



The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc.

"World's Largest Registry of Pedigreed Cats"

Pedigreed Cat Breeders and Pet Buyers are Allies

Most cat lovers find it hard to believe there are groups fiercely dedicated to the goal of stopping all purposeful breeding of pedigreed cats. There is little awareness of the agenda behind the campaigns of the more radical animal rights organizations that advocate shelter adoptions only. Cat lovers are often surprised that some animal rights groups even advocate elimination of **all** pet ownership. If the general public were to believe that preserving pedigreed cats has no value then our beautiful breeds with their rich history and predictable personalities will be gone forever.

Grass roots advocacy means reaching to the broad base of people who support pet ownership. To do this we must convey our message not just to the cat fancy, but also to the general public. One of the most important messages we have to get across is the value to society of pedigreed cats. When we oppose legislation that threatens pet ownership and also pedigreed cat breeding, the pedigreed kitten buyer, often overlooked, is an essential ally.

Those searching for a pedigreed kitten to add to their home have already made some crucial choices. In their hearts, they know that the human animal bond is mutually beneficial and that a cat is the right pet for them. They have done some research to select a kitten with special potential to meet their own expectations. They have acquired some knowledge of the various breed characteristics and have thought about what would suit their own temperament, family, home environment or lifestyle. They have an appreciation for a particular kind of feline beauty, softness of coat, agility, fine boning or massive structure. Whether a cat is gregarious and outgoing with children or dogs or is a placid lap sitter is very important to those who decide on a pedigreed kitten.

Pedigreed kitten buyers also have certain expectations of the breeders who raise their selected breed. Conscientious breeders love their breed and have a wealth of knowledge to share about its history and character. They have established a reputation and pride in their breeding program, which is reflected in good health and genetic soundness of the kittens they raise and sell. They provide proper veterinary care and ensure their home-raised kittens are well socialized.

Every time a kitten goes to his new home there is an opportunity to gain an important ally. Pet buyers can help spread the message that **preserving pedigreed cats is of the value to society**. Of course, the corollary is that if the pedigreed breeds are important, so too are the breeders of these cats. Legislation that means the end of hobby breeders will eventually impact the public that appreciates these breeds.

Most breeders provide the new owners with a variety of information and materials at the time of placement. Vaccination records, health records, pedigrees and other information are often given. Many breeders also provide helpful advice about cat litter, food and other essentials. "Kitten packets" from pet food companies are sometimes given out. These may contain discount coupons, advertisements or other materials designed to promote the product.

Yet, few breeders take the time to discuss the efforts to take away peoples' ability to acquire and own pedigreed cats. When placing a kitten, you are talking to a person who is already open to the suggestion that pedigreed cats have a place in our society. They know some of the benefits of having the right pet in their home. You can help build on this base to educate them about the danger of losing this choice if some people get their way.

Are you shy or not sure of how to begin such a conversation? Some of the basic information available from the Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) regarding the value of pedigreed cats could be included in the materials given at the time kittens are placed. CFA's pamphlet "Why Do We Need Breeders?" could be given to every new family. Other pamphlets to consider for your "kitten packet" could include: "Pedigreed Cats Face Extinction" or "Due Credit" or "Changing Laws Affect Pet Ownership."

Another way to improve communication, as well as our image, is to make yourself and CFA a resource for general information about their pet. The pamphlets: "Welcoming Your New Kitten" or "Myths and Facts About Your Cat" are available from CFA.

Other pamphlets from CFA and the Winn Feline Foundation cover commonly asked questions about pet ownership. These could be given to people as needed, and include pamphlets about declawing, early spay and neuter, keeping cats indoors, rabies, toxoplasmosis, vaccinations, care of older cats and many other useful topics.

A variety of helpful articles about cat care and health are available on the CFA web site at: <http://www.cfa.org/caring.html>. These range from information on specific diseases to common household dangers, such as potpourri or toxic houseplants. Has the new cat in the house triggered litter box "accidents"? Refer them to the article at: <http://www.cfa.org/articles/litter-box-problems.html>

Once you have established yourself as a source of reliable information on cat ownership, the door is open to discuss the efforts to take away their right to own pets. The average person is unaware of the attacks from all sides on breeders and owners of pedigreed cats. You can offer facts about cat populations that will counteract the misinformation that the breeding of pedigreed cats means shelter cats will not have homes. Less than 1% of the cats in shelters are pedigreed. Feral cat management, affordable spay/neuter and innovative programs are achieving a dramatic reduction in homeless cat numbers all over the country. The killing in shelters can be stopped without losing the pedigreed cat breeds.

Many new communities are controlled by Home Owners Associations that limit or even prohibit pet ownership. This is often done by the developers of the housing project, without any real input from future property owners. People who have purchased homes in these communities are often shocked that the rules prohibit pets. Many zoning laws, while well intentioned, restrict or eliminate our ability to breed and raise pedigreed cats in our homes. Most kitten buyers will readily understand the advantage of having kittens raised in homes, with loving care and attention.

The average person is often unaware of the hidden agenda behind certain directions in the Animal Rights movement. You could explain to them how the term "guardian" is being proposed in place of "owner" and put forth as an innocuous change in laws; when the eventual goal is to take away your [property] rights to keep your pets. Some organizations are opposed to any form of animal ownership. These people even feel that owning a pet is a form of "slavery" and must be eliminated.

The first step to further this radical Animal Rights position is to imply that breeding pedigreed cats is immoral and only shelter animals should be adopted "until there are none". They are teaching our children now that pedigreed cats should become extinct; eventually there will be promotion of the concept that keeping pets in homes is a form of exploitation.

The opposition to pedigreed pet ownership has the financial support of some famous Hollywood celebrities. They conduct well-orchestrated publicity stunts to draw attention to their cause. They mislead the public with half-truths, staged events, and empty promises. They solicit millions of dollars to spread their message through the media and through our children.

First and foremost, as breeders we must live up to the expectations of the pedigreed kitten buyer. We must be fair and honest in all of our dealings. We must do all we can to assure that our kittens are healthy and well socialized. We must be a source of information and help both before and after the kitten has been placed. There is an old saying in business: "Treat a customer well and they will tell a friend. Treat a customer badly and they will tell ten friends."

We need the support of fellow cat lovers if pedigreed cats are to survive. We must fight this Animal Rights disinformation, one person at a time. We ask the pedigreed household pet fanciers to help in this effort.

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September 2004

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