Old Wives Tales About Cats: Common Cat Myths

By: Renae Hamrick, RVT

There are countless theories and ideas out there on cats and cat care. What should you believe? Is it true or is it merely an old wives' tale that has mutated as it has been passed along?

Listed below are several common cat myths, old wives' tales, and legends and the truth or lack of truth they contain.

1. **Cats can suck the breath from a baby.** – **NOT true!** Cats have no intentions or ability to suck the breath from a baby. You should, however, be cautious of allowing a pet to sleep with a small child, in case of other inadvertent injuries.

2. **Pregnant women should not scoop the litter box.** – This has a lot of truth, but there is **NO need** to get rid of your cat. Toxoplasmosis is a parasite that a cat can carry without showing signs. This parasite, which can be acquired by **handling their feces**, is a concern for pregnant women because it can be detrimental to a developing fetus. While it is best for someone other than the pregnant woman to scoop the litter box, it is generally safe if scooped at least once every 24 hours. **Pregnant women must also be cautious of this parasite when gardening and handling raw meat.** Wearing gloves is best.

3. **Cats cause schizophrenia.** – This is **NOT true!** Pets are actually very helpful to our mental health.

4. **Cats can see ghosts.** – There is no scientific evidence of this.

5. **If you have multiple male cats, they will spray and mark.** – This is possible, but not necessarily true. Male and sometimes even female cats living by themselves will mark. **Neutering** before sexual maturity is the best way to prevent marking behavior.

6. **Milk is good for cats.** – A cat eating a high-quality food should not need milk. Cow's milk contains more lactose than a cat can tolerate, and will often cause diarrhea. If your cat insists on drinking milk, milk made for cats, such as Catsip, is best for him.