



THE CAT FANCIERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

World's Largest Registry of Pedigreed Cats

WHO WILL DEFEND THE BREEDERS?

Pedigreed cats are valuable.

Dedicated breeders are respected.

The CFA Legislative Group receives correspondence each month on a variety of topics related to proposed legislation around the country. An email came in recently expressing frustration and anger because of the public perception that breeders of pedigreed cats and purebred dogs are responsible for the homeless animals in shelters.

“Who will defend the breeders? People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is running their ‘Buy one – Kill one’ ad. I find this profoundly distressing. Why is it acceptable for a person to buy a horse of a certain breed because it is appropriate for an intended purpose, but not acceptable for a person to buy a cat or dog of a certain breed because experience has shown that the breed suits the person’s needs and wants. Why should President Obama feel a need to apologize for acquiring a purebred dog? Who will stand up and say, out loud, that hobby breeders are not the cause of ‘pet overpopulation’, and that stomping on years of selective breeding of dogs and cats will not solve that problem? Who will explain that, in fact, the education breeders provide for kitten/puppy buyers probably actively combats’ overpopulation’?”

*Any ideas? “
Cathy M.*

Dear Cathy;

The Cat Fanciers' Association will continue to defend the breeders. Our mission is to “preserve and promote the pedigreed breeds of cats and to enhance the well-being of ALL cats”. We care about homeless cats in shelters and feral/unowned cats. CFA opposes laws that negatively impact pet ownership, feral/unowned cats or the breeding of pedigreed cats. We are proud of the recognized breeds with their long history, unique character, personalities and appearance that make them an ideal choice for many families and individuals. Even if there were no pedigreed cats left in the United States this would not change the numbers of cats relinquished to shelters by their owners or the reasons why cats are homeless on the streets.

CFA works with other groups to increase respect for all cats. We support voluntary spay/neuter of pet cats, trap/neuter/return (TNR) programs for feral cats, surveys to obtain community data and many other efforts that have successfully reduced the intake of cats in shelters. Many breeders of beautiful and well tempered pedigreed cats provide outstanding pets for the cat loving public and they are also involved with issues of homeless cats. They donate time and money to help cats and to prevent harmful laws that restrict pet ownership.

We share your outrage with the current anti-breeding rhetoric of some animal activists who seem oblivious to the positive impact of CFA and breeders of pedigreed cats. The public has been gradually seduced by ever increasing campaigns to convince people that “every kitten born means a shelter cat is killed”. For some in the sheltering community this simplistic rationale may seem plausible. Certainly organizations

working to re-home cats do need to encourage adoption. However, at the same time the option of selecting a pedigreed cat from a breeder should be recognized as a good choice for many. Choosing a pet cat is a major life decision that needs careful consideration, especially now that cats live much longer lives. A cat of a breed known to be quiet and sweet or another with predictable high energy might be a better fit for certain individuals. Taking a chance on a shelter cat with little to no known background or personality assessment may not always be the best choice for everyone.

When a family obtains a cat from a breeder their priority is to add an ideal pet who will fit their lifestyle and preferences. They usually have done a great deal of study and looking first. The buyer of a pedigreed kitten or cat acquires the benefits of a long lineage of selective breeding. Private home breeders dedicated to their chosen breed are not just placing a cat – they are also offering years of work behind the development of their bloodline through knowledge, show exhibition and feline husbandry. They are there to educate and advise the new owner on proper care, feeding, introduction and other aspects of pet ownership. Few pedigreed cats ever end up either on the streets or in a shelter thanks to the quality of the cats provided by these breeders and the pet owners who cherish them. CFA has a Breeder Code of Ethics, a Mentor Program and strict disciplinary procedures to encourage the best breeding practices.¹

Unfortunately the message that all selective breeding is morally “wrong” has become part of a well developed and orchestrated social marketing campaign with a dangerous goal. Condemning purposeful breeding of pets is put forth as a way to save cats’ and dogs’ lives but in effect this is aimed at changing public opinion by those who believe it is actually a form of “exploitation” for animals to be kept as pets at all². Some feel the first step toward eliminating pet keeping is to convince the public that all breeding is equal to displacing a shelter animal’s chance for adoption. The next step is to force the sterilization of all cats and dogs. This objective is now reflected in the many proposed mandatory spay/neuter ordinances and state bills. These laws are supported by activists who claim they want to save animals lives but refuse to acknowledge the negative consequences for feral/unowned cats. They claim forced sterilization will mean fewer cats and dogs in shelters but ignore the data that clearly shows communities that do not have coercive legislation have reduced shelter numbers to a greater degree. They claim to care about the endangered small wild cat species but have no qualms about seeing the end of many rare domestic cat breeds.

The general public is unaware that some “humane” organizations and animal rights advocates have a goal to eliminate thousands of years of mutual benefits from dog or cat-human interaction. Stopping all breeding of pedigreed cats/purebred dogs has consequences that most people would soundly reject if they really thought about it. But in this age of informational over-stimulation a simple sound bite idea like “buy one – kill one” is attractive to both lawmakers and some of the public. Complex problems do not have easy answers but long explanations or factual papers fail to work in a society that likes sound bites, text messaging and “Twitter” comments.

CFA has many articles on the subject of pet “overpopulation” and related topics. We have explained why this term is simplistic and derogatory. We outline the reasons behind cats and dogs ending up in shelters and why they are different and often misunderstood. We know that less than 1% of pedigreed cats are in

¹ The CFA Breeder Code of Ethics, Mentor Program, Cattery Environment Inspection Program and other ways in which CFA encourages good breeding are included in, “Breeder Assistance Programs”, George Eigenhauser, Sept. 1. 2006. <http://www.cfa.org/articles/legislative/breeder-assistance.html>

² “I don’t use the word “pet.” I think it’s speciesist language. I prefer “companion animal.” For one thing, we would no longer allow breeding. People could not create different breeds. There would be no pet shops. If people had companion animals in their homes, those animals would have to be refugees from the animal shelters and the streets. You would have a protective relationship with them just as you would with an orphaned child. But as the surplus of cats and dogs (artificially engineered by centuries of forced breeding) declined, eventually companion animals would be phased out, and we would return to a more symbiotic relationship – enjoyment at a distance.”

-Ingrid Newkirk, PETA vice-president, quoted in The Harper's Forum Book, Jack Hitt, ed., 1989, p.223.

shelters and that 87% to 94% of cat owners voluntarily sterilize their pet cats³. On the CFA website there are articles and guidance statements regarding issues we have addressed for at least 20 years. Yet the general public tends to believe what the large “humane” organizations say. The influence of their multi-million dollar budgets, PR departments and long established media contacts, Hollywood stars and political allies has been effective. Their strategy is to promote easy to digest messages through constant press releases, billboards and well financed social agenda “campaigns”.

Our challenge is to make known what CFA and breeders have contributed. We need to find ways to get our views better exposed. If it is possible to develop easier-to-understand messages this would help build awareness of the fine pedigreed cat breeds. We need the public to rebel against moralizing that limits their choice of an ideal pet cat.

You can find materials on the CFA website legislative page that every breeder could give out in their community and whenever they sell kittens. A few examples⁴:

Cat Overpopulation – CFA’s Position, Approved by the Board 1991
Pet “Overpopulation” – a Self Fulfilling Prophecy, by Anna Sadler, 1994
Why Do We Need Breeders?, by Ann Segrest, 2004
Breeder Permits and Extinction, by Joan Miller, 2004
Are There Responsible Breeders?, by George Eigenhauser, 2007

One of the goals of CFA’s Outreach and Education program is to educate the public and veterinary students about the many aspects of cat breeding and pedigreed breeds. We have presented talks at the CFA-IAMS Championship Cat Show in New York, at the CFA International Shows, many large cat shows and pet expos that incorporate great examples of pedigreed breeds. We will focus on education of the public at the AKC/CFA “Meet the Breeds” in New York City this fall at the Jacob Javits Center⁵.

Thank you for your awareness that the value of pedigreed breeds and those who work to preserve them needs to be a high priority for CFA.

Joan Miller
CFA Legislative Information Liaison
May 1, 2009

³ MSPCA; Massachusetts Dorr Research Study Report (survey every 5 yrs.) – 2006 survey - 94% of owned cats sterilized. APPA National Pet Owners Survey 2007-2008 – 87% of owned cats sterilized.

⁴ For reference articles on cat issues CFA website - <http://www.cfa.org/articles/legislative/index.html>

⁵ CFA website - <http://www.cfa.org/events/meet-the-breeds.html>