

## ***Temperament Testing of Domestic Cats: Consistency over Time and Correlation with Behavior and Baseline Cortisol Levels***

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Temperament tests are not widely used to assess cats before adoption from shelters. However, cats exhibit a wide range of temperaments as do the families adopting them and ensuring compatibility between the two could increase the rate of successful placement. Scores on a feline temperament test (FTT) were compared between cats and over time and related to responses of cats to familiar and unfamiliar persons and to basal cortisol levels. Positive and neutral scores on the FTT differed significantly among cats. Ranking by cats according to high positive and low negative scores resulted in three distinct groups of cats, which could be used to set criteria for adoption needs of cats. Over 8 months, changes in FTT scores were minor, with cats scoring somewhat more positively and less negatively following adoption. Positive responses to a familiar caretaker were positively correlated to positive scores on the pre-adoption FTTs, as was average percent of time spent near either males or females in the open field test with unfamiliar persons indicating that cats which displayed general positive responses to humans did so in both test and home environments and with familiar and unfamiliar persons. No correlation was seen between FTT scores and basal cortisol levels. The data indicate that the FTT was relatively stable over time for adult cats and the scores correlated well with ethological observations of cats interacting with humans. The FTT could provide shelters with a realistic, consistent assessment of cat temperament which could lead to more successful placement of cats.