

American Cat Fanciers Association

How to Find a Reputable Breeder

by John J. McGonagle and Carolyn M. Vella
(First Appeared in CatsUSA 1996)

A reputable breeder of purebred cats devotes their time to the protection, promotion and preservation of their special breed. Without people who are willing to undertake this daunting responsibility and devote their time, effort and a considerable amount of money to this task, every breed known today would ultimately become extinct. But how do you, as the prospective owner of a purebred kitten, find these reputable breeders?

As part of their commitment to purebred cats, reputable breeders also have a commitment to the cat Fancy in general. In a way, this is our professional association just like the Bar Association is the professional association for lawyers or the American Medical Association is the professional group for doctors. Involvement in the cat Fancy generally involves showing your cats. When a breeder exhibits the cats they have bred, they are getting together with other breeders and comparing how well they are meeting the standard of perfection for the breed that they are breeding. This helps the breeder to modify their breeding program if necessary. In addition, cat shows are where breeders of all breeds meet and compare notes on common cattery problems. This enables breeders to discuss current health protocols that pertain to multiple cat households as well as the current information on diseases, vaccines, genetics and the myriad of subjects that are necessary for reputable breeders to know.

Since reputable breeders have an involvement in the Fancy, this is a good place to start to find the breeder you want. Go to several cat shows in your area and meet the breeders who are exhibiting there. At the shows, you can see the breeders show quality cats and you will have time to talk with them. You will find a listing of cat shows in Cat Fancy.

If you cannot go to a cat show, you may contact the breeders listed in the breeder advertisement section of Cats USA or Cat Fancy. You will have the best luck catching the breeder when she has time to talk if you call in the evening and during the middle of the week. If your Veterinarian works with breeders of purebred cats, and many do not as this is a specialized part of a Veterinarian's practice, he may be able to refer you to a breeder he feels is reputable. If you know the breed you are interested in but want further information, you can contact one of the national breed clubs. These breed societies are made up of breeders of the various breeds and you may contact them to find out more about the breed or to find a breeder in your area. A partial listing of these national breed clubs is listed in the back section of Cats USA. In addition, you may contact the cat registries themselves. You may then be referred to the head of the breed committee for the breed you are interested in. In this way you will also be able to get a list of breeders in your area.

The latest way of contacting breeders is through the on-line computer services such as "America Online" or "Prodigy". Here you will find bulletin boards listing purebred kittens for sale or you may place your name on the bulletin board inquiring for purebred kittens. Many breeders will access this bulletin board on a routine basis and will respond directly to you on the computer. In addition, since breeders know each other and generally know who may have kittens available, most breeders can refer you to other breeders of the breed you want who may have kittens at the time you are looking for one. Once you have the name and telephone number of the breeder from the computer, you can call them and speak with

them directly.

It is important to spend some time with breeders because, as a perspective buyer, you will have many questions. You will want to make certain that the breed you have selected will fit your lifestyle. If you like a nice, calm lap cat who doesn't jump much, you will want to look at the Persians and British Shorthairs. If you prefer a very active cat, you might want to look at the Abyssinians and the Japanese Bobtails. While most cats adapt easily to their home environment, you will be happier if you start with a cat who fits your lifestyle. Any breeder will be able to discuss the personalities of the cats with you. Reputable breeders want their kittens to be in homes where both the kitten and the owner are happy with each other. If you want a quiet cat and you talk to a Siamese breeder, they will tell you that this breed is not for you. Also, the amount of time you will be spending with the cat is important. There is nothing more beautiful than a Persian who is perfectly groomed. However, if you don't have the time to brush your Persian everyday, you will find that your beautiful cat has knotted fur all over her body. This is not only no longer beautiful but it can even be dangerous as a knot of fur can cover the anus and your Persian will become unable to defecate! Do you have an alternative if the look of the Persian is the look you like? Of course. Acquire an Exotic Shorthair - a shorthaired Persian.

Questions to Ask a Breeder

1. What is the personality of this breed? (is it active or placid)
2. How much grooming is required to keep this breed in top shape? (daily brushing with a bristle brush or occasional brushing with a rubber brush)
3. Are there any genetic problems with this breed which will affect the cat in the future?
4. Are there any special dietary needs of this breed?
5. How big will the breed generally get?
6. How does this breed get along with other pets or with children?
7. Do you participate in a cattery inspection program?
8. What is in your contract?
9. Do you guarantee the health of your kittens and does it come with a certificate of health signed by a Veterinarian?
10. Do you provide copies of the blood tests that you have done to show that your cattery is free from contagious or infectious diseases?

Some exhibitors will sell kittens at the show, but many will only bring pictures of the kittens for you to see. This is for a distinct reasons. Many breeders will carefully check out the buyers of their kittens to make certain that these babies are going to the best home possible. For this reason, they may need time to check your veterinary references or even your home. So, for as many questions as you may have to ask the breeder, the breeder may have just as many to ask you. All breeders want to place their kittens in good home environments. They want to make certain that the kittens will be neutered and will not be allowed outdoors. They want to make certain that there are no contagious or infectious diseases in your home. If you have had a cat who has recently died, they will want to know how the cause of death. Don't be offended by any of these questions. Remember that the breeder has raised this kitten and will always love it no matter where it lives. It is very important to the breeder to know that the kitten will have a good home.

Questions a Breeder May Ask You

1. How many cats do you have and how do you take care of them? (are they neutered and are they kept indoors)
2. (if you had a cat who died recently) What was the cause of death and how long ago

did your cat die?

3. Do you have children or other pets?
4. Are you out of the house during the day?
5. What is your lifestyle? (do you like quiet or do you like some activity)
6. Are you able to physically take care of a cat?
7. Do you understand that you will have to sign a contract in order to buy this kitten?
8. Do you realize that this kitten will have to be neutered and never used for breeding?
9. Are you prepared to keep this cat as a strictly indoor cat?
10. May I call your Veterinarian and have him recommend you as an owner of a purebred kitten?

While it may take some work to find a reputable breeder of the breed you want to own, it is well worthwhile. When you hold your healthy, purebred kitten in your arms, hear it's quiet purr and enjoy it while it explores it's new home, all your efforts will be well rewarded.

Signs of a Reputable Breeder

1. The breeder only sells kittens as pets that must be neutered.
2. The breeder requires you to sign a contract which delineates both your rights as a buyer as well as what is required of you as an owner.
3. The breeder not only gives you a verbal guarantee of the health of the kitten, but also provides you with a certificate, signed by the Veterinarian who examined the kitten, of it's health.
4. The breeder provides you with proof as to the health of her cattery in the form of blood tests on her cats showing that they are negative for contagious or infectious diseases.
5. The breeder explains about the personality and required care of the breed in question to make certain that this breed will fit your lifestyle.
6. The breeder charges a fair price for her kittens. (not such a low price that she is cutting corners on their care)
7. The breeder participates in a cattery inspection plan.
8. The breeder participates in the Fancy.
9. The breeder spends time talking with you but does not try to "oversell" her kittens.
10. The breeder is willing to provide names of others who own her kittens so that you may check with them on the reputation of the breeder.

Copyright 1995, 1997. Reprinted with permission.

No further reproduction or use authorized, "without the consent of Carolyn Vella and John McGonagle". All rights reserved.