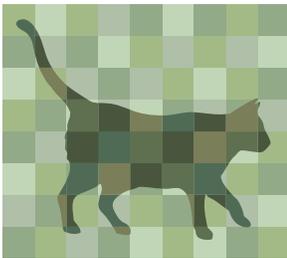


Just One Litter

Julie forgot the apartment repairman was coming to fix her sliding glass door that day. Later at work, she realized she also forgotten to confine her five-month-old kitten, Kali, in the bedroom. When she arrived home, Kali was waiting for her outdoors, under the pine tree. "Thank goodness you're okay," she said to the kitten.

A week or so later, Julie noticed that the kitten was putting on weight. She felt disappointed when she discovered that Kali was pregnant. She had no idea cats could get pregnant at such a young age! Julie had been waiting for Kali to go through one heat cycle before spaying, which she'd always heard was best. But she hadn't been in a hurry. After all, Kali never went outdoors. With Christmas coming, Julie didn't worry about finding homes for Kali's kittens. She would just take them into the store where she worked and put them in the window.



The four kittens, when placed in the window at work, all found good homes within one week. Six months later, Kali's kittens had matured and their stories went like this:

A striped female went to live with a mother with two children. No longer kitten cute, the kids paid little attention to her anymore. She was left outside most of the time. When she delivered five kittens, the family put a "Free Kitten" ad in the paper. Luckily, a man was interested and took all five. He said he sold the kittens to a local dealer, who sold them to a research facility. The family did not have the mother cat spayed.

Another family took the black male kitten. They said he was a great cat, and they let him out periodically. When the cat was eight months old and sexually active, he spent a great deal of time roaming the neighborhood looking for receptive females. One day his excursions took him across a highway where a car struck him. The family discovered their dead pet, and the parents told their crying children that those things happened and they would get another cat. In his short life, this cat fathered eight litters—50 kittens.

The young woman who took the black female kitten lived in a no-pets apartment. Her landlord discovered the cat and ordered her to get rid of the pet or be evicted. Unable to move and unable to find anyone to take a mostly grown cat, she took the animal to the country and abandoned her. In the year and a half before this cat died of distemper, she had four litters of wild kittens.

The young man who adopted the striped female had her spayed when she was four months old and kept her indoors at all times. This cat was a healthy, wonderful companion for him for years.

In the fifteen months after Kali had her litter, 83 kittens were born. Julie found "good" homes for Kali's first four kittens, but she didn't consider the other 79. If Julie's cat had been allowed to breed at will, it could have been the source of 420,000 cats in only seven years. But 420,000 is not the root of the pet-overpopulation problem. Kali's one litter is.

This is an updated version of a 1990 article written by Katie Rindy and Rhonda Lucas Donald for The Humane Society of the United States.