

Questions you might ask a cat shelter before adopting:

1. Before adopting from the shelter ask about the adoption process that takes place once you are at the shelter. It may be tricky to think straight and objectively once at the shelter. Do shelters put pressure on potential adopters who show an interest at the shelter? I think a person should be clued into this possibility to make sure she/he can cope. Adopting a cat is for the life of the cat. A cool head is required.
2. Has the cat been examined and certified (by a vet?) as healthy? In this instance we are looking to ensure the cat has not picked up contagious diseases at the shelter or is a carrier of a disease. There is a distinct possibility that this can happen.
3. The contract (agreement) probably provides for this but what happens if your cat becomes ill immediately after adoption? Who pays for treatment? Can you tell if the illness was acquired at the shelter (a pre-existing condition)? The agreement should deal with this.
4. Ask about spaying or neutering. I suppose you'll be told without asking but there seems to be alternatives such as neutering after adoption and providing a deposit to the shelter which is returned after neutering.
5. Has the cat been microchipped?
6. Has the cat been vaccinated?
7. Has the cat been treated for internal and external parasites?
8. Has the cat been housed individually at the centre (this reduces the risk of getting an infection).
9. What is the cat's background? Does the cat have a name and do we know what sort of lifestyle the cat had prior to being at the rescue center?
10. Why was the cat given up by her previous owners?
11. Was the cat a stray or feral?
12. How long has the cat been at the shelter? I am not sure this is hugely relevant, however, except it indicates the cat is unpopular but this, in fact, might be good reason to adopt as opposed to the opposite.
13. Has a personality assessment been carried out? How did the cat behave at the shelter? That said, cat behaviour at a shelter is not going to be typical because shelters are atypical places.
14. Will the rescue centre be available to provide advice after adoption and for how long?
15. Is there a return policy if things go wrong? I am not sure if this is asking too much. Do cat shelters have return policies? I suspect they do.
16. Is there a contract? If there is I'd sit down and read it carefully. It should cover the above points. If there isn't a written contract I'd think twice about adopting from the shelter because contracts create clarity and certainty and you need that when making a big decision which this is.

Prepared by Michael on PoC