



## Marvellous Aunt Maneka

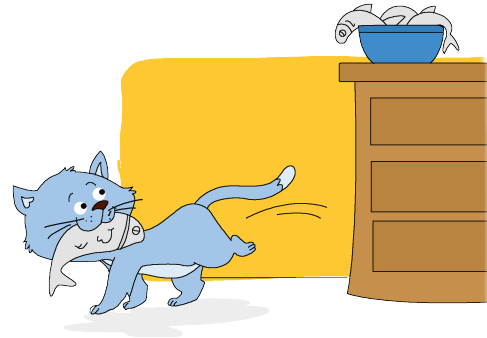
Aunt Maneka is an environmentalist, a Minister of State, and an animal lover. She is here to answer all your questions on animals and birds so that you can take better care of the animals around you and be a better friend of nature.

**Q. I live in a place where there are a lot of squirrels and sparrows. How may I adopt them?**

*Surajit Bhowal, 10 years, Ichapur*

Dear Surajit,

A. Squirrels and sparrows are not pets. But you can take care of them. You can start by feeding them cooked or uncooked rice, bread, small pieces of *roti*, or fruit under the trees. Put a shallow bowl of water for them and change the water twice a day. Do not attempt to catch them as they will scamper away. Do not attempt to go near them when they feed as they will run/fly away. Plant as many fruit trees as you can or bushes like *karaunda*. As it starts getting cold, they need cotton wool for their nests, so leave small bits of cotton wool and cloth for them to pick up.



**Q. I have seen my pet cat stealing fish from the kitchen. Why do cats love fish?**

*Anu Pragna, 11 Years, Karnataka Davangere*

Dear Anu,

A. The Egyptians were the first people to domesticate cats. They lured them into their homes with offers of fish. That's supposed to be how they developed the taste for fish.

Cats are carnivores, which means that meat is their main source of food. They may also eat a small amount of vegetables, fruits and grains. Cats need an amino acid called taurine found in the heart, liver and muscles of animals. Fish also contain taurine. Most mammals manufacture taurine by themselves but cats can't and hence must have their diet supplemented.

However, fish can contain high levels of mercury and other toxins. Feeding your cat a diet high in fish is linked to Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) and hyperthyroidism. It's best to limit fish meals to no more than twice weekly.

If you have questions about pets/animals/birds, write to us and we'll ask Aunt Maneka to answer.

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