



The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc.

"World's Largest Registry of Pedigreed Cats"

Breeder Permits ... and Extinction

The Cat Fanciers' Association's (CFA) mission is to "Preserve and Promote the Pedigreed Breeds of Cats, and to Enhance the Well-Being of ALL Cats".....

Our breeds are now becoming endangered.

Why is there so little caring about the loss of domestic cat breeds by people who would never want to see wild animals become extinct? Cat fanciers have become increasingly concerned that the very existence of our valued domestic pedigreed cat breeds is becoming threatened in the United States. There may be several contributing factors; however, the most critical is the spread of legislation. Limits on the numbers of animals one may keep, high license fees, breeder permits and other laws are detrimental to pet ownership and put the breeds in jeopardy.

Mandatory spay/neuter laws were widely proposed in the early 1990s, then almost disappeared as communities established task forces that recognized these laws could not be reasonably enforced. More recently in several parts of the country this approach is once again emerging as the panacea for animal control problems. The proposals now include expensive and onerous permits for breeders who are targeted and blamed for homeless animals in shelters. These laws are purposely designed as a form of excessive taxation and punishment, unfairly directed toward stopping, not just accidental or indiscriminant animal reproduction, but all cat/dog breeding. In their eagerness to force the public to spay/neuter cats and dogs jurisdictions pass laws with no thought given to the impact on the future of pedigreed cat breeds.

Similar to wildcats like the cheetahs in Africa, considered to be among the most endangered of all species, several pedigreed cat breeds are or will soon be struggling for survival. As breeders cannot find places to live where they can continue conscientious breeding programs, pedigreed breeds lose their "habitat". Environmentalists plead with the general public to understand why the preservation of a rare animal species is important. Saving some animals can be critical to the ecosystem, but often rare wild species are admired solely for their exquisite beauty or distinctive characteristics. The appreciation of rare animal species enriches our lives and reinforces a general respect for centuries of natural history. Cat fanciers feel the same passion about preserving our beautiful, good natured and historic domestic pedigreed breeds, some of which have existed for thousands of years.

Look at the facts

CFA, the largest registry in the world, records each year the numbers of living kittens reported on litter registrations - not only breeding and show kittens kept or sold to perpetuate the breeds, but others who are altered and treasured as indoor-only pets. As an example, in 2003, CFA's records showed only 81 Korat kittens reported. The Korat is an ancient breed originating in the Far East and pictured in the 1300's. There were 289 Turkish Angora kittens recorded in 2003. This elegant and historic longhaired breed was saved from extinction once before by the Turkish Government's breeding program at the Ankara Zoo. The Abyssinian is closest in appearance to the original African wild-cat origins of all domestic cats - even though this ancient breed is CFA's fifth most popular, there were only 2,839 recorded in 2003.

Many in the general public, animal welfare world, as well lawmakers, are not even familiar with any of the pedigreed breeds except perhaps the Siamese, Maine Coons and Persians, since these have been known in this country since the mid 1800's.

- In fact several studies show that only 3 to 6% of all the household pet cats in the United States are pedigreed.
- Almost 1/3 of all households with cats obtain their pets as strays who came to the door.
- In several communities studied 10% of all households are feeding unowned/feral cats, but only a few take the next step to sterilize these cats. This is the large cat population that is "loosely owned" reproducing unchecked.
- At least 5 studies show that 85% to 87% of all owned pet cats are altered. Most who have not altered their cat believe their kitten is too young; some need financial or transportation assistance; others are simply procrastinating and need incentives not punitive laws.

- Breeders require strict spay/neuter contracts or provide early-age altering prior to placement. CFA is confident that the altering rate of pedigreed pet cats placed as pets is well over 95%. Unaltered cats do not make suitable indoor-only pets and pedigreed cats are rarely allowed outside by their owners.

There is no evidence to show that the breeding of pedigreed cats has any relationship to the numbers of surplus cats in shelters.

The American Humane Association “Animal Shelter Reporting” Study, 1990, showed less than 1% of cats in shelters were pedigreed breeds. Today, with increased altering of pet cats and cat breed rescue activity, most shelters report pedigreed cats to be negligible.

Every shelter and community’s problems with homeless cats revolve around the numbers of abandoned cats, once wanted cats later relinquished to shelters and the lack of an organized response to stop the unchecked reproduction of free-roaming/unowned/feral cats. Breeder permits are not the solution – these are community problems that call for a strategic plan with broad based support involving all those who work to raise the value of cats. Breeding permits have not been successful in achieving expected revenue or in reducing shelter populations. (See accompanying article –[Breeder Permits Have Failed](#))

Why then are pedigreed cat/purebred dog breeders targeted?

Regardless of the facts, many communities feel pressure to “do something”. A dramatic law that imposes a complete ban on cat and dog reproduction is a simple-to-understand solution. To ban all pet keeping would be intolerable to the public. However, limiting pet numbers or taxing/licensing pet owners seems a reasonable alternative to many who do not consider the consequences or don’t care.

Only breeders are affected by high unaltered cat/dog licenses with additional permit fees (\$100 per unaltered breeding cat/dog usually). These proposals have little opposition from pet cat owners. Though there are reasons for keeping unaltered dogs aside from breeding, most cat owners have altered their cats. The few pedigreed cat breeders in any community are the only ones faced with these onerous fees, fines, requirements, and criminal penalties for non-compliance.

Breeder permit laws treat conscientious hobby breeders as if they were businesses. Commercial cat breeding is almost non-existent because of the risks, husbandry difficulties and unpredictability. Cat fanciers raise litters in their homes, are not businesses and should not be regulated and taxed as if they were. These are individuals, who are dedicated to a selected breed and, with veterinary and other expenses in order to provide proper care for their animals, rarely cover the costs through sales of kittens. While it may be appropriate for business operations to be open to government inspections and bureaucratic record reporting, it is a huge invasion of privacy for hobby breeders to be forced to open their homes and bedrooms for the police or animal control officers to inspect kittens. These laws in essence do not “permit” breeding - they make it virtually impossible. They are an assault on the preservation of the pedigreed breeds.

While those who promote breeder permit laws claim they will reduce the numbers of homeless cats in shelters and stop both intended and accidental reproduction, the actual result is ONLY the loss of very special domestic cat breeds with historic background and uniqueness. There is no impact on the population of feral/freeroaming/unowned cats without owners to pay fees and fines. There is the unfortunate loss of local cat clubs, pedigreed cat shows and other activities revolving around the cat fancy that have helped raise the public’s knowledge and respect for cats, promote shelter cat adoptions, spay/neuter programs, rescue programs and trap/neuter/return (TNR) for feral cats throughout the US and in other countries.

Demand for pedigreed cats is high among a discerning pet owning segment that considers predictable personality, good health and a home-raised kitten environment to be the optimum when obtaining a family pet. Many cherish particular breeds because of appearance or other characteristics and they should continue to have this choice in the future.

The Cat Fanciers’ Association provides facts and data to lawmakers and to animal welfare organizations to illustrate the negative consequences of laws and to help provide guidance on programs that do work.

By Joan Miller, CFA Legislative Liaison, December 2004
Published in Fanc-e-Mews, January 2005

See accompanying article – Breeder Permits Have Failed.

To correspond with the CFA Legislative Committee, please email Legislation@CFA.org