



Purrfectly Capable

THERE'S AN OLD SAYING — IT'S LIKE HERDING CATS, AKA IMPOSSIBLE. BUT YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED WHAT THEY CAN BE MADE TO DO

Ever since the late 1980s, there have been agility competitions — jumping over hurdles, running through tunnels, etc. — for dogs. The competitions have become big attractions at dog shows.

But cats, no. Ever-independent cats couldn't be trained to perform like that. Or could they?

They definitely can, say people who know cats best. Carol Babel, a breeder along with her husband Bob Weller of Egyptian Mau cats, says she's known for years cats could perform. She had been involved in the filming of Disney's "That Darn Cat" and saw cats trained to do stunts. Plus, her work as a breeder showed her that young, healthy cats are "very athletic and they like challenges." All you need is an enticing toy and the skill to get the cat to chase it through an obstacle course of steps, hurdles, hoops and weave poles.

In 2004 the national Cat Fanciers Association realized the potential and began planning for agility courses at cat shows; in the last few years there have been biannual competitions at the NH CFA shows. Two of Babel and Weller's cats racked up top national honors last show season — "Eli" (shown above) placed #1 and became the first cat to achieve Agility Grand Master status in 10 consecutive shows and in one season.

See cats in action in Dover Jan. 25-26. If you're interested in attending or competing (house cats are welcome), visit the NH Feline Fanciers website at nhff.org.