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N Human Perceptions of Coat Color as an Indicator of Domestic Cat Personality

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Abstract:

Associations between mammalian coat color and behavior have been investigated in a number of species, most notably the study of silver foxes by the Institute of Cytology and Genetics at the Russian Academy of Sciences. However, the few studies conducted regarding a potential relation between coat color and domestic cat personality have shown mixed results, even though many people believe that differently colored cats have distinct personalities. Understanding how humans might perceive personality in relation to coat color may have important ramifications regarding whether cats are relinquished to shelters or adopted from them. In order to assess human perceptions of differently colored cats, we conducted an anonymous, online survey, using a 7-point Likert scale and 10 terms describing personality traits that were chosen based on previous studies of animal personality. This survey examined how people assigned these given terms (active, aloof, bold, calm, friendly, intolerant, shy, stubborn, tolerant, and trainable) to five different colors of cats (orange, tricolored, white, black, and bi-colored). There were significant differences in how participants in this study chose to assign personality terms to differently colored cats. For example, participants ($n = 189$) were more likely to attribute the trait "friendliness" to orange cats, "intolerance" to tri-colored cats, and "aloofness" to white and tri-colored cats. No significant differences were found for "stubbornness" in any colors of cats. White cats were seen as less bold and active and more shy and calm than other colors of cats. While survey respondents stated that they placed more importance on personality than color when selecting a companion cat, there is some evidence that they believe the two qualities are linked. We anticipate our findings will be relevant to further study in domestic cat personality and to those who work in animal rescue, particularly in how shelters promote differently colored cats and educate potential adopters.

Keywords: [CAT PERSONALITY](#); [COAT COLOR](#); [DOMESTIC CATS](#); [HUMAN ATTITUDES](#); [TEMPERAMENT](#)

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