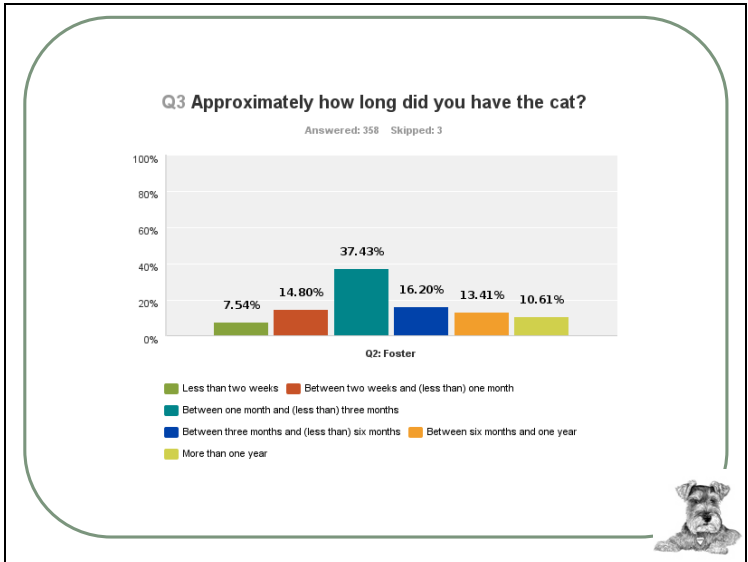
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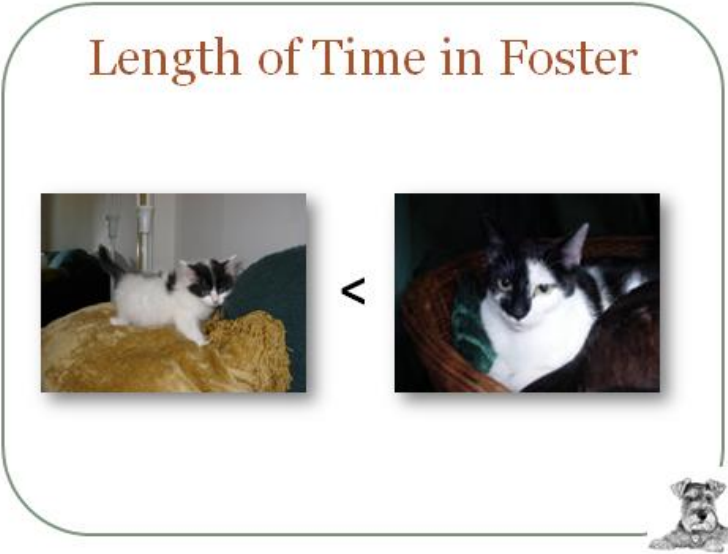
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## Time to Interact

Approximately how long did it take until you were first able to interact with the cat?

Answered: 952 Skipped: 283

Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Less than one week	34.56%	329
Between one and (less than) two weeks	20.80%	198
Between two weeks and (less than) one month	16.81%	160
Between one month and (less than) three months	10.71%	102
Between three months and (less than) six months	5.15%	49
More than six months	5.36%	51
The cat never allowed me to interact with him/her.	6.62%	63
Total		952

Comments (143)




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# Time to Interact

	Less than one week	Between one and (less than) two weeks	Between two weeks and (less than) one month	Between one month and (less than) three months	Between three months and (less than) six months	More than six months	The cat never allowed me to interact with him/her.	Total
Q2: Own	36.89% 121	17.99% 59	16.16% 53	11.28% 37	5.79% 19	7.32% 24	4.88% 16	329
Q2: Foster	40.65% 137	22.55% 76	16.91% 57	7.72% 26	4.45% 15	2.67% 9	5.04% 17	337
Q2: Fostered and then owned	25% 72	21.88% 63	18.06% 52	13.54% 39	4.86% 14	6.25% 18	10.42% 30	288
Total Respondents	330	198	162	102	48	51	63	953



Series of horizontal lines for writing notes.

# However, Some Cats Took Much Longer

Answer Choices	Responses
Less than one week	16.81% 161
Between one and (less than) two weeks	15.14% 145
Between two weeks and (less than) one month	21.50% 206
Between one month and (less than) three months	20.15% 193
Between three months and (less than) six months	7.41% 71
More than six months	3.97% 38
The cat never voluntarily left the room he/she initially stayed in.	4.28% 41
The cat was not allowed to leave the room he/she initially stayed in.	10.75% 103
Total	958

60%

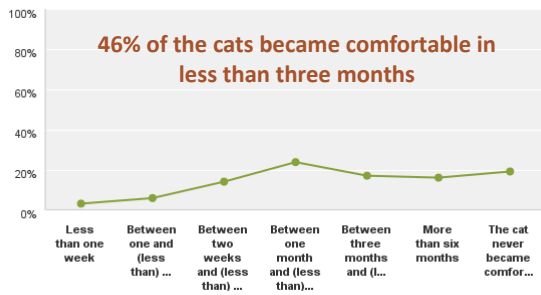
9%



Series of horizontal lines for writing notes.

# Q7 Approximately how long did it take until the cat was comfortable and relaxed in your house?

Answered: 945 Skipped: 293



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## Shelter Socialization Program

Difficult to implement

Is it practical??

**Or is foster the answer?**



Drawing courtesy of Dr. Kate Hurley



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## Different Types of Cats



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## Community Cats

What is your shelter or community's live release rate for cats?

Is a shelter the best place for a cat who isn't comfortable living in a home?

[http://www.maddiesfund.org/Maddies\\_Institute/Webcasts/Shelter\\_Crowd\\_Control\\_Webcast.html](http://www.maddiesfund.org/Maddies_Institute/Webcasts/Shelter_Crowd_Control_Webcast.html)

[http://www.maddiesfund.org/Maddies\\_Institute/Webcasts/Making\\_the\\_Case\\_for\\_Community\\_Cats\\_Part\\_One.html](http://www.maddiesfund.org/Maddies_Institute/Webcasts/Making_the_Case_for_Community_Cats_Part_One.html)



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## Shelter/Rescue Intake: Categorizing Cats

History

Physical appearance?

Behavior?

Response to treatment?



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## Fearful vs. Feral?

ASPCA Research

Can we Differentiate Socialized vs. Unsocialized Cats?

4 evaluations over 3 days



<http://www.aspcapro.org/recorded-webinars.php>  
Is that cat feral?  
Feral vs. frightened pet?



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## Fearful vs. Feral?

Behaviors that Identified Socialized Cats

Chirp

Rub

Knead

Touch

Play

At front of cage

Tail up in air



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## Fearful vs. Feral?

Behaviors that Identified Socialized Cats  
if Performed any Combinations of Behaviors, 4 or More Times

- Yawn
- Groom/shake
- Approach front of cage
- Sniff
- Roll
- Reach
- Still standing or still moving




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## Intake: Socialized vs. Unsocialized?




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## Fear vs. Anxiety

Fear- an appropriate response to a fear inducing stimulus

Anxiety- profound physiological and behavioral response




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## Feline Stress

Environmental changes

Noises

Uncertainty/unpredictability



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## Reducing Fear in the Shelter

Consistency

Reduce noise

Decrease population density



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## Shelter Housing



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## Handling



Video courtesy of Jacqueline Munera, What is my cat saying?



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## Handling



Video Courtesy of Jacqueline Munera, 'What is my cat saying?'



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## Resources

Jacqueline Munera- What is my Cat Saying? (DVD)

Sophia Yin- Low Stress Handling (book and DVD)

ASPCA Pro webinars- Humane Feline Handling, Feline Communication



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# Treatment



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Afraid Attention Brought Calming Music Eye Contact  
 Feral Kittens Food Gain Trust Handling Hiding Places  
 Increased Interact Introduced Learn Love Moved  
 Slowly Not Push Pet Play Therapy Quiet Environment  
 Rescue Remedy Room Slept Spoke Softly  
 Talked Softly Terms Treats



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# Treatment

## Step One: Reduce Stress!!



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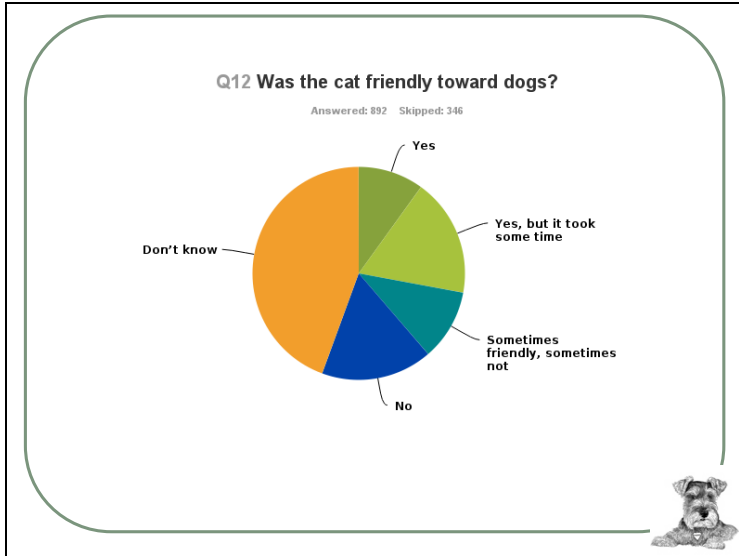












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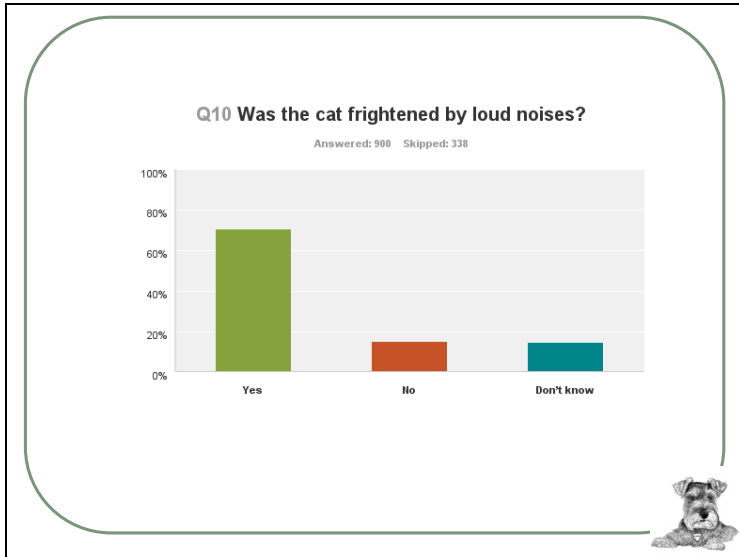
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## Other Options

### Eastern medicine

Nutrition

Herbs

Acupuncture



### Behavior medication(s)

Feliway



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## Placing Fearful Cats for Adoption

Some of these cats are WAY too stressed living around other cats or in busy areas (i.e., adoption-area housing), and need a foster home or creative marketing strategies



## Marketing for Special Needs Cats



## Adoption Counseling

Be honest

Be realistic

Be supportive



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## Post Adoption Support



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Questions?



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