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# Furry friends

**For many, pets are therapeutic – they give us a listening ear and a paw to hold when we're feeling down, and they don't talk back. Youth2 listens as pet lovers gush over their special friends.**



Noor Jehan Abdul Hamid gives Mia a nose rub as a show of affection. Jehan's feline-loving family has been taking care of cats for 26 years.

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**G**ETTING five cats to pose for a photograph together is an impossible feat – dirty looks are flung across the couch and the fur begins to fly.

"Trixie is a little jealous of Mia and Nina, because before the two sisters came along, this part-Siamese beauty was the only girl in the bunch," begin sisters Noor Jehan and Nur Nabilah Abdul Hamid.

This is the situation in the home of a pet lover – their lives revolve around their little furballs, answering to their every beck and call, making sure they are comfortable and content.

The six felines of the Abdul Hamid household in Subang Jaya are well-fed, well-groomed and loved to bits by the four family members. Match, Yoes'C, Trixie, Uno, Mia and Nina, couldn't be happier house cats.

"I'm getting married in December, I haven't even started thinking about kids yet; the three cats my fiancé and I have are already a handful!" Jehan, 26, half-laments, referring to Mia, Nina and Uno.

The latter is injured, and lying alone in his cage in the kitchen.

He glances up as we enter the enclosure – his two broken back legs prevent him from getting up. To make sure that he can walk when he gets better, Jehan performs physiotherapy on him every day.

"He was a stray – he wouldn't leave my fiancé and I alone when we were dining at a pizza place – so we took him home. Of course, dad wasn't too happy about the extra edition to the family home, but I promised I'd pay for all the bills," chirps Jehan, who coordinates events and is a graphic designer.

All their cats are bathed and brushed often, as well as supplied with vitamins regularly. They also make regular visits to the vet for vaccinations and check-ups.

In waltzes in the very rotund nine-year-old Match, a 9kg heavyweight puss, who replies to your questions with different tones of 'meow'.

It is as if he's talking to you, and every reply sends the two sisters into giggling fits.

Pet lovers are a queer bunch – they can go on and on about how wonderful their pet is, detailing their daily activities, the food they eat, their temperaments and telling funny pet anecdotes.

"We had a cat that lived until he was 21 years old, and died in his sleep five years ago. My mum used to feed him cod liver oil," recalls Nabilah, 19.

Food for the cats costs the family RM300 a month, and medical bills for the injured Uno have amounted to RM1,400 so far.

"In a way, I think it's a test for us, to see whether we'd be fit as parents," jokes Jehan.

Like the Subang dwellers, the Choo family in Old Klang Road, KL, has spent a lot of time and energy, not to mention cash, keeping their two pet cats happy and healthy.

Younger sister Jaclyn takes care of three-year-old Kimba, who suffers from a urinary tract disease that requires constant care and medication.

"My dad is very attached to him and we visit the vet several times a year to make sure he's doing ok," said the student in mass communications.

The family has spent thousands of ringgit keeping him alive, because they can't stand the thought of losing him.

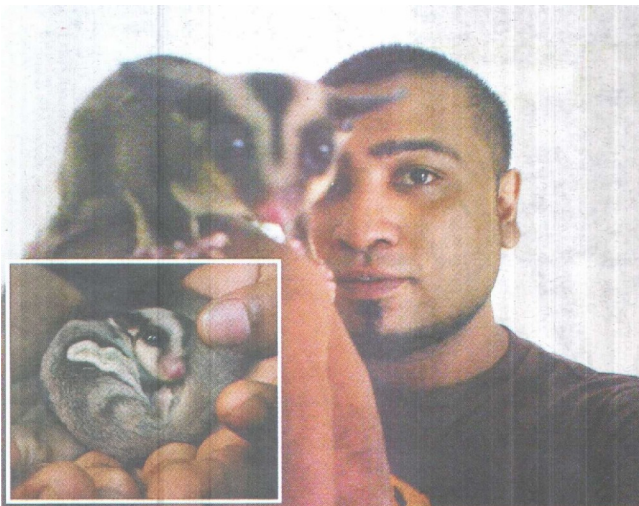
Jaclyn and her family have dispelled the myth that cats hate water – Princess and Kimba take baths every two weeks, in a sink filled with warm water.

"Afterwards we towel-dry them and they



Jaclyn Choo's cats Princess and Kimba are the loves of her life.





Mohd Sufiennaz wants to get a companion for his Sugar Glider, as these creatures are known to get depressed when they're lonely.

sun themselves out on the balcony," she explains.

Psychic abilities have long been associated with pets, and Jaclyn swears by this.

"When the Tsunami tragedy happened in 2004, Princess circled our apartment for hours before we felt the tremors - I'm sure if something similar happens she'll warn us," says Jaclyn.

She admits that her cats are a major factor in her life. "It's nice to have someone, or something, to come home to. My cats are the reason I rush home every day after classes."

#### The new hamster

Years ago, a tiny furry rodent became the pride and joy of many a family in Malaysia - hamsters graced the windows of pet stores while cats and dogs fumed in the background as potential buyers gushed over the tiny creatures.

They were cheap, cute and required little maintenance. Except for cleaning their cages and feeding them, hamsters pretty much took care of themselves.

However, the *Mesocricetus auratus* is now a thing of the past. Youngsters and adults alike have a new craze - and it's called the Sugar Glider.

The small gliding possum originates from Australia, and was recently introduced to Malaysia.

Freelance 3D animator Mohd Sufiennaz Md Ali purchased his first Sugar Glider last November for RM350,

and is going to buy a female companion for Iggy (as he was christened).

"Sugar Gliders are social creatures - they don't like living alone. They have a tendency to die of loneliness, but luckily for Iggy, he has my cat to keep him company," says Sufiennaz, 28.

The creatures, which can grow up to 21cm in length, is able to glide mid-air for almost 50m, thanks to their 'gliding membranes', which is skin stretched from the fifth finger of the forelimb back to the first toe of the hind foot.

Sufiennaz is just recovering from an allergic reaction to Iggy's poop and pee, but that hasn't stopped him loving his little friend any less.

"They are very neat except for the fact that they pee everywhere. I have to confine him to a single room," he explains.

He also notes that Sugar Gliders are extremely temperamental creatures, with mood swings that often end in biting fits.

"Of course, their bite doesn't make you bleed. But they have no qualms about showing you that they're unhappy," chuckles Sufiennaz.

Iggy eats nuts and bits of fruit on normal days, but when he's been good and obedient, Sufiennaz makes him scrambled eggs and treats him with cat biscuits.

"It seems everyone is getting Sugar Gliders. I had been thinking about it for the longest time and now that I have Iggy I can't wait to extend the family," he says.

## Animal crazy

WE MAY be amused at Paris Hilton's tendency to bring her miniature Chihuahua Tinkerbelle everywhere, but look around at pet places in our country and you'll see that we're not too far off from the pet-crazy phenomenon.

While celebrities carry their pooches in tiny bags and house them in five-star pet hotels, in Malaysia many grooming centres and pet lodgings have sprouted up over the years.

The little furry balls of fun even have their own forums all over the Internet, with tips from other pet owners on how to care for your pet as well as funny anecdotes about their pets' daily lives.

#### PET PLACES

Groomingdales ([www.groomingdales.com.my](http://www.groomingdales.com.my)) is a professional pet grooming centre in Old Klang Road, Kuala Lumpur, that has been around for a few years, and specialise in taming manes. There's a "day-care" centre at the place as well.

Don't want to leave your pet at home while you go shopping? There is a pet "hotel" called Pet Safari just before you enter the IKEA carpark at Mutiara Damansara in Petaling Jaya, where you can leave your pets for a day.

Worry not, they'll be taken good care of, and when you're done with shopping, just let the centre know (they'll get your details as you enter the carpark) and your pet will be ready for collection in no time.

House of Groomers in Subang Jaya styles your pets - they trim and treat your pet's fur, and it's all done with sterilised equipment.

#### EVENTS

Malaysian Dog Olympic Day - Usually held at



The Malaysian Dog Olympic Day is held annually outside I-Utama Shopping Complex in Petaling Jaya.

Central Park Bandar Utama in PJ, this is one pet event that attracts large crowds. The main attraction is a demonstration from the Royal Malaysian Police K9 Unit.

Pets and their loving owners congregate for pet-related activities like obstacle courses and pet 'beauty' pageants at this event.

*The UPM Dogathon* - This event is held every year at Universiti Putra Malaysia, where owners can bring their dogs to participate in exciting activities including doggy sports and lucky draws.

*Cat Shows* - Normally these are held in shopping malls on weekends, where owners will bring their well-groomed and overfed cats to be judged by a panel of animal lovers. It's a good place to just go and ogle the lovely breeds of cats.

#### FORUMS

Looking for breeders, vets, vectors and shelters? There are heaps of forums online where you can discuss pet-related queries with other pet lovers.

Also, there are sections to post notices on pets for sale, adoption, sale of items, lost and found and pet wanted. Find similar people who love pets on these forums, and share your experiences with them. Here are some good sites to visit:

#### Home A Pet:

[www.homeApet.com](http://www.homeApet.com)

#### Malaysia Dog and Puppy portal:

[www.puppy.com.my](http://www.puppy.com.my)

#### Cat Portal and Forum:

[www.kitten.com.my](http://www.kitten.com.my)

#### Malaysia veterinary forum:

[www.vet.com.my](http://www.vet.com.my)