

## CommunityCatsPodcast\_Ep430\_Hall\_211116.mp3

**Kristen Petrie** [00:00:03]

You've tuned in to the Community Cats Podcast. Ready? Let's go.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:00:13]

Welcome to the Community Cats Podcast. I am your host, Stacy LeBaron. I've been involved helping homeless cats for over 20 years with the Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society. The goal of this podcast is to expose you to amazing people who are improving the lives of cats. I hope these interviews will help you learn how you can turn your passion for cats into action. And today, we're speaking with Emily Hall. Emily is the founder and owner of Kitty Cat Go, a website community dedicated to all things cat adventure. She has been traveling and adventuring with her cats for over six years. They love to hike, road trip, canoe and more. Her goal and passion is to educate, encourage and help others to have successful cat adventures, Emily. I'd like to welcome you to the show.

**Emily Hall** [00:01:00]

Yeah. Hey Stacy. Thanks so much for having me.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:01:03]

Yeah, so Happy Holidays. We are sort of in the holiday period here, and I want to just give a shout out to that. And first and foremost, I'd love to find out how you got to be passionate about cats.

**Emily Hall** [00:01:14]

Yeah. Sure. So, my family adopted our first cat when I was in kindergarten. And so, I grew up with cats. We eventually had three cats and three dogs. So, we always had a house with a lot of animals. And there's just something about cats that I connected with a little bit more. And so now, as an adult, my husband and I have seven cats and they're all rescues, and I just, cats are the best; so many wonderful qualities and I love sharing my life with them.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:01:49]

So, what happened in your life, I'm assuming when you were a child and you had cats, you weren't necessarily thinking about your cats being outdoors and

adventurous and, you know, doing all the things that you're doing right now and doing them with your cats. How did that change happen?

**Emily Hall** [00:02:06]

Yeah. I know. I did not adventure with my cats as a kid. My husband and I, one of our cats has a neurological disorder called cerebellar hypoplasia, and it just causes her to be a little bit wobbly. And she's not very coordinated. And we started taking her out in our backyard several years ago because we knew she couldn't run away. She couldn't climb the fence. So, we could easily take her out in the backyard and play with her and not have to worry about the dangers of that and she loved it. She loved being outside, all the sights and smells and we eventually worked our way from the backyard to the park and the pet store and just going all these different places and she loved it so much that I decided to start training some of our other cats to go out on a harness and leash as well, and it's just sort of grown from there.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:03:01]

So, if they're, you know, if somebody who is interested in having their cat become a bit more adventurous and letting them have some time outside would you recommend the first step be that they actually try them on the harness? Or are there other things that you should do first like having a, like a playpen type thing set up and having them out with that. You know, what would your recommendation for a first step?

**Emily Hall** [00:03:26]

I think the first step is harness training within your house. You always want to start training with the harness from the safety and comfort in your house and you don't even start by putting the harness right on your cat at first. I mean, it starts as simple as getting a harness and putting it on top of your cat, maybe when they're eating and sort of distracted because most cats aren't used to wearing anything. And so that feeling will be so foreign to them and it might, you know, freak them out at first. So try to do it when they're distracted like eating or playing or something. So that also they're associating it with a positive experience. And you'd eventually work your way up from there from it just sitting on top of your cat to then connecting it and latching it on and then attach the leash and work on that just in your house and then eventually,

you know, work your way to maybe the backyard or a playpen, introducing your cat to being outside if they don't already have a catio or anything like that.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:04:31]

What are your thoughts about the kitty strollers that I have seen around?

**Emily Hall** [00:04:36]

Yeah. Those are a great option as well. It allows you to take your cat out and introduce them to new environments and situations, but they're confined into, you know, a safe space. They're great, especially for going to the pet store or other pet friendly places where you can push the stroller really easily, you know, again, just with that, you want your cat, the key is getting them to associate that stroller as being a safe and comfortable space. So, you want to train your cat to see the stroller as that from home. So get the stroller, set it up in your living room or wherever put treats catnip, you know, whatever your cat likes. So, attract them to it so that they like the stroller and will be comfortable in it.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:05:19]

So, I took the opportunity to take a look at your website and you also have a blog. One of the blog posts that you did relatively recently was about a product called Marco Polo, a pet tracker. Can you share a little bit about that? And what your thoughts were about that idea?

**Emily Hall** [00:05:37]

Yes. So, there are so many pet tracking systems out on the market. Many of them are more marketed for dogs. What I loved about the Marco Polo was that the tracker that you put on your pet's collar was small and lightweight enough for cats as well. My cats didn't even notice that it was on their collar and the other features I really loved about it was that there are no monthly fees with it. So, you know, it's just the one-time purchase of the tracker and that's it. And it's not based on GPS or bluetooth or anything like that. So, you don't have to worry about not having cell phone service or your phone's battery dying or whatever. It's based on like radio frequency. So it'll work anywhere anytime, and we tested it out several times and I use it when we take our cats out and I love it. It works so well, I haven't ever actually lost my cat but when we tested it out, it took me right to my husband who was with my cat hiding in the woods and it works great. I love it. It's what I recommend to people all the time.

That's a common question I get. People are always looking for a pet tracker for their cats if they're taking them out and it's the one that I always recommend to people.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:06:49]

So if somebody was interested in having an adventurous cat or even an indoor-outdoor kitty, is this something that they would, they would be using?

**Emily Hall** [00:06:57]

Yeah, not everybody does, but a lot of a lot of people do. It just gives you that extra peace of mind. If your cat were to slip out of their harness when you're out on a hike or something, you know, it gives you the reassurance that hopefully you'd be able to locate them and find them.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:07:18]

And of course microchipping has gotten quite popular and we want to encourage microchipping even more but the most important thing with the microchipping obviously is making sure that the chip is continually updated in the registry because if you move the microchip's, not going to figure out what your new address is or new contact information. So, you know, microchipping is only as good as the person who keeps the information up-to-date.

**Emily Hall** [00:07:41]

Yes. Absolutely.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:07:45]

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Stacy LeBaron [00: 09:23]

So we're sort of in the holiday period here and there may be people who are going to be traveling. Traveling for Thanksgiving, traveling for the December, January holidays, what sort of tips do you have for folks that want to travel with their cats?

**Emily Hall** [00:09:37]

The first step would be to get your cat used to riding in the car. If you're going to visit family for the holidays, you know, you're probably going to be driving and if your cat isn't already used to car travel, it can be stressful. So, I would recommend starting car training your cat just by taking them for short, little car rides and gradually increasing that time. So that way, when you go for that 2-hour car ride or 5 hour or however, long, your road trip is that they're a little more prepared.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:10:07]

And so, a lot of people, you know, are using Airbnb's and and that kind of stuff, you know, when they're traveling. Are there things that we need to really make sure that we're doing when we're checking out for cat-friendly locations for us to stay overnight.

**Emily Hall** [00:10:22]

Yes, absolutely. So, just because Airbnb or hotel or whatever kind of accommodation you're looking at just because it says it's pet friendly does not always necessarily mean that it's cat-friendly. I have run into a few times looking for Airbnb's where it

was listed as pet friendly. And I contacted the owner to make sure that cats were also allowed and they told me no. So always, always contact the place where you're looking to stay and make sure that cats are welcome as well because a lot of times pet-friendly really translates to dog-friendly, so you want to make sure that you can bring your cat.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:10:58]

When you're traveling, do you bring copies of your cat's medical records with you?

**Emily Hall** [00:11:04]

I have them on my phone and I always make sure, like I have up-to-date pictures, which of course, probably we all do because we all take a million pictures of our cats all the time and you know, my vets contact information and everything in my phone. And then of course, their tags, like microchip tags and rabies tags, all of that.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:11:24]

In terms of like traveling with the litter box, and traveling in the car, do you have them in a cage in the car? Like where there's room for them for a litter box? Or you know, how do you position them? Say, you're going on a five or six hour drive? You know, how would you set them up in your car?

**Emily Hall** [00:11:42]

I use Sleepypod mobile pet bed carriers. They aren't big enough to fit a litter box. But I really love them because they are also pet beds. So, I just leave them out around my house and my cat naps in them all the time. So when it comes time to, going for a car ride, it's just like they're traveling in their bed. So, I usually do bring a litter box in the car and have it like in the back or in between the seats, but in my experience, my cats have never once used the litter box, when we were on the road. They always wait until we get to our destination, but I still bring one. Just in case.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:12:22]

How long do you go in the car with them? I mean I had the opportunity of driving with my daughter to Chicago, moving her cat, Maggie who hated the car, but we actually did really well. It was a very successful day. So, the question was, you know, how long do you go in the car? Or how short because you want to make the trip as fast as possible for a cat, especially that does have some stress in the car. But then again,

you also if they're not going to use a litter box in the car, you know, you want to make sure it's a short enough drive so that then they get in a place where they do feel comfortable enough to use the litter box. I think we maxed out at about eight or nine hours, but I just didn't know if you had an opinion of sort of. Is there a best practice of like the amount of time we really should be in the car with our cats.

**Emily Hall** [00:13:05]

I think it just depends on the cat. You know, you you've got assess to your cat's personality and their needs and what is best for them. The longest I've ever gone with my cats was about a seven-hour car ride and they did really well. They didn't use the litter box at all, they waited until we were set up at the hotel when we got to our destination and, you know, they might be able to go a couple more hours than that. But if it's your first time traveling with a cat and it's going to be a really long road trip, I would suggest taking breaks, you know, and maybe letting your cat stretch, their legs in the car. If their harness and leash trained, maybe let them stretch their legs, at a rest stop or something. Give them an opportunity to use a litter box and maybe break your trip up into two nights. You know, it may be that you could make that road trip yourself in one day, but your cat might not be able to make it 10 or 12 hours and you need to stop for an overnight stay on the way. I think it just depends, you know, on the cat.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:14:09]

Do you have any two or three different sort of products or gift ideas that you think would be cool for somebody to get either for a friend or a family member that is thinking about making their cat a bit more adventurous?

**Emily Hall** [00:14:22]

Well, if the cat isn't already going out, then, I think a nice harness and leash make a really great gift. And then a backpack carrier is a pretty popular gear item for traveling adventuring cats because it lets you carry them on your back really easily and you can introduce them to new places and like the stroller we talked about earlier. It's sort of like a safe comfortable space for your cat. So, if they're maybe not ready to be out walking somewhere, they can still go with you in their backpack. So those are probably the three gift ideas that I would recommend for someone just starting out, harness and leash and a backpack carrier.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:15:03]

And there are a lot of different kinds of backpack carriers that I have seen or there's actually there's you know, there's ones where they're fully enclosed and like a bubble and then there's they're more like almost Baby Bjorn's too. Sort of that can carry kitties that way. My niece uses that one. Do you know of people who use those Baby Bjorn's? My niece uses them. Maybe people heard me reference is Lily LeBaron on Instagram. And she's got lots of different pictures of how Lily the cat, goes out and adventures around. But yeah, she uses that sort of Baby Bjorn style as well as a different kind of backpack and according to my niece there's different scenarios that work well in different situations, but I didn't know if you had any thoughts on that.

**Emily Hall** [00:15:49]

Yeah. I think I agree with your niece. It depends what I'm doing. Like I have a backpack carrier that's meant to be more like for longer hikes. So, it has a lot of padding on it. So, it's comfortable for the human as well and has more pocket and storage space to store snacks and water bottles and whatever other kind of gear items you might need it for a longer hike and then you know, the I have like a sling that's pretty similar to the Baby Bjorn one you were talking about where there's no pockets or anything, your cat just kind of goes in it. So, I pick which backpack I'm using depending on what kind of outing we're going on. But whichever kind you go for ventilation and space for your cat so that they're comfortable and they don't get overheated or something inside.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:16:38]

Before we hit the record button. We were talking about your adventure challenge. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

**Emily Hall** [00:16:44]

Yeah. Sure. So last year I started hosting these adventure challenges. We have them three or four times a year and it's just a way that I've found helps to encourage people to get out and try new things with their cat. So what it is, it's a list of different tasks in that vary in difficulty level from wearing a harness walking on a leash all the way to kayaking and camping with your cat. And the number of tasks varies from challenge to challenge. I have one going on right now that is 25 tasks and human and cat adventure teams can complete these tasks whichever ones, they are able to

and they would like to try. And the participants all engage with each other and encourage each other along the way as they try these new things and go on these new adventures and it's so much fun. I love seeing the posts and the entries to the challenge of people who are just starting and they share about how they've accomplished taking their cat outside in the backyard for the very first time and it's so exciting to see that. that's cool. That's great.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:17:55]

That's cool. That's great. And so when you take the challenge, you're just going through and gaining points by doing different things. And do you have prizes or anything like that? Or is it more just a group effort?

**Emily Hall** [00:18:07]

There are prizes. The prizes are different every time I make handcrafted cat leashes. So, right now, the prize is a cat leash and it's a random drawing. Those who complete at least, you know, however, many tasks I've set for that particular challenge will be entered into a drawing to win a prize.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:18:24]

Sounds great. If folks are interested in checking out your website or signing up for your blog. Is there a way to do that?

**Emily Hall** [00:18:33]

Yes. So my website is KittyCatGo.com. You can sign up for my newsletter on that site. If you would like to get my weekly tips and updates on traveling adventuring with cats. And then I also have a Facebook group called the Kitty Cat Go Adventure Team and it's full of people. You can ask questions, get help, share about your adventures. It's a really great group of people. And then my Instagram as well, is @KittyCatGoAdventures.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:19:04]

Fantastic. So, I recommend everybody, check them out, social media. Check out her website. Emily, is there anything else you'd like to share with our listeners today?

**Emily Hall** [00:19:14]

I don't think so. I think I think we covered a lot of ground.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:19:16]

So I'm going to ask you one, follow-up question because one thing we didn't talk to you because we're sort of in the north we're in the winter time here, but in the South it's still nice out. You know, we're talking about canoeing or I just saw a post about a surfing cat. I guess that was from that cat The cat people TV show that just came out on Netflix, you know, so what is the most adventurous cat activity that you've either heard of or that you've done with your own cats?

**Emily Hall** [00:19:45]

The most adventurous thing I've done with my cats is camping. We've gone camping a couple of times and that's always a lot of fun. As far as what I've seen, other people do it, really amazes me. Sometimes the things people do with their cats. I've seen people go rock climbing with their cats and snorkeling with their cats, which that one is insane to me. Like not. I mean, it's amazing that someone get their cat to swim in the water and ride on their shoulders, while they're snorkeling. Very cool.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:20:14]

That's great. That's excellent. Yeah, and my niece, she goes kayaking with her cat and, and her cat's gone into the lake and even done a little swimming. So it's really exciting the opportunities and the options that you can do with your cats. And with the being holiday time in some parts of the country, it's kind of cold and dreary right now. So, it's good to think about things that we can do with our cats. I actually in Vermont, I used to take my cat out on a leash, even in the wintertime. Not that he was that excited about walking on the snow and, and that kind of thing, but he really enjoyed the smells and being out in the fresh air and certainly it was a change of scenery. So, you know, he definitely enjoyed it and on my personal Facebook page, my profile picture is of him, out in the snow on his leash, which is really quite nice. And so it's fond memories for him, which he unfortunately is not with us anymore. So, I have that as a nice memory to have with Hooch. Emily, I want to thank you so much for being a guest on my show this week and I hope you have a safe happy holiday season, and I hope you'll join us again on the show in the future.

**Emily Hall** [00:21:19]

Yes. Thanks so much for having me. Stacy. This is a lot of fun.

**Kristen Petrie** [00:21:24]

That's it for this week. Please head over to Apple Podcasts and leave a review. We love to hear what you think and a five-star review really helps others find the show. You can also join the conversation with listeners, cat caretakers and me on Facebook, and Instagram, and don't forget to hit follow or subscribe on Spotify, Apple Podcast, Google Podcast, YouTube, Stitcher or wherever you listen to podcasts so you don't miss a single show. Thanks for listening, and thank you for everything that you do to help create a safe and healthy world for cats.

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