



Dane County Friends of Ferals

627 Post Road
Madison, WI 53713
Telephone: (608) 274-4940
Website: daneferals.org

Feline Behavior Assessment

Modified from the ASPCA's Meet Your Match Feline-ality™ Assessment

Cat Information

Cat's name: _____ ID#: _____

Age: _____ Sex/Neuter status: MI MN FI FS
MI = Male/Intact MN = Male/Neutered FI = Female/Intact FS = Female/Spayed

Breed: _____ Color: _____

Admitting date: _____

Source: Stray Surrender Another shelter Colony

Evaluation Information

Date: - - Time: : a.m./p.m.

Evaluator: _____ Assessment room location: _____

Assessment Checklist

- Reviewed surrender form, if applicable
- Reviewed care staff and volunteer comments
- Cleaned hands

Assessment area (i.e., Novel Room):

- Free of hiding spaces (e.g., under counters, desks, behind items, etc.)
- Quiet
- Free of distractions

Equipment:

- Chair
- Cat toys
- Stopwatches (2)
- Clipboard



Ideally, the behavior assessment should take place after the cat has been housed at the shelter for at least 48 hours, with 72 hours being optimum, and prior to the spay/neuter surgery.

Item #1a: Greeting Approach

Approach the front of the cat's cage while speaking to the cat in a soft, normal tone of voice. Once in front of the cage, observe the cat's response to your presence through the closed cage door.

Choose one of the following responses:

At front of the cage, soliciting attention by rubbing, chirping, etc.	add 3 points
Comes to front of cage after you encourage	add 2 points
Does not approach but meows, chirps or blinks	add 1 point
Does not approach	0 points
Attempts to hide	subtract 1 point
Hisses or growls	subtract 2 points
Charges	subtract 3 points
Total points for item #1	

Other observations:

Item #1b-d: Feral or Fearful?

Item #1b: Remote object interaction

While the cat is in his or her cage and the door is closed, place a small diameter (approximately 1/4" or less) pole with a blunt end slowly in the cage. Gradually move the end of the pole towards the cat. If possible, gently stroke the cat with the end of the pole.

Check all behaviors that occur:

Allows stroking with pole
Sniffs pole
Shows no reaction
Turns head away/Pulls head back
=====
Struggles/tries to escape/ Pushes body against cage wall
Hisses and/or growls
Swats/attempts to swat
Bites/attempts to bite

Other observations (e.g., freezes):

Item #1c: Food Interaction

While the cat is in his or her cage, open the door slightly and offer some food (e.g., canned cat food, baby food, etc.) on a spoon using a gloved hand (using thick handling gloves). Start at the cage door and gradually move the spoon towards the cat. Maintain your other hand on the cage door in case the door must be closed quickly.

Check all behaviors that occur:

Starts eating the food	Circle one: without encouragement with encouragement
Sniffs the food	
Shows no reaction	
Turns head away/Pulls head back	
=====	
Struggles/tries to escape/ Pushes body against cage wall	
Hisses and/or growls	
Swats/attempts to swat	
Bites/attempts to bite	

Other observations (e.g., freezes):

Item #1b-d: Feral or Fearful (continued)?

Item #1d: Touch Interaction	
While the cat is in his or her cage, open the door slightly and slowly present a gloved hand (using thick handling gloves). Start at the cage door and gradually move the gloved hand towards the cat. If possible, gently stroke the cat with the gloved hand. Maintain your other hand on the cage door in case the door must be closed quickly.	
Check all behaviors that occur:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Allows stroking with gloved hand
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sniffs gloved hand
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shows no reaction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Turns head away/Pulls head back
=====	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Struggles/tries to escape/ Pushes body against cage wall
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hisses and/or growls
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swats/attempts to swat
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bites/attempts to bite
Other observations (e.g., freezes):	

Interpreting Results of Item #1b-d

- Responses above the double line for each section are more likely to be the reactions of a fearful cat (i.e., open to human interaction).
- Responses below the double line for each section are more likely to be the reactions of a feral cat (i.e., unopen to human interaction).

Note: The information contained in Item #1b-d has yet to be scientifically validated.



CAUTION:

If the cat shows aggression, withdraws from attention, you are uncomfortable handling the cat, and/or unable to safely place the cat into a plastic carrier for Item #2a-b, stop the assessment.

Item #2a-b: Introduction to Novel Room

Take the cat out of the cage and place him into a plastic carrier (cleaned and dry) for transport to the “Novel Room” (i.e., assessment area). Throughout this item, you will be recording the amount of time the cat is either interacting or not interacting with you. In order to obtain an accurate assessment of time spent in each activity, use two stopwatches—one to keep the total time (start when you open the crate door, end at five minutes) and the second to keep track of time, interacting with you. Click on the second stopwatch whenever an interaction begins and click it off once the interaction ends.

IMPORTANT: Other than eye contact, do not initiate, engage with or respond to the cat. Interaction includes eye contact and other behavior even when the cat is in the carrier.

Interactive behaviors include meows, chirps, looks, blinks, rubbing against you, touching you, and being in your lap. Be sure to include those behaviors made while inside the carrier after the door has been opened.

Item #2a—Choose one:

	Exits carrier in 25 seconds or less with tall body posture	add 1 point	
	Exits carrier in 25 seconds or less with crouched body posture	add ½ point	
	Exits carrier within 25 seconds and quickly scoots to hiding place, keeping body low to the ground	subtract ½ point	
	Does not exit carrier (choose one): ___ within 25 seconds or ___ at all	0 points	

Choose one (if applicable):

	Investigates room while standing tall	add 1 point	
	Investigates room in a low body posture	add ½ points	
	Races out of carrier to one spot in the room and stays there	subtract ½ point	
Total points for item #2a			

Item #2b—Fill in information:

	Time spent interacting with the evaluator (as determined by second stop watch)		
	Time not spent interacting with the evaluator		

Choose one:

	Interacts for more than 60 seconds	add 1 ½ points	
	Interacts for 30-60 seconds	add 1 point	
	Interacts for less than 30 seconds	0 points	
Total points for item #2b			

Other observations:



If at the end of Item #2 the cat is in the carrier, gently and slowly tip the carrier until the cat exits. Close the carrier door so the cat cannot reenter the carrier. Allow another 5 minutes for the cat to acclimate to the room and then proceed to Item #3.

Item #3: Call and Approach

Crouch down on the opposite side of the room from the cat and about five to six feet away, start the stopwatch, and call the

cat several times. Extend one hand, closed in a fist, toward him or her. Stop the stopwatch when the cat approaches and makes contact with your hand or body. Allow the cat up to 30 seconds to approach. Be sure to talk softly and encourage coming forward with your voice.

Check all behaviors that occur:

Makes eye contact	add 1 point
Does not make eye contact	subtract 1 point
Approaches	add 3 points
Sniffs or head butts	add 3 points
Roles on back or rolls over	add 2 points
Meows, purrs, and/or chirps (circle all that apply)	add 1 point
Watches with no approach	add 0 points
Retreats	subtract 1 point
Hisses and/or growls	subtract 2 points

Total points for Item #3

Other observations:



If the cat has been approached and shown no aggressive behavior, proceed to Item #4. Stop the assessment if the cat displays aggressive behavior.

Item #4: Open Hand

While still crouching, extend an open hand to the cat. Your hand should be lower than the cat's head. If the cat did not approach you in Item #3, walk toward and crouch next to the cat.

Check all behaviors that occur:

Sniffs or head butts	add 3 points
Licks or rubs on hand	add 3 points
Rolls on back or rolls over	add 2 points
Meows, purrs, and/or chirps (circle all that apply)	add 2 points
Retreats/defensive position	subtract 1 point
Hisses and/or growls	subtract 2 points
Swats/attempts to swat hand	subtract 2 points
Bites/attempts to bite hand	subtract 3 points

Total points for Item #4

Other observations:



If the shown no aggressive behavior, proceed to Item #5. Stop the assessment if the cat displays aggressive behavior.

Item #5: Stroking

While talking to the cat, use your open hand, slightly cupped, to stroke the cat in long strokes along the head, back, and

sides. Continue for 4-5 long slow strokes, if possible.			
Check all behaviors that occur:			
	Rubs against legs or hand	add 3 points	
	Head butts	add 3 points	
	Circles you attentively	add 2 points	
	Meows, purrs, and/or chirps (circle all that apply)	add 2 points	
	Rolls on back or rolls over	add 2 points	
	Show initial fear but then relaxes	0 points	
	Retreats/defensive position	subtract 1 point	
	Hisses and/or growls	subtract 2 points	
	Swats/attempts to swat hand	subtract 2 points	
	Bites/attempts to bite hand	subtract 3 points	
Total points for Item #5			
Other observations:			

Item #6: Play							
Beginning a couple of feet away from the cat, slowly move a piece of string/yarn along the floor to initiate play. Observe the cat's reaction. Then try to engage the cat in play with other toys from the following list (for a total of three different toys): ball, toy mouse, cat charmer, and feather wand. Do not use catnip toys during the behavior assessment.							
Check all behaviors that occur:							
	Watches toy intently	add 3 points					
	Chases toy	add 3 points					
	Comes back for stroking	add 2 points					
	Ignores toys	0 points					
	Attends to something else	subtract 1 point					
	Avoids eye contact	subtract 1 point					
Total points for Item #6							
Other observations:							
Toy preference:							
Ball	Toy mouse	Cat charmer	Feather wand	None	No preference	Likes all	Other



If the cat has shown no aggressive behavior, proceed to Item #7. Stop the assessment if the cat displays aggressive behavior.

Item #7: Hug			
Call the cat again until he or she approaches, or approach the cat slowly yourself. Begin to stroke the cat again and if he or she is calm, gently pick the cat up and cradle him or her against your chest, with the cat's body sideways to your chest for			

two full seconds.			
Check all behaviors that occur:			
	Is relaxed	add 3 points	
	Extends paw to evaluator's neck or shoulder in an affirmative manner	add 3 points	
	Meows, purrs, and/or chirps (circle all that apply)	add 2 points	
	Accepts hold but remains a bit tense	add 2 points	
	Struggles to escape	subtract 1 point	
	Hisses and/or growls	subtract 2 points	
	Stiffens and extends claws	subtract 2 points	
	Swats/attempts to swat	subtract 3 points	
	Bites/attempts to bite	subtract 3 points	
			Total points for Item #7
Other observations:			



If the cat has shown no aggressive behavior, proceed to Item #8. Stop the assessment if the cat displays aggressive behavior.

Item #8: Sensitivity			
Sit on the ground and allow the cat to approach if he or she chooses. Wait at least 60 seconds before you stroke the cat along his back and gently grasp the cat's tail firmly at the base and gently pull up with a steady pressure just enough to almost, but not quite, move the cat's back feet off the floor. Hold for one second.			
Check all behaviors that occur:			
	Rolls onto back or rolls over	add 3 points	
	Shows no reaction	add 3 points	
	Meows, purrs, and/or chirps (circle all that apply)	add 1 point	
	Struggles/tries to escape	0 points	
	Hisses and/or growls	subtract 1 point	
	Swats/attempts to swat	subtract 2 points	
	Bites/attempts to bite	subtract 3 points	
			Total points for Item #8
Other observations:			



Allow the cat to settle before returning to his or her cage.

scoring



If the cat scores four or fewer points on the independent-gregarious scale, refer to the section in your guide regarding decreasing stress, and reassess in 48 hours.

Likely to be talkative? See Items 1 & 3

Likely to enjoy being held? See Items 7 & 8

Likely to play? Favorite toys? See Item 6

overall score		
item #1		
item #2a		
item #2b		
item #3		
item #4		
item #5		
item #6		
item #7		
item #8		
body posture score		
condition of cage score		
social response score		
food score		
	independent-gregarious	valiance
total score		

determining the feline-ality™

Circle the cat's independent-gregarious score and valiance score. Where the two scores intersect determines the cat's Feline-ality™.

		INDEPENDENT - GREGARIOUS																															
		independent								social								gregarious															
		5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34		
VALIANCE	low valiance																																
		private investigator								secret admirer								love bug															
	medium valiance																																
		the executive								sidekick								personal assistant															
	high valiance																																
		MVP								party animal								leader of the band															

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