



# The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc.

*"World's Largest Registry of Pedigreed Cats"*

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## Due Credit

**"Let's give responsible breeders the credit they deserve."**

For years I have tried to find statistics on how much, if at all, breeders contribute to cat overpopulation. Representatives of various humane groups have told me that breeders contribute "significantly", but no one has yet been able to cite any figures.

Breeders often suffer the stereotype that they are reckless, profit-hungry people, each producing hundreds of cats a year. Such a generalization is as accurate as saying that all cat owners are irresponsible because some don't spay and neuter their pets. Do you want to be classed in the same category as a neighbor who lets her calico produce dozens of kittens year after year?

According to Michael Brim, former public relations director of The Cat Fanciers' Association, the typical person registering kittens with CFA is a hobby breeder - someone who produces a few kittens a year in an effort to obtain one or two that fit a breed standard. Kittens fitting the standard compete in shows, and as they mature, a few are selected for breeding.

Most kittens produced do not fit the standard and are sold as pets. A buyer signs a contract that states that the kitten will be spayed or neutered at 6 to 8 months of age. If it is not spayed or neutered, the contract says, the breeders can repossess it.

Critics like to point out that these contracts are often unenforceable. Most breeders, long frustrated by repossession efforts, agree. They dread the thought that they have played a part in the production of unwanted kittens. But just how big a part have they played?

In 1990, 19,873 breeders registered litters with CFA. Of these, half produced only one litter. Twenty percent produced two litters, and 15 percent, three or four. Fourteen percent produced from 5 to 20 litters, and 1 percent produced 21 litters or more. As the number of litters increases, these people registering them are less likely to be hobby breeders and are more likely to be breeding for profit.

If we estimate that each litter contains an average of four kittens, then the hobby breeders (the 85 percent producing not more than four litters a year) produced a total of 111,708 kittens in 1990. If half of these kittens were sold as pets with neuter/spay agreements, and if, in turn, half the pet kittens were spayed or neutered, then in each state an average of 500 unaltered cats went to new homes.

This figure will alarm hobby breeders as much as it will animal welfare workers. But consider this: most humane societies use similar spay/neuter contracts when placing kittens, and some pounds place kittens with no spay/neuter agreements at all. Clearly, animal welfare groups face the same problem breeders do: how to ensure that kittens going to new homes will be spayed or neutered.

In 1991, The Winn Feline Foundation joined the American Veterinary Medical Association to fund a University of Florida study on the spaying and neutering of kittens younger than 4 months of age. If the study shows that kittens this young can be altered with no unhealthy consequences, breeders and humane societies may have a solution: spay or neuter kittens before they go to new homes.

The Winn Foundation, which is contributing \$24,400 to the study, is supported by donations from corporations, individuals and, especially, cat clubs - groups whose memberships consist primarily of hobby breeders. CFA covers all administrative and operational costs.

Hobby breeders have promoted neutering and spaying for more than 25 years. They sponsor household pet competitions to emphasize the beauty and good health of spayed and neutered cats. They offer free booth space at cat shows to groups that encourage spaying and neutering, and they donate show profits, cages, cents-off coupons and volunteer time to humane organizations throughout the country.

While it is true that some breeders are producing cats indiscriminately, many more have taken conscientious steps toward alleviating pet overpopulation. These responsible breeders don't deserve our anger; they deserve our encouragement. Let's give them the credit they deserve.

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reprinted from the June 1991 issue of Cat Fancy Magazine

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**To correspond with the CFA Legislative Committee, please email [Legislation@CFA.org](mailto:Legislation@CFA.org)**