

The Feline Friends Study: Benefits of Pet Cats for Children with Autism

Results of a HABRI-funded study from researchers at the University of Missouri highlight the benefits of adopting a temperament-screened shelter cat for families of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

In children with ASD, adoption of a temperament-screened shelter cat resulted in:

- Greater empathy
- Less separation anxiety
- Less bullying
- Less hyperactivity



Children and parents also **felt strong bonds with their new cat almost immediately** after adoption and despite the cat caretaking responsibility, these bonds did not decrease over time.



Temperament-screened shelter cats may be beneficial for some children with ASD while not imparting undue burden to the children's parents.



The Feline Temperament Profile (FTP) screening tool was used to objectively identify cats of calm temperament for placement into the participant's homes.

The FTP is a practical tool for animal shelters and rescues to effectively place shelter cats into suitable homes.



Scientific research has demonstrated that children with ASD can benefit from the human-animal bond. The Feline Friends study findings offer support for pet cat ownership for this population, which may benefit from the quieter, calmer demeanor of a cat.

HABRI hopes that by sharing these results, we can help raise awareness of the health benefits of pet cats and help more cats find loving homes.

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