



# ***Helping Cats Who Hiss and Hide: Assessments, Behavior Modification and Re-Homing Strategies for Shy and Fearful Cats***

**Results from our Pre-Webcast Survey  
November 2013**

Can cats who are shy and fearful in the shelter still get adopted? Can cats who may never be well-suited for a home have happy outcomes, too?

The answer is yes!

## ***The Webcast***

Maddie's Institute<sup>SM</sup> presents *Helping Cats Who Hiss and Hide: Assessment, Behavior Modification and Re-Homing Strategies for Shy and Fearful Cats*. In this webcast, Dr. Sheila D'Arpino, board-certified veterinary behaviorist and Director of the Maddie's<sup>®</sup>

Animal Care Center, discusses the tools and techniques that can increase your lifesaving of cats, as well as ensure an outcome tailored for the well-being of that individual cat. Feline behavior while in a shelter is not always a good representation of that same cat's behavior in less stressful surroundings. Proper housing, handling, and, if needed, behavior modification can turn that hissing and hiding cat into a beloved family pet.



Please view our on-demand webcast of *Helping Cats Who Hiss and Hide* anytime at:

[http://www.maddiesfund.org/Maddies\\_Institute/Webcasts/Helping\\_Cats\\_Who\\_Hiss\\_and\\_Hide.html](http://www.maddiesfund.org/Maddies_Institute/Webcasts/Helping_Cats_Who_Hiss_and_Hide.html)

*This course has been pre-approved for Certified Animal Welfare Administrator continuing education credits as well as reviewed and approved for 1 hour of continuing education by the AAVSB RACE program in jurisdictions which recognize AAVSB RACE approval.*

## ***The Survey***

Those who registered to attend the live webcast, presented on November 14, 2013, were asked to fill out a quick online questionnaire about their own experiences with shy and/or fearful cats. The results of the survey are shared in this report.



# Pre-Webcast Survey Results

## Fearful Cats in the Home

- Nearly 87% of survey respondents (1,069 individuals) have *owned and/or fostered* a cat who was extremely shy and/or fearful (for example, the cat hid for 24 hours or more after first obtaining him/her).

## Foster to Adoption

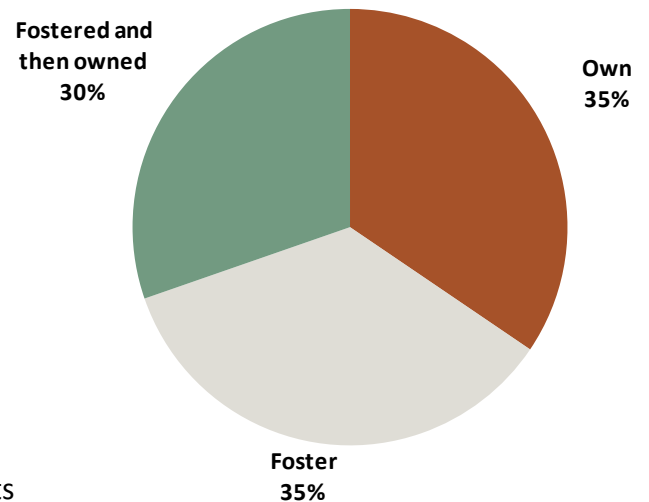
- Approximately 30% of those respondents are what we lovingly term “foster failures,” those who have *adopted their own fosters*.
- Equal proportions of respondents have *owned* or *fostered* a shy or fearful cat.

## Age of Acquisition

- Overall, 37% of respondents reported that the cat was *more than one year old* when they first obtained him/her. Approximately 30% of respondents cared for a shy or fearful cat *less than twelve weeks of age*, and 32% cared for shy or fearful cats *between the ages of 12 weeks and 1 year*.
- Cat age upon acquisition did not appear to differ by *owner* or *foster* categories.

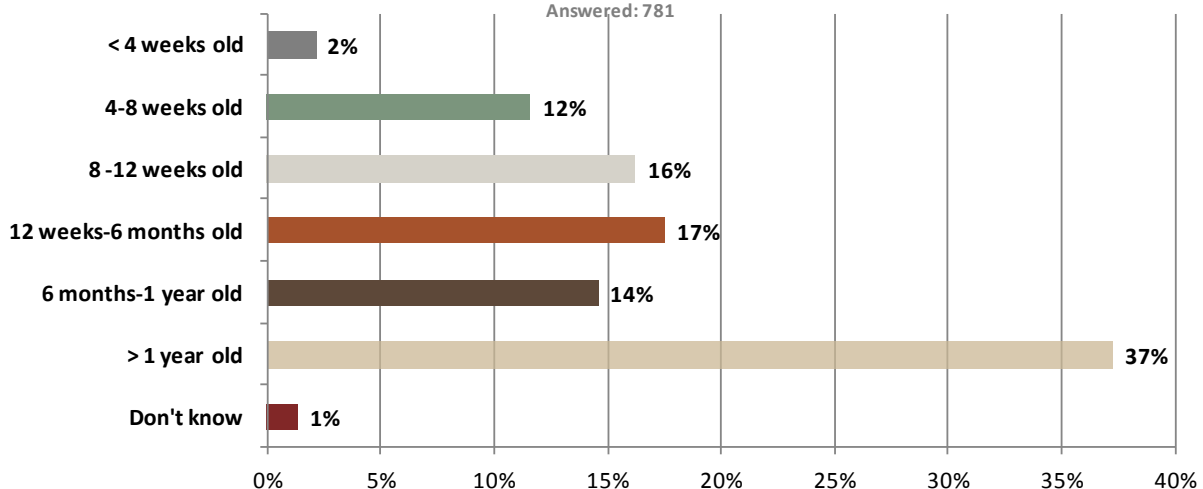
### Did you own or foster the cat?

Answered: 1,032



### How old was the cat when you first obtained him/her?

Answered: 781





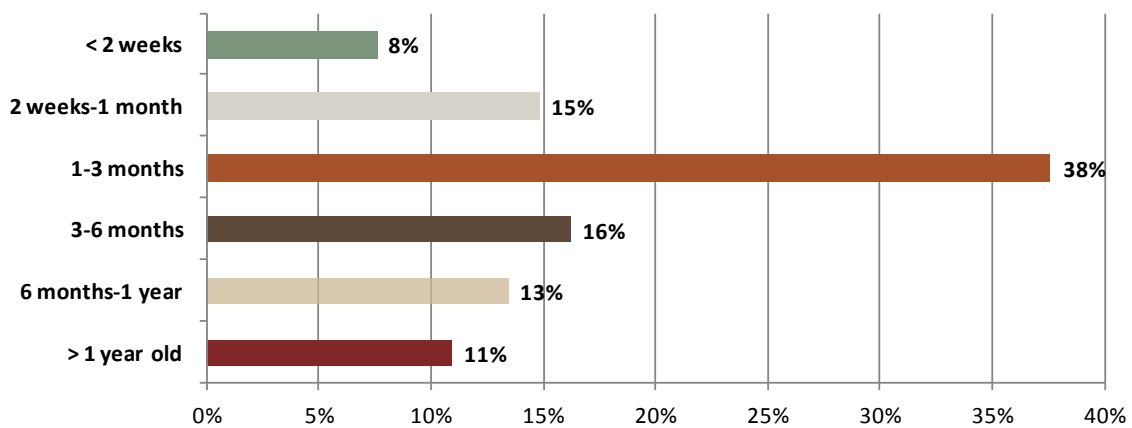
# Pre-Webcast Survey Results

## Length of Stay

- The majority of those who either *owned or fostered and then owned* shy or fearful cats had the cat for *more than one year*. Foster caregivers however, most commonly had the shy or fearful cat *between one to three months* (38%). Notably, 78% of fosters cared for their cat for *more than one month*.

### Approximately how long did you have the cat?

Answered: 360 (Fosters Only)

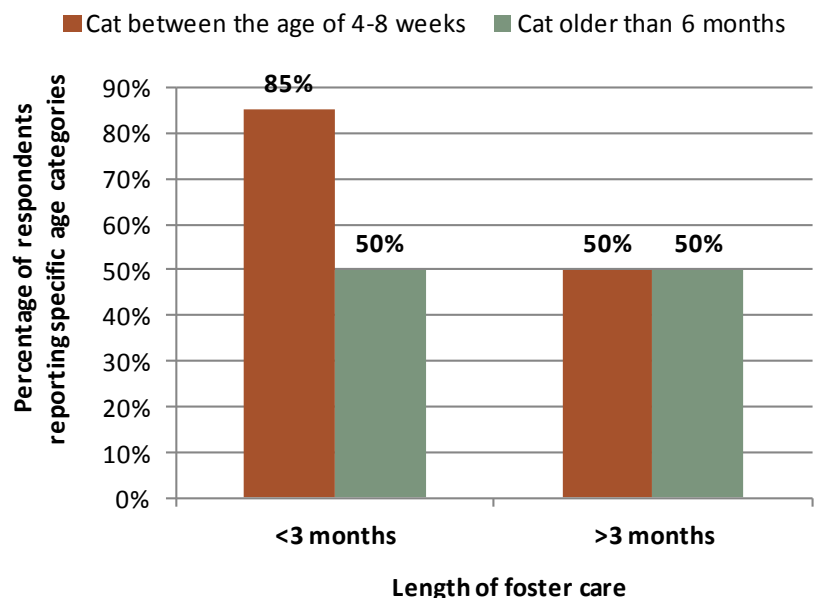


## Age and Length of Care

- Survey data suggested that as age increased, length of time in foster care tended to increase.
- Specifically, fosters caring for kittens during their primary socialization period, *between the age of 4 to 8 weeks*, reported having the cat in their care for a shorter period of time than fosters of cats who were *6 months or older*.

### Length of care by age

Answered: 39 fosters with cats between 4-8 weeks old  
139 fosters with cats older than 6 months





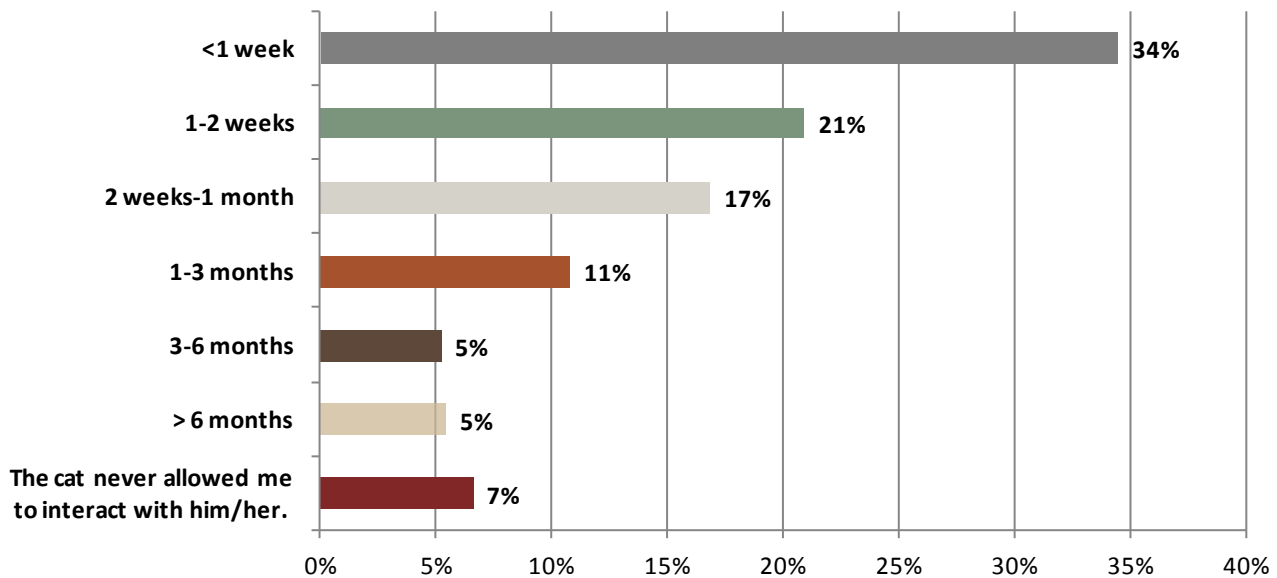
# Pre-Webcast Survey Results

## Caregiver Interaction

- Respondents most commonly reported that it took *less than one week* to first interact with the shy or fearful cat. Nearly 55% saw the opportunity for interaction *within 2 weeks*.
- Respondents caring for younger cats (*less than 12 weeks*) were slightly more likely to report a shortened length of time to first interaction (44% reported first interaction in *less than one week*; data not depicted).
- Approximately 7% of respondents reported that the cat *never allowed a caregiver interaction*.

### Approximately how long did it take until you were first able to interact with the cat?

Answered: 959



*"I find that even among kittens in the same litter, the time it takes for them to interact can vary widely. [In] the last litter of three, one was eating out of our hand and purring within two days, another took about two weeks and the third [took] two months. [It was the] same litter all trapped by me within 48 hours of each other."*

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*



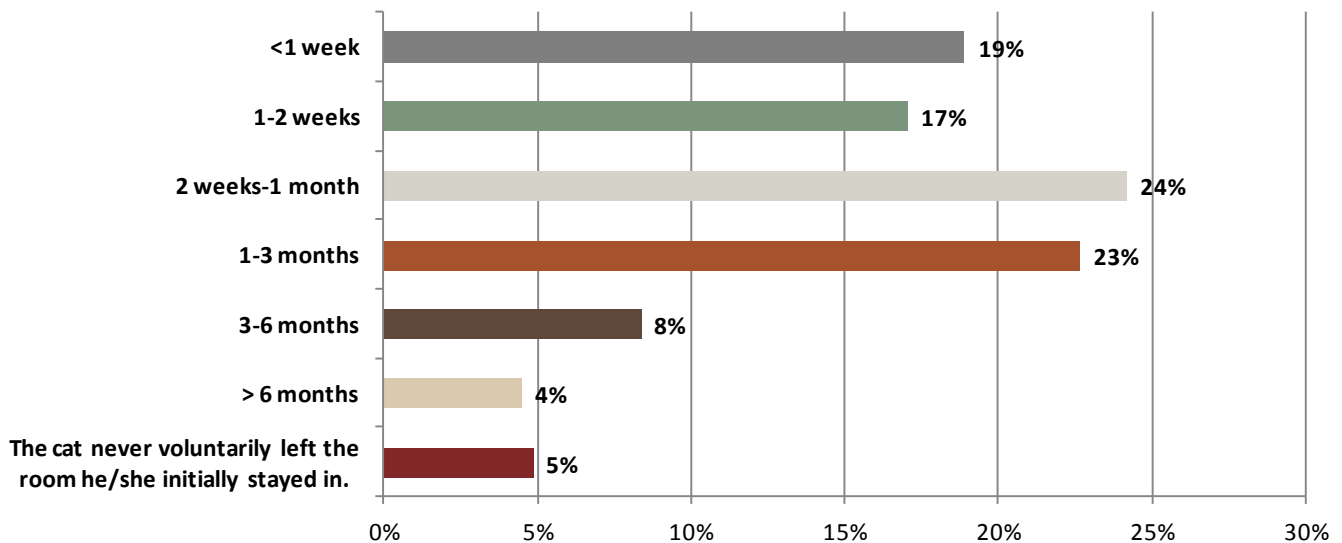
# Pre-Webcast Survey Results

## Building Confidence

- The majority of respondents, 60%, reported that it took *less than one month* for the shy or fearful cat to leave the room he/she initially stayed in. Only 4% of cats described in this survey took *longer than six months* to leave the room he/she initially stayed in, while another 5% *never* left the room. It should be noted that caregivers had these cats for varying amounts of time.
- Nearly 11% of respondents (103 individuals) reported that the cat was *not allowed to leave the room he/she initially stayed in*. These responses were not included in the calculations or graph depicted here.

### Approximately how long did it take until the cat left the room he/she initially stayed in?

Answered: 855 (Excluding those reporting "The cat was not allowed to leave the room he/she initially stayed in.")



*"I gradually increased cat roaming space as [he/she] became more comfortable."*

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*

*"At first I kept the cats in one room where I worked on my computer most of the day. After about 6-8 months I kept the door opened to this room so the adopted feral cats could roam about the house.*

*They were very timid and cautious at first but within a few days they were happy to be able to roam through the whole house and sleep by the windows with the sunlight on them."*

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*



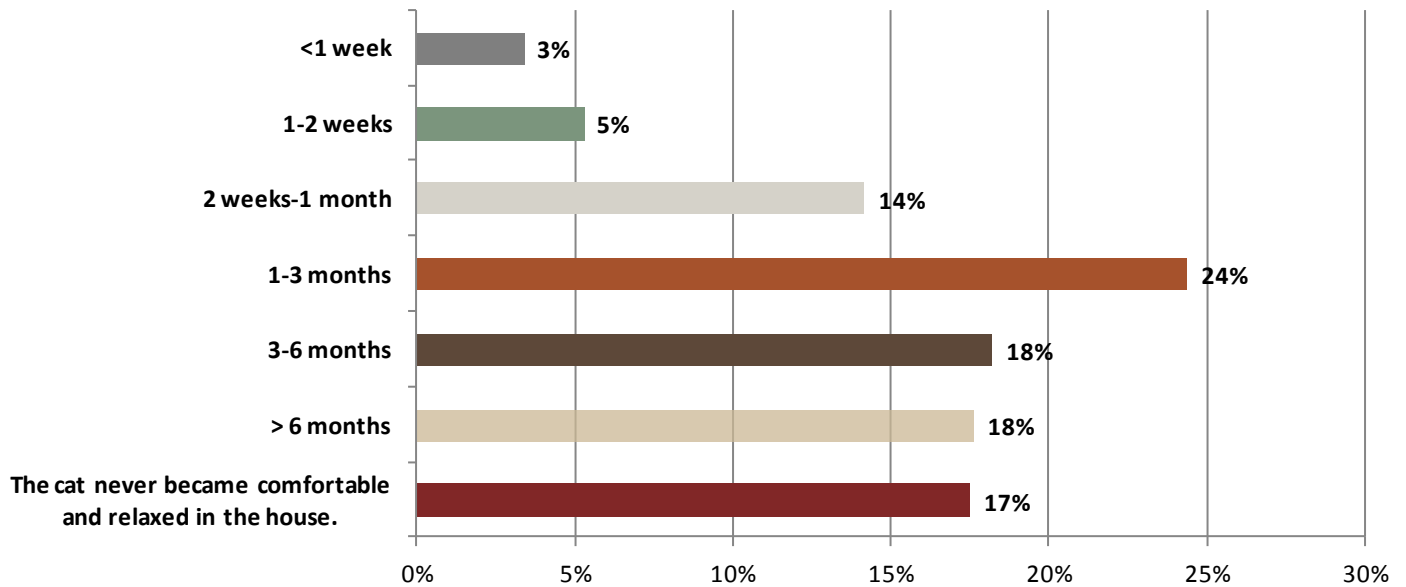
# Pre-Webcast Survey Results

## Settling In

- Approximately 46% of respondents reported that the shy or fearful cat became comfortable and relaxed in the house in *less than three months*. The figure below does not include responses from those who previously noted that the cat was *not allowed to leave the room he/she initially stayed in*.
- Nearly 17% of respondents (183 individuals surveyed) felt as though the cat *never* became comfortable and relaxed in the home.

## Approximately how long did it take until the cat was comfortable and relaxed in your house?

Answered: 844 (Excluding those reporting "The cat was not allowed to leave the room he/she initially stayed in.")



*"The cat is still quirky and probably always will be, but I believe he is relaxed and comfortable now."*

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*



# Pre-Webcast Survey Results

## Quiet, Please.

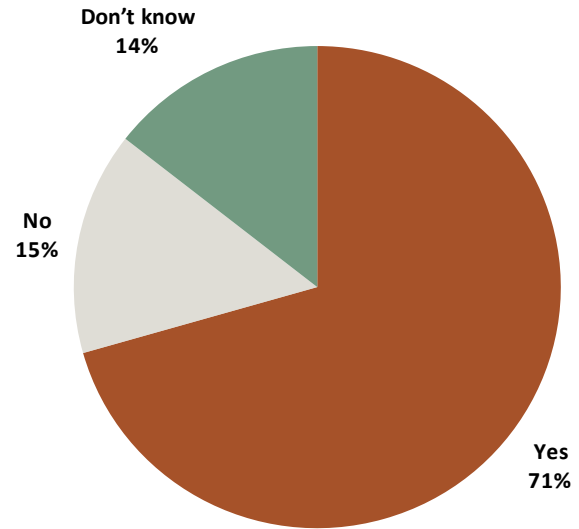
- Respondents overwhelmingly reported that the shy or fearful cats in their care were frightened by loud noises.

*"I would just go into the room and sit quietly on the floor until the cat got use to me, then I would sit and calmly read out loud to the cat so she would get use to my voice. It was a big help."*

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*

## Was the cat frightened by loud noises?

Answered: 905

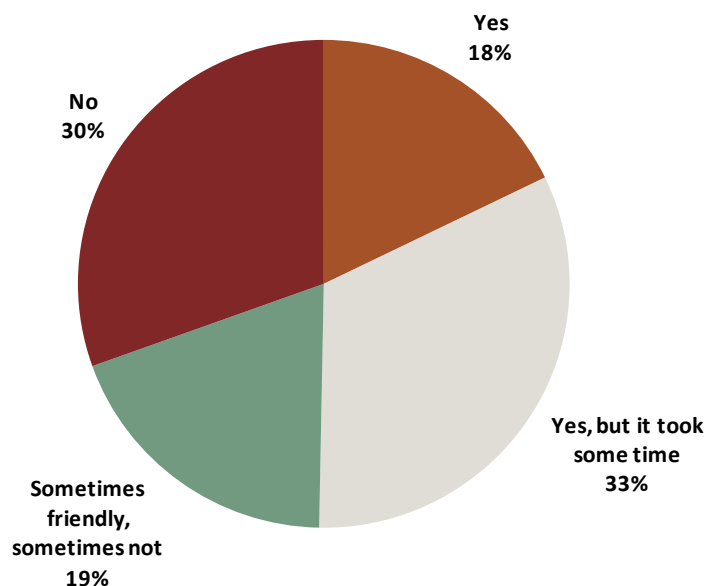


## Doggie Pals

- Approximately 44% of respondents (398 individuals) *did not know* if the shy or fearful cat was friendly toward dogs. Responses of "don't know" were not included in the calculations or graph depicted here.
- The slight majority, 51%, noted that the shy or fearful cat *was friendly toward dogs*, whether immediately or over time.
- Finally, 30% reported that the cat was *not friendly toward dogs*.

## Was the cat friendly toward dogs?

Answered: 499





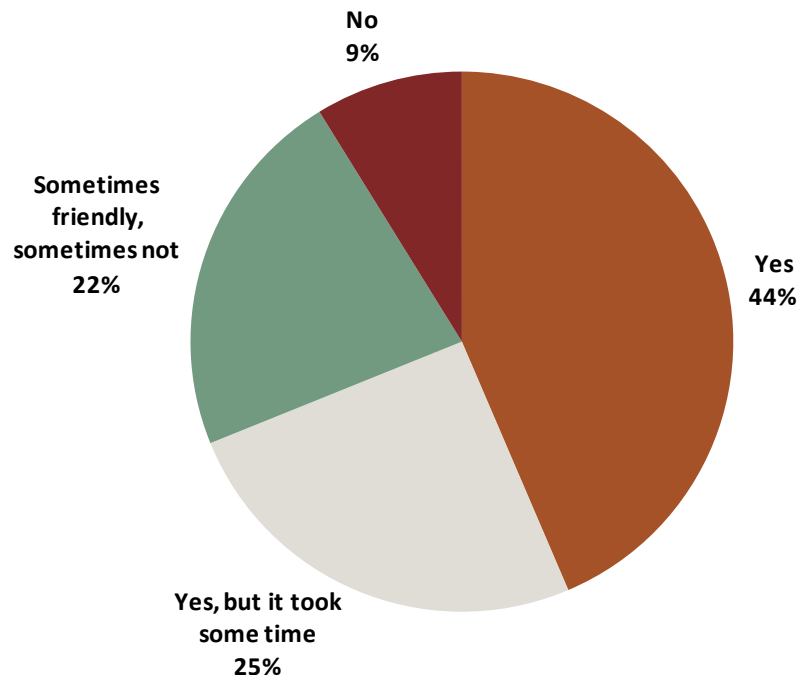
# Pre-Webcast Survey Results

## Cat Introductions

- The majority of respondents, 69%, noted that the shy or fearful cat in their care is friendly to other cats, regardless of whether that reaction was immediate or took time.
- Only 9% reported that the cat was not friendly toward other cats.
- Approximately 7% of respondents (64 individuals) *did not know* if the shy or fearful cat was friendly toward other cats – likely meaning that an introduction was never made or that caregiver is not aware of any cat to cat exposure. Responses of “don’t know” were not included in the calculations or graph depicted here.

### Was the cat friendly toward other cats?

Answered: 832



*“Numerous people report that having a friendly cat can help a fearful cat. In my experience, this is definitely something to try – [even if it] doesn’t always work – especially when you have a cat that is friendly.*

*I would initially recommend doing it by desensitizing the cat, so introducing the cat at a distance [to determine] whether the cat has any interest at all in interacting.”*

*Presenter, Sheila D’Arpino, DVM, DACVB*





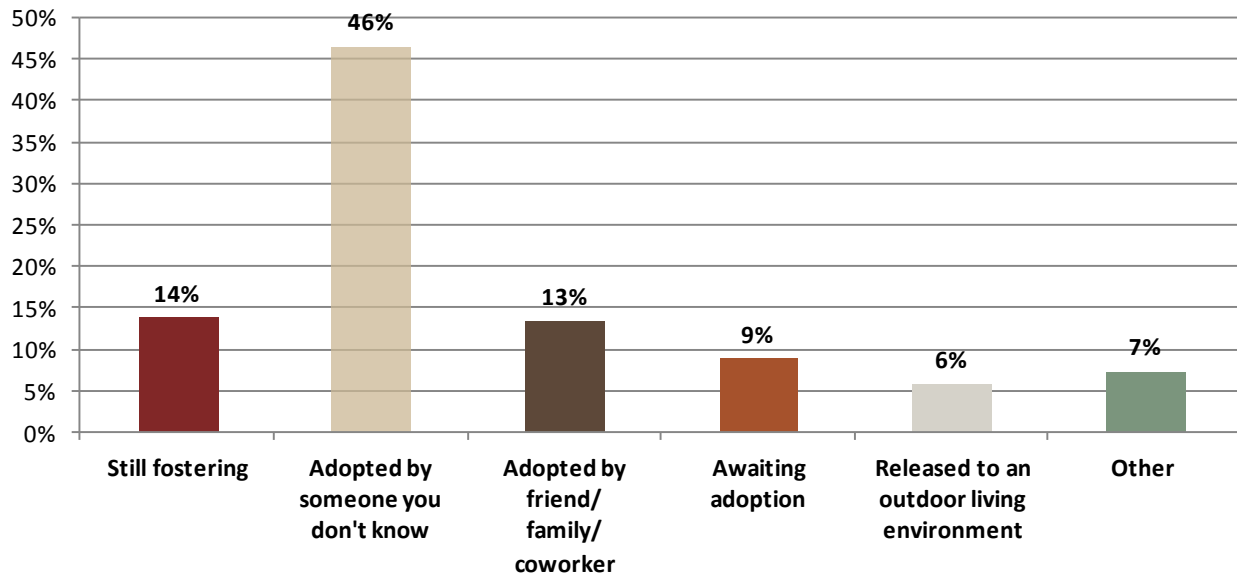
# Pre-Webcast Survey Results

## Finding Homes

- Approximately 60% of foster caregivers who did not adopt the shy or fearful cat themselves were able to get the cat adopted either by *someone they did not personally know* (46%) or by a *friend, family member or co-worker* (13%). Nearly 22% of foster caregivers at the time of this survey were either *still fostering* the cat or are *awaiting an adoption outcome* for the cat.

### If you fostered the cat, what happened to him/her at the end of the foster period?

Answered: 263 (Excluding those reporting "Not applicable")



*"I just let her decide when she was ready to trust."*

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*

*"They have just gone to their adoptive home this week."*

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*

*"The cat became the 'resident' at an animal shelter free roaming, greeting people when she wanted."*

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*