

GEORGETOWN
view
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Who's the Cat's Meow?

Come to the cat show! No pedigree required

BY
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PHOTOS BY
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It's down to two—Gumdrop and KitKat. They're both rich in color and extra sweet. Then the judge holds Gumdrop up and asks, "Is this cute, or what?" And Gumdrop has just become another winning Household Pet show cat belonging to Suzanne Correira.

None of Suzanne's cats are the purebreds that you might expect. Gumdrop's mama was a stray that showed up in Suzanne's barn and, shortly afterwards, had kittens. Suzanne found homes for the mama and all her kittens except one. Suzanne's husband and Gumdrop had mutually agreed that they should not be parted. So Gumdrop joined Boudreaux,

White E. Bob, and other feline residents in the Correira household.

Boudreaux, not Gumdrop, was Suzanne's first show cat. Suzanne attended a cat show with a friend and was immediately intrigued by the Household Pet division. These cuddly competitors were

non-pedigreed, and many were once shelter cats or strays. What a wonderful way to show off the special appeal of every cat! Suzanne thought Boudreaux would be a perfect entry. With his sleek tabby coat and "Look at me—I'm beautiful!" stance, he was sure to win. And win he did—at his very first CFA (Cat Fanciers' Association) competition.

TICA (The International Cat Association) and CFA shows both feature Household Pet divisions, focusing primarily on the felines' appearance and personality. The two organizations' rules differ somewhat, but both allow kittens and cats to compete and require that pets past eight months of age be altered. Pets must be in good health with current vaccinations, and thorough grooming is mandatory. Clean ears and clipped nails are *de rigueur*, and no fleas are allowed! These rules are another reason Suzanne got involved in showing. They are positive reinforcement to spay or neuter pets and to provide good care for them.

And now the show begins! The cats compete in up to eight rings each day, each ring providing chances to win awards and earn points.

Each cat has its moment on the benching table with a judge, and spectators never know what will happen. A cat might preen and pose, it might extend those clipped claws in fear, or it might run for cover, at which point the call "Cat out!" goes up. All doors are shut, and spectators remain in place until the escapee is found.

At the end of two days, the judges hand out awards and tally points to determine the overall winner. Regardless of the outcome, the show is sure to be entertaining, and spectators will undoubtedly learn something new about cats. They might even choose to take home a new pet from one of the exhibiting shelters.

Although Boudreaux has retired, Gumdrop is still competing and winning. As much fun as it is to win, though, Suzanne says it's even more exciting watching all those wonderful cats get their moment in the spotlight and seeing shelter cats getting new homes. After all, every cat deserves to be the cat's meow to someone. ■



Suzanne Correira with Gumdrop

For more information about the TICA Household Pet Division, go to www.tica.org/public/hhp.php. For more information about the CFA Household Pet Division, go to www.cfa.org/dient/showshhp.aspx.