

Man's NEW best friend

"Women and cats will do as they please, and men and dogs should relax and get used to the idea." – Robert A. Heinlein

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While the stereotypical pet relationships based on gender are generally men with dogs and women with cats, that could all be changing if we look at recent statistics.

When PFMA (the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association) released its new Pet Data Report back in March, based on interviews with over 8,000 households in the UK, it revealed there are about one million more male cat owners in 2017 (17% of those interviewed) than there were in 2016 (13% of those interviewed). While the percentage may seem small, it represents a rise of more than 25% - so why the dramatic increase?

Cats Protection's Social Media Manager, Gemma Croker, said: "Cats

have always been on social media but we have definitely noticed more men openly expressing their love for their feline friends. We now see more male celebrities talking about their cats such as our supporter The Vamps' James McVey (cat Mickey), Ed Sheeran (Graham) and Russell Brand (Morrissey). It is possible that this trend may have triggered an increase in their popularity among the general male population, which is great news for rehoming cats."

Men and cats through history

The 'well-known' male cat owner isn't a new thing, although social media wasn't around to broadcast the feline fancy of the likes of Marlon Brando or Raymond Chandler. Writer Ernest Hemingway is known for having polydactyl (six-toed) cats, descendants of his cat Snow White, and his home (now also a museum) in Key West still has 40-50 such cats in residence.

Andy Warhol (who had 25 cats at one time) published a book of hand-coloured cat illustrations in 1954, and there are countless cat quotes attributed to ailurophile (that's cat lover to you and me) Mark Twain. It's not just men linked to the arts who love cats though, as male cat fanciers can also be seen in the world of science. For example,

Sir Isaac Newton is believed to have invented the cat flap, and Nikola Tesla's childhood cat Macak inspired his interest in electricity with the static charge a young Tesla experienced on Macak's fur.

Whatever the reason behind the increasing attraction to cats among the male population, it's good news for cats and owners alike. Michael Bellingham, PFMA Chief Executive, said: "Pet ownership is a rewarding experience for everyone. It's wonderful to see that men are realising the huge benefits of pets with an increase in cat ownership in this sector. We are delighted that in spite of the challenges presented to pet ownership, our population is stable with a 4% increase to 12 million households owning a pet."

Real men and their cats

We spoke to some real life crazy cat men to discover what makes cats the purrfect pet for modern men.

Jordan Cattell, student/artist, and Stavros

Stavros, AKA Stav, was left behind by previous owners when they moved house, and taken in by one of Jordan's relatives. Following a few altercations with their dog they decided they couldn't keep him after all, and rather than letting

Male Celebrity Cat Lovers

Ricky Gervais – Ollie
Russell Brand – Morrissey
The Vamps' James McVey – Mickey
Ed Sheeran – Graham
Morrissey
Ewan McGregor
George Clooney
David Bowie
Vincent Price



Cats have a calming effect of stressed-out men.



his relatives take him to one of the already full rescues, Jordan decided to rehome Stav himself – the start of a beautiful relationship! Jordan classes Stav as his best friend and although they've moved around a lot recently Stav has adapted well to the moves – as long as he's with Jordan he's happy.

Jordan said: *"Cats are more independent than dogs and don't need the high levels of maintenance that dogs require – levels that modern men don't necessarily have the time to provide. Owning a cat has been a fantastic experience and has introduced me to a whole new world – including membership of a local online cat club (Kings Heath Cat Club). Through the cat club I've been able to build great friendships with likeminded individuals, people who I probably wouldn't have encountered otherwise, and had so much support from them – cats really do unite everyone, in my experience. Although the majority of the club members are female, male membership seems on the rise."*

Adam J Chambers, photographer, and Freckles

The story of Adam and Freckles goes to prove the old adage true – cats really do seem to choose their owners, not the other way around. Originally belonging to one of Adam's neighbours, Freckles started showing up in Adam's garden every day and didn't seem to want to leave. When he found out who the owner was, Adam offered to take Freckles home each day so she wouldn't be left outside every night. Freckles, however, seemed to have other ideas, and eventually her original owner asked if Adam

wanted to keep her as his cat. More than just a pet, Freckles was a huge support (both emotionally and physically) to Adam when he had a stroke in 2014. As well as being his motivation to get out of hospital and speed up his recovery, Freckles made the perfect model when Adam was getting back into his photography.

Adam said: *"I think more men are starting to have cats as they're more independent than dogs, and men are living a more high maintenance lifestyle these days. Cats may have originally been more popular with women but times are changing. Men are being kept busy in many ways nowadays, making a cat a more suitable pet than a dog which will need more time and attention on things like being walked."*

Jason Ward and Tony Williams, owners of the pet-sitting company Kitty Angels, and Daisy

An older lady (approximately 12-14 years old), Daisy is Tony and Jason's second cat together. Adopted in 2014 from Cats Protection, she'd been found as a starving stray, scavenging for food in people's gardens. The Cats Protection branch was having difficulty finding her a permanent home because no-one seemed to want an older cat, but as soon as they saw her picture on the website and read her story, they knew she was the cat for them.

Tony said: *"We think more and more men are adopting cats because perhaps the traditional perception of cats as being 'women's pets' (and dogs being 'men's pets') is changing. The rise of the 'metrosexual' has seen men embracing things which were traditionally seen as feminine. Single working men probably see the advantages of cats over dogs when it comes to things such as living in a flat, and being left alone for the day while owners are at work."*

Finally, in this internet age, social media is abound with pictures and videos of cute cats, as well as celebrity cats (e.g. Bob the street cat), so with cats getting more and more exposure (and rightly so!), men are now catching up with women in seeing just how amazing, adaptable and loving these beautiful creatures can be!"

As you can see, it's important that retailers don't just assume their cat-owning customers are female, because you could well be missing out on this growing demographic. Move over crazy cat ladies, the crazy cat men are on the rise!



Paw-sing for a quick cuddle before work.