



## **THE DIFFICULTIES OF BUYING QUALITY CATS FOR BREEDING AND SHOWING**

-- Gregory Beach

One thing I feel anyone involved in the art of breeding and showing cats should never lose sight of: The very nature of breeding and showing cats is competitive. For example, if you were involved in the hobby of making the best apple pies for competition at the county fair then you would probably be reluctant to give your secret recipe out to others who also wanted to do the same thing, and this principal holds true for breeding and showing cats, too. Conversely, if you were a master chef and your goal also included a desire to inspire and develop others to become better cooks then you would be willing to bring others into the fold, teaching them your secrets, helping them to grow. A breeder is both a competitive cook and master chef. Like a cook, their goal is to have the best apple pie at the county fair. Like a master chef, a breeders' dedication to the breed, helping it improve so that modifications and refinements they make to the breed continue beyond them, inspires the breeder to work with and develop others.

Here is another thing I feel people wanting to purchase quality cats to breed or show from established breeders should remember: Exempting those who breed primarily for profit, a breeders desire to help others is usually based on a desire to promote *their* agenda, helping others breed to advance traits *they* desire in the breed, because this reinforces their work, and reflects back on them. Why would someone want to help you breed cats they don't care for, or to become involved in things in the fancy they find distasteful? You can almost always tie the success rate of any team back to its leader. It cannot be over looked, the actions and behavior of those the breeder helps can and *do* reflect back on them, and this is another important reason why those who have developed good reputations are reluctant to take chances with people they don't know.

In my opinion, those who desire to purchase breeding and show cats would do well if they approach a breeder with the above thoughts in mind. Please remember, it takes time to get to know someone, and no one owes you anything. If you want a breeders' cat and look then it is up to *you* to get to know them, if they are interested, and demonstrate what you have in common with *their* goals. If you are unable to this, why would any breeder want to help you? And, promises about how you will show their cat, or some inner secret thought that if you show one of

their cats they will owe you something, is the height of flawed thinking. A successful breeder does not really need you to show their cat. There is a great deal of wisdom to this thought: If it is important to the breeder that a cat of their breeding gets shown then they would do well to show it themselves. Even under ideal circumstances, there are unknown factors involved with showing cats. More things can go wrong once the cat is out of the breeders' hands or home that affects the cat's ability to be shown. In consideration, I do not feel it is wise for a breeder to be primarily influenced in making placement decisions because they think, believe or hope someone else will show their cat.

Loyalty and trust are two other paramount issues that most breeders take into consideration when placing cats, especially those that are to be bred or shown. Trust is something that is earned, and I do not understand why new people sometimes expect blind trust? No breeder is under any obligation to share their cats for breeding or showing with anyone, ever. Sometimes I think people lose sight of this: When a reputable breeder places one of their cats with you it is a privilege, a demonstration of their trust in you that should be highly regarded and deeply appreciated, indefinitely. Never forget from whence you came, because without help where would you be? Any breeder who trusts you, taking on the *huge* responsibility of helping you develop your skills and program, deserves your absolute deep abiding respect and loyalty. That breeder has already demonstrated their good will towards you by placing a nice cat with you and helping you. Now, it is your turn to live up to the faith they have placed in you! And, that is not by showing the cat they sold to you, but it is by always striving to be someone they can be proud to have helped. Betrayals in the cat fancy are often eventually forgiven, but will almost always remain unforgettable.

Our reputations follow us in life, and I have always believed that it is fair to judge a person based on their own actions or behavior. This said, in addition to providing exemplary care for animals, you should always be *honest* and *loyal* in your dealings with others, and keep all of your agreements. Personally, if you are not beyond reproach in the quality of care you provide for your cats, and the level of honesty and loyalty you have given others who have helped you, many breeders won't be interested in getting to know you at all, let alone helping you. There is nothing more disheartening than helping someone and being betrayed, and this is one excellent reason why it is important to get to know someone *well* before you work with them. People have all sorts of agendas, but time will usually reveal them. If someone has a cat to breed or show that I produced it is *only* because I *allowed* them to have it. In my opinion, all breeders have an absolute right to discriminate by share breeding and show cats *only* with others who share interests and goals that compliment their own. Thankfully, experience has taught many of us the value of getting to know the people we share breeding and show cats with, there is just no substitute for it. This is a discriminating hobby, after all – to be successful we must discriminate in the selection of all we keep, breed, buy and sell, and who we sell it to is equally important.

All told, another thing people who are in the market of buying a breeding or show cat sometimes lose sight of is another deeply held conviction of mine: I wholeheartedly believe that, more often than not, cats placed into pet homes have less stress and happier lives than cats that are used for breeding and showing. I view pet homes for my kittens as *ideal*, and everything else, including keeping them for breeding or showing myself, is a compromise. Allowing someone else to have my cats for breeding and showing is an even *bigger* compromise, and in all

sincerity, I need a really good reason to justify doing that to my cat. At the end of the day, I *value* the *likelihood* that my cat will have a better life in a pet home over someone's desire to have my cat for breeding or show. My cats exist because I did something to bring it about. I consider *all* decisions that affect my cats' long term happiness as my *primary obligation* to the animals I produce. When someone asks me to put that aside, and make a compromise by placing my cat into a breeding or show home, they really need to convince me it will be in line with *my* goals for the breed, that they are someone I can count on to take *exemplary* care of my cat, and that they are someone who I have every reason to believe I can *trust* to never let me down. Below are things I feel should be considered prior to the placement:

- ✓ Draft contracts that protect your interest and the interests of your cats.
- ✓ Have your contracts reviewed by an attorney to ensure they do what you want.
- ✓ Get to know people before placing breeding cats with them.
- ✓ Personally visit a cattery before sending one of your cats into it.
- ✓ Make contracts a part of every placement, even with friends.
- ✓ Microchip your cats so you can prove who they are in the event of a dispute.
- ✓ Strongly consider staying on as a co-owner to further protect your interest.

Finally, it is not only newer breeders who experience difficulty acquiring quality cats for breeding and showing. Even experience breeders with pristine reputations have difficulty. Why? Breeding and showing *always* requires unique and special cats, not just any one will do. As you develop greater experience working with a breed your method of selection becomes more refined. As a rule, the more discriminating your tastes become the more difficult it is to acquire just the right cat, and so experienced breeders often find themselves with long waits, too. I've often said, and continue to believe, over time most of us end up breeding our best cats.