

FELINE 411: ALL ABOUT BLACK CATS

by Modi Ramos

Silky, smooth, shiny and lovely, black cats are like little panthers right in your very own living room! Although these raven kitties have gotten a bad rap over the years, they are most certainly undeserving of it. Do you have one of these amazing cats in your life, or has one ever left a special little black paw print on your heart? I've dug up some super cool and fun facts about black cats for you to enjoy and share with your friends who love black cats, too!

1. Paint it black, but in many shades

A cat that is black may be a different shade of black when compared to another cat that is black. So, yes, black cats are unique and rarely identical to one another. Black coats can come in a wide variety of cat breeds, in both longhair and shorthair variations, from domestic shorthairs, Persians, Oriental Shorthairs, Turkish Angoras, Maine Coons, and more.

But there is only one breed of cat that is exclusively black in color, and that's the Bombay cat breed. These gorgeous mini-panthers have coats with a dramatic black shine, and their eyes range from gold to copper. A cross between sable Burmese and black American Shorthairs, these cats named after the popular city in India actually have no connection to the country aside from their name.

2. Consider yourself lucky to have one of us in your life!

Forget everything negative that you've heard surrounding black cats. In many other cultures around the world, these cats are actually symbols of good luck! Check out some of the cool ways that black cats bring good luck around the world...both long ago and still today!

—In Japanese culture, women who own a black cat are considered to be more attractive to their male counterparts. It's also said that if a black cat crosses your path, this is considered to be good luck in Japan. Some Japanese people

will even go as far as to tell the cat "konichiwa" as they pass by!

—Back in olden times, pirates and sailors considered them to be good luck and would often bring them onboard before setting sail on the high seas

—Stage performers consider black cats to be synonymous with good luck, especially on opening night of a play. Their belief is that if a black finds its way into your audience during this time, your show will have a long and prosperous run.

—In Chinese culture, it is thought that black cats are believed to ward off evil. And due in part to their "good energy" as believed by Feng shui enthusiasts, these dark felines possess the ability to "frighten away demons, evil energy, and stalkers."

—Freya, the goddess of love, fertility and beauty in Norse mythology was said to have driven a chariot that was pulled

by two black cats. Farmers would leave bowls of milk for the cats to win the favor of the powerful goddess, and in return, she'd bless their fields with a bountiful harvest.

—The French have long since believed that black cats literally pave the way to wealth. Long ago, the French peasants had a belief that if a black cat were to appear at a crossroads where five roads intersect, following this lucky black cat would lead them to treasure. In southern France specifically, black cats were once referred to as "matagots"—meaning magician cats—and the people would give these cats the first mouthful of food and drink at every meal, because they believed it would repay them with a solid gold coin come morning.

—In Scotland, should you open your front door and a black cat be sitting on your doorstep, this is symbolic of prosperity.

—Throughout olden times, English people would gift black cats as wedding presents to wish the bride a long and happy marriage



Athens

3. Better protected against disease

Okay, this fact is just amazing if you ask me! According to research out of the National Institutes of Health, it was discovered that cats with exclusively black coats have a genetic mutation in their DNA which better protects them against the threat of specific diseases.

And what's even more interesting is that this mutation they possess controls the same genes that offer HIV resistance to humans. Therefore, researchers are able to study these raven kitties and see how they've evolved, adapted and survived as we humans are also mammals and can suffer from similar health issues. Further research and examination of these healthy black cats can help give us insight and hopefully discover ways to combat major health concerns facing us humans.

Fun black cat fact: There's a cat cafe in Japan that's dedicated exclusively to black cats. Check out Nekobiyaka in Himeji, Japan to learn more!

4. Popular fixtures of pop culture

Black cats are a common fixture in pop culture, whether it's cartoons, movies, or television. And despite the fact that many people preach low adoption rates for cats of this coat color, that is not the truth. According to veterinary experts, it seems that there are simply more black cats in comparison to cats of other colors. *But I will agree, black cats can be difficult to photograph, which is a common point of concern when it comes to advertising their images online to potential adopters.*

But despite all of this, black cats are loved by many cat people the world over and have cemented themselves as a favorite among many feline advocates. Some favorite famous black cats include: Salem of *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, Binx from *Hocus Pocus*, Snowball from *The Simpsons*, and Lucifer from *Cinderella*.

5. Careful, kitty will "rust"

So, although we simply see black when we look at black cats, next time you are around one try and carefully observe their coat in the sunlight if possible. Even to the untrained eye, you can see variants of black across their fur, and some regions in which the black almost appears as if it has stripes. In order for a cat to have a black coat, science has told us that the cat's parents must both possess the coat gene that carries black. And this specific color gene, AKA an allele, is referred to as B for black coat coloring.

For this genetic coding, there are three specific variants of the black fur gene: cinnamon, solid black, and brown; the hue works in conjunction with the pattern. If a cat with a solid black hue also has a dominant tabby striped gene in its genetic makeup, then prolonged exposure to the sun can cause the eumelanin pigment in their fur to reveal a rusty tone.

But the reason a black cat will become rusty actually relates more to a deficiency in tyrosine, which can come as a result of protein deficiency in their daily diet.

Did you learn any new facts about black cats that you didn't already know?

Special thank you to
Modi Ramos
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Cattitude Magazine

Risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people



The current spread of COVID-19 is a result of human-to-human transmission. According to the World Organisation for Animal Health, there is no evidence to suggest that animals infected by humans are playing a role in the spread of this disease. This is an area that continues to be studied.

Pets and COVID-19

There have been several reports of infected humans spreading the virus to their pet dog or cat. It is still not clear how often this happens and under what circumstances. From the limited information available, it appears that some animals can get sick. A small number of laboratory studies suggest that cats, dogs, ferrets and hamsters can be infected with COVID-19.

How to keep your pets safe

It is important to remember that pets are not the source of the virus but are getting the virus from people (human-to-animal transmission). Pet owners should abide by the following recommendations if they:

- ✿ have COVID-19 symptoms
 - ✿ are self-isolating due to contact with a COVID-19 case
- In these circumstances:

- ✿ avoid close contact with animals

do not:

- ✿ let them lick you
- ✿ snuggle or kiss them
- ✿ share food with them
- ✿ let them sit on your lap
- ✿ let them sleep in your bed

practise good hygiene

- ✿ wash your hands often, especially before and after touching animals, their food and supplies
 - ✿ avoid coughing and sneezing on your animals
 - ✿ avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
- if possible, have another member of your household care for your animals
- if this is not possible, always practise good hygiene, as noted above

restrict your animal's contact with other people and animals outside the household until your illness is resolved or you are no longer required by the public health authority to quarantine (self-isolate), approximately 14 days

- ✿ keep your cats indoors at all times
- ✿ keep your dogs on a leash or within a private fenced area when you take them outside to go to the bathroom

Continued on Page 4

MAMMARY TUMORS IN CATS

Cornell Feline Health Center

Cancer in general afflicts an estimated 30 percent to 40 percent of all cats, and one-third or so of these malignancies involve the mammary glands. Tumors originating in these glands account for the third most common type of feline cancer (after lymphoma and skin cancer). Occurring more than 95 percent of the time in females, it is the most frequently diagnosed type of feline cancer in cats older than 10 years of age.

According to Margaret McEntee, DVM, a professor of oncology at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, approximately 85 percent of feline mammary cancers are lethally malignant adenocarcinomas. These growths originate in the epithelial tissue of a gland beneath a nipple and eventually spread (metastasize) to the lymph nodes, lungs, pleura, liver, adrenal gland, kidney, or other parts of the body.

A cat has two "chains" of four mammary glands and nipples running parallel on each side of its belly. "A tumor can start as a small, firm nodule, about the size of a BB, just beneath or next to a nipple," explains Dr. McEntee. "Although the tumor can become fixed at its point of origin, it will usually spread to the lymph nodes and then to other parts of the body. In its initial stage, when the growth is small, it's not going to be painful, you won't be able to feel it, and there will be no obvious clinical signs. It may take weeks or months before it is noticeable."

The underlying causes of feline mammary gland cancer are unknown. Genetic influence has not yet been found to play a role. Likewise, while links between external cancer-causing agents—such as environmental carcinogens, exposure to sunlight, viruses, and vaccine injections—have been established in relation to various other forms of feline cancer, these factors do not appear relevant to the onset of mammary cancer in cats.

On the other hand, says Dr. McEntee, the hormone status of a female cat is significant—specifically the roles played by the two female reproductive hormones, estrogen and progesterone. "If these hormones are given to unspayed cats as contraceptives or for behavior modification either orally or by injection," she notes, "their risk of mammary cancer can triple."

A cat's breed may also play a role. For example, says Dr. McEntee, "Siamese cats, for unknown reasons, have twice



the risk of other breeds, and they also tend to get the cancer at an earlier age." (Although the average age of cats with mammary cancer is between 10 and 12 years, the disorder can affect animals anywhere from less than one year to 20 years of age or older.)

Definitive diagnosis of mammary cancer is usually achieved by removing a portion of affected tissue—or all of it, if possible—and submitting the sample for biopsy, a histopathologic examination that will determine whether the cancer is benign or malignant. Chest x-rays and abdominal ultrasound imaging may also be used to determine whether the mammary mass has spread to the lymph nodes and subsequently to the internal organs.

If the cancer has spread throughout a cat's body, treatment would center on chemotherapy. But if the tissue involvement is confined

to the mammary glands, mastectomy would be performed to remove one or both chains of the patient's nipples, mammary glands, and underlying tissue. "If caught early," says Dr. McEntee, "the survival chances are very good—three years or more if a tumor is smaller than two centimeters in diameter."

To dramatically reduce the risk of feline mammary cancer, Dr. McEntee urges pet parents to have their female cats spayed before they enter their first heat cycle, as young as three to four months of age. Indeed, one study indicated that cats spayed prior to six months of age had a 91 percent reduction in risk and those spayed prior to one year of age had an 86 percent reduction.

In addition, a pet parent can play a valuable role in recognizing the presence of a mammary tumor at an early stage of its development by routinely palpating a cat's underside in the areas of the mammary glands and nipples. This should be done on a weekly basis, the objective of which is to detect the formation of obvious masses or lumps of tissue when they are most treatable. Of course, any such alarming discovery should be reported to a veterinarian without delay.

Cornell Feline Health Center

Supporting Cat Health with Information and Health Studies.
<https://www.vet.cornell.edu/departments-centers-and-institutes/cornell-feline-health-center/health-information/feline-health-topics/mammary-tumors>

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE CITY OF NEW WESTMINSTER



COVID-19 Continued...

Pets contribute to our overall happiness and well-being, especially in times of stress. If you have no symptoms of COVID-19 and are not self-isolating, taking walks with your dog or spending time with your pet can help keep both you and your pet healthy.

Caring for exposed animals

Pets are not thought to be playing an important role in the spread of this disease. However, if you are caring for a pet that has been exposed to someone with COVID-19, it is recommended that precautions be taken for 14 days after the last possible exposure to the human case:

- ✿ follow the recommendations in the previous section
- ✿ regarding contact and hygiene
- ✿ clean and disinfect surfaces frequently that have high animal contact

If possible, the animal should remain in their own home in order to minimize contact with any new people, animals or environments.

An animal may need to be moved temporarily to a new location if the owner lives alone and needs to be hospitalized, such as to a:

- ✿ clinic
- ✿ shelter
- ✿ new household

In these cases, the animal should be confined to one area in order to minimize contact with other people and animals.

Individuals at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness should avoid being temporary caregivers to exposed animals.

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& Other Supporters:**

Thank you for your kind generosity, which enables The Royal City Humane Society to provide on-going assistance to animals needing help in our Community.

THE NEW NEW WESTMINSTER ANIMAL SHELTER



The new New Westminster Animal Shelter had its grand opening on February 1, 2020, but the staff and animals moved in November 2019. The move was an exciting time but it went relatively smoothly. We have been in the new building for 8 months. By far, the best part of the new shelter is the benefit to the animals. The living spaces are larger, quieter and less stressful. This decreases chances of illness by providing avenues and different areas for infection control but it also increases the chance of an animal being adopted. We are so happy to be able to have much more room for the animals, as well as a bright, welcoming space for the public. We have multiple cat rooms to help them acclimatize to their surroundings upon arrival, recover from surgeries if necessary and meet their adoring public when they're ready for adoption. Dogs have much larger kennels, larger outside kennel runs and large play yards. We have a dedicated 'meet and greet' room where potential adopters can spend time with a prospective new furry family member. Smaller animals, like rabbits and guinea pigs, finally have their own quiet space away from other species.

As many people already know, the old animal shelter location was small, outdated, and not conducive to behavioral rehabilitation, disease containment and proper housing for the animals we care for. Additionally, the space and the layout of the previous animal shelter was designed for a time when animals did not stay in shelters long-term; therefore, it was not suitable for current best practices for animal welfare.

Courtesy of the New Westminster Animal Shelter

Royal City Humane Society

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The Royal City Humane Society is a registered, no kill animal charity based in New Westminster, BC. As the only charity animal shelter in New Westminster, RCHS campaigns against pet overpopulation and cares for stray, injured and abandoned animals by testing them for disease, sterilizing and tattooing and finding them new homes. RCHS is 100% volunteer run. Funding is obtained through various fund raising activities, memberships and donations, and all funds are spent on the welfare of the animals.