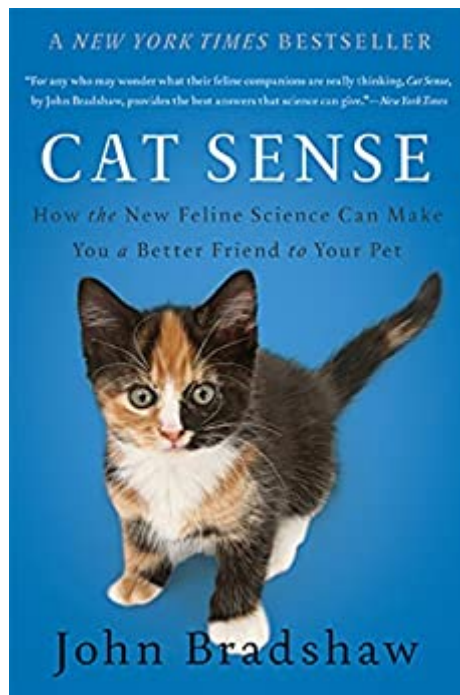




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# Cat Sense: How The New Feline Science Can Make You A Better Friend To Your Pet



## Synopsis

Cats have been popular household pets for thousands of years, and their numbers only continue to rise. Today there are three cats for every dog on the planet, and yet cats remain more mysterious, even to their most adoring owners. In *Cat Sense*, renowned anthrozoologist John Bradshaw takes us further into the mind of the domestic cat than ever before, using cutting-edge scientific research to explain the true nature—and needs—of our feline friends. Tracing the cat's evolution from solitary hunter to domesticated companion, Bradshaw shows that cats remain independent, predatory, and wary of social contact, qualities that often clash with the demands of our modern lifestyles. If we're to live in harmony with cats, Bradshaw contends, we first need to understand and adapt to their ancient quirks. A must-read for any cat lover, *Cat Sense* challenges our most basic assumptions about cats and promises to dramatically improve their lives—and ours.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a solid book on an under-researched topic: cats. The first three chapters provide a context for thinking about cats in today's world. The author discusses the history of the domestication of cats

and traces their emergence as a "truly global phenomenon." In the middle chapters, the focus is on how different the senses and brains of cats are from humans. Cats, we learn, are not little furry humans. The author discusses the way cats gather information, how they interpret and use that information, and the way their emotions guide their actions. The science in these chapters is fascinating. The author goes on to examine the social life of cats--the connections they make with one another, and the science of cat "personality." The chapter on "Cats and Their People" is especially good. It discusses the human preference for "baby-faced animals," but points out that the physical appearance of cats cannot explain the affection humans have for them. Cats owe their success as pets, the author writes, because they are open to building relationships with humankind. The discussion of what cats feel for humans, and the analysis of purring, will warm the hearts of cat owners. The book closes with a look at the different pressures cats are under in today's world. The evolution of cats, the author argues, is moving away, rather than toward, better integration with human society. The book reveals that cats and dogs are more different than we might have imagined. "The dog's mind has been radically altered from that of its ancestor, the gray wolf; cats, on the other hand, still think like wild hunters." There is much to be learned from this work. NOTE: One reviewer here says the author "advocates breeding." That's not quite right. The author says that we should not be breeding cats for appearance--which is what is done today. If there is to be breeding, it should be done in order to select behaviors. The author is not calling for breeding, however.

This is one of the best books on feline "psychology" and cat nature that I've read. Either you are a cat person or you are not; I've had cats almost continuously for more than fifty years and I like them. They are easy to care for, affectionate, yet sometimes you'll get a cat with a quirk and it drives you crazy. I found some of the quirks explained in this book--for example, why "Oriental" (ie Persian and Siamese cats) eat wool or other fabrics. I have had several Siamese and all of them were dangerous around wool. Eating yarn is bad--it can wrap around a cat's intestines and cause a deadly condition. The observation that Siamese do indeed seem more prone to nervous disorders and eating fabric to comfort themselves is true in my experience as well. I enjoyed the chapter on the domestication of cats. Cats have not been domesticated nearly as long as dogs. Domestic cats more or less hark back to Ancient Egypt, and the author discusses how the wildness is just below the surface in any cat, which may account for the fact that some people find them difficult to understand and call them "aloof" or unfriendly, even. But it's all to do with their nature. There is info all sorts of cat psychology and physiology, for example, the effect of "scruffing" --which can be

controversial. This is picking a cat up by the loose skin on the back of the neck, same as a mommy cat would do to a kitten. I happen to know from my own animal physiology classes that this causes a relaxation effect in a cat --they go limp when you pick them up by the scruff, same as when Mommy Cat picks up a kitten, and this is an actual physiological effect that will calm a cat. But it looks nasty to some people. Other cat behaviors also hark back to kittenhood and soothe a nervous kitty, such as "kneading" or "knitting." When cats pulse their paws against your side or a blanket, they are repeating nursing behavior, pushing Mommy Cat for more milk, and thus going back to infant bliss. (My university degree is in zoology, so perhaps I look at things slightly differently than most folks when it comes to animals--but I find all this absolutely fascinating.) There is information about purebred cats and their specific traits in this book. This is proper for a book on cats; the breeding of cats has produced a lot of variants, such as the flat face breeds and other extremes. This discussion is proper for a cat book; my cat is a dumpster rescue, but he turns out to be a purebred Siberian (we were surprised when we found this out.) He was probably tossed out by an irresponsible person because he has birth defects. Breeding cats however, is controversial because there are millions of feral cats, the product of their amazing fertility. A pair of cats over a few years can be the progenitors of literally (litter-ly) thousands of offspring. These cats, your "dumpster cats" eat wildlife, and are not only eating rodents (yay!) but also birds and can make a dent in the local songbird population. So stabilizing wild feral cat populations and spaying and neutering are key. But the author talks about cat breeds and this book would not be complete without a rundown about the various types of cats. So I'm not dinging this book for discussing breeding, which is a scientific endeavor. If you feel that there are too many cats in shelters, as I do, then adopt one, as I did and will always do in future. Anyone who dings this book for containing valid information about cat breeds is being unfair; you can discuss cat breeds and then go right down to the shelter and adopt a cat and that's what I always do. But the information belongs in this book and is interesting as well. I would not have known as much about my adopted cat if I didn't have access to such information.

Cat Sense is worth your time, I wish I could have given it four stars, but it had some flaws that kept it from that rating. It gets many things right. The structure of the book is clear and moves cleanly from the evolution and history of the cat to behaviors and quirks that makes this animal a beloved pet. I learned a lot about my cat, confirming some things I suspected and correcting some misunderstandings. I appreciated most the scientific grounding of the book, especially in regards to the ecological impact of cats. Bradshaw does not get sucked into the "cats are innocent" and "cats are indiscriminate killers" dichotomy. Reality is much more complex. However, the book was

frustrating in that it wasn't written very well. Chapters closed with recaps of content like students trying to pad papers for length. I felt like I could have skipped the last two or three pages of most chapters. If it had been more fluidly written I probably would finished it much quicker. Still, I'm glad to have finished it and recommend it for anyone interested in cats.

I liked it, but I can see how it would not appeal to everyone. The first three chapters on the history of cats and humans seemed to "drag". However, the chapters on cat socialization, nutrition, and learning are very interesting and I learned many new useful things. It is refreshing that Dr. Bradshaw does not see cats as furry little humans, with human motivations. In particular, DO read the footnotes, many of which contain very useful "factoids", that are not stated in the body of the text.

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