

Finding a Breeder By Kathryn Brady ~ Katsmith Cattery www.katsmith.net

Now that you've decided to buy a pedigreed cat, and you've determined what breed, you'll need to find a breeder. Visiting a cat show or calling a known association such as CFA (Cat Fanciers Association www.cfa.org) or TICA (The International Cat Association www.tica.org) and asking for a list of breeders in your area are two of the best ways. The Internet is also a valuable resource for locating breeders as well as other information that will help you make your decision.

Once you find a breeder you should ask some basic questions:

-In what environment are the kittens raised? Are they used to people, noise, etc.

-How many litters does the breeder have in a year? The more litters a breeder has the harder it is to give the personal care each and every kitten needs.

-Ask to see health records. You want to make sure your kittens are getting proper health care. A lot of breeders administer vaccines themselves, that's fine, just make sure that the kitten will have a complete check-up at the vet before he or she goes to his or her new home.

-Ask to see pedigrees *. You don't want to see the same cats' name over and over again. Make sure your kitten isn't a result of a mother/son, father/daughter or brother/sister breeding. Inbreeding can lower a cat's immune system and leave the cat susceptible to future health problems. An outbred cat is a healthy cat.

-Are the cats and kittens registered with a known association? Ask the breeder to give you the URL of the association they register with and check it out yourself.

All these questions will help you ascertain whether this is a breeder you want to purchase a kitten from.

Most breeders have pet buyer's agreements that they will ask you to sign. This agreement will let you know what the breeder expects of you and what you can expect from them. If this agreement is available on the breeder's web page, please read the agreement carefully before going to look at kittens. If there is something you don't understand or you don't agree with call the breeder and discuss it first.

Whether you found the breeder on-line or from a referral, you should try to visit the cattery. But keep in mind, a breeder is not a pet store. Most breeders have full time jobs on top of caring for their cats, so you should be serious about wanting a kitten before you make an appointment.

When visiting the cattery you will be able to see kittens as well as the mother and sometimes the father of the kittens. You might not be able to handle very young kittens that have not been vaccinated and are vulnerable to infection. This is not a reflection on you, but simply a precaution.

Ask to see the breeder's other cats and try to see the entire cattery. Seeing where the cats actually live and not just a special room set aside for pet buyers will aid you with your decision as to whether or not this is a cattery you want to get a kitten from.

Here are some things to look for when visiting a cattery:

-Areas should be clean and void of offensive odors (if there is a whole male in the house you may smell a strong urine smell, this is normal and should not reflect badly on the cleanliness of the cattery).

-Food bowls and water bowls should be clean & full.

-Litter boxes should be scooped. This is hard to keep up with so if there is something in the litter box it should be firm and not foul smelling.

-Cats and kittens should be alert and playful (unless you arrive right after mealtime).

All this should help you to gauge the general condition of the cats and kittens you are visiting in a cattery.

Some associations have what's known as a "Cattery of Excellence" or "Cattery of Distinction" designation. Please be aware that this is not issued as an *award* but is a certificate confirming that the breeder's own vet has made a cattery inspection.

Here are a few items to check for when you evaluate kittens:

-Their ears should be clean and free from parasites.

-Their eyes should be bright and clean with no discharge.

-Their nose should be clean and free of discharge.

-Their gums should be a healthy pink color and the teeth white. Red gums can be a sign of ill health.

-The kitten's coat should be clean & shiny and free of fleas, flea dirt or bald patches.

-The kitten's body should be firm. A healthy kitten will be heavier than it looks; it should not feel bony but should have a light padding of body fat. If a kitten feels light but has a pot-belly, this may be a sign of worm infestation.

Kittens should be used to being handled from birth, and should not be frightened of humans but if the kitten hisses or spits at you, or seems timid or nervous give him a little time to adjust to you. Given a chance most kittens will most likely warm up to you. Just like people some kittens are just more outgoing and social than others.

A breeder is always striving to produce the best kittens when picking a male and female to breed. They should not only compliment each other aesthetically but both cats should be healthy and strong. Although all these kittens meet the board standard set forth by the association the breeder registers & shows in, not all kittens are show and/or breeder quality. Make sure you tell the breeder if you are looking for a kitten to show or breed. If the kitten is for breeding you will need the breeder's permission before the kitten is registered.

Some of the things which might determine whether a kitten is pet quality, show quality or breeder quality are; color, pattern, the set and size of the ears, the shape of the eyes or body type. Since the point of a breeding program is to breed the best kitten possible you definitely wouldn't want to breed a cat that

is not top quality. And a breeder certainly wouldn't want to see a kitten of their breeding exhibited at a show if it is not up to the challenge. This wouldn't reflect well on their breeding program.

If all goes well and you choose a kitten you will probably be asked to leave a deposit. This works two ways, first you are now assured that that kitten is yours and won't be offered to anyone else and second the breeder now knows that you are serious about buying the kitten.

When it's time to take home your kitten make sure you're prepared. See New Kitten Shopping List for some of the things you'll need.

-Bring a carrier with you when you pick up the kitten. Keep the kitten in the carrier while in the car, no matter how much he cries, you don't want to be distracted and have an accident.

-Try to keep the kitten in one room until he's used to you and his new surroundings. Show him where the litter box and food are located. Once he feels safe and secure you can let him explore more rooms.

-Introduce you kitten slowly to your other cats. Never attempt to force an established cat to except a new kitten. The cat and kitten will develop their own relationship in time. Be patient, don't give up.

-Keep the kitten warm. Siamese, Oriental and Colorpoint cats are sensitive to cold and must not be kept in a cold environment (high AC in the summer, low heat in the winter). This is very important as a kitten could develop an upper respiratory problem in just a few days if kept in a cold room. AC (if needed) in the room where the kitten resides should be kept in the high 70s and heat should be on in the winter.

-Ask the breeder what kind of food the kitten eats and make sure you have plenty on hand. A sudden change in diet can make a kitten ill. If you don't live in the same area as the breeder, give the kitten bottled water until it gets used to your tap water.

-Make sure you find out what sort of litter and box the kitten is used to. If a kitten is used to (for example) clay litter it might not recognize crystal litter and go somewhere inappropriate. Some kittens might not be comfortable "going" out in the open where others might not like a covered box. It's just easier to ask.

-Find out what kind of toys the kitten plays with (most breeders will send a few toys home with the kitten) sometimes a familiar game is all a kitten needs to feel welcome in his new home.

* How to read a pedigree

The name of the cattery that bred the cat is first (this is referred to as the prefix), the cat's name follows and, in the case where the cat is owned by another breeder there may be an "of" after the cat's name (this cattery is the suffix).

There may be a lot of letters preceding the cat's name (this is a good thing) those are the cat's titles. The title of DM (Distinguished Merit) is always at the end of the cat's name. i.e. "RW, GC, GP Crystabel's Eye'm Odd of Katsmith" this cat was bred by Crystabel cattery, his name is Eye'm Odd and he is owned by Katsmith cattery. He is a Regional Winner, a Grand Champion and a Grand Premier.

Sometimes you will see a registration number, color description, birth date or other information included on the pedigree. The sire is always listed before the dam.

In the example below you can see that Geishagoll Domingo of Crystabel is the father and Crystabel Camille White Tornado is the mother of Crystabel Eye'm Odd of Katsmith. Domingo is a Grand Champion and holds a Distinguished Merit title. Camille is a Champion.

The sire and dam of Domingo are CH Magnifikat Strike The Gold and RW, GC Geishagoll Evaleigh, DM. Evaleigh is a Regional Winner as well as a DM.

Camille's sire and dam are GC Woodmeadow Arowhon and Woodmeadow Betty Rose of Crystabel.

This is just a 3 generation pedigree, but it should give you the basics you will need to make sense of the pedigree you receive with your new kitten.

<p>Pedigree of: GC, GP, RW Crystabel Eye'm Odd of Katsmith Odd eyed white OSH M 2304-1266392 6/2/1999</p>	<p>GC Geishagoll Domingo of Crystabel, DM Blue Pt 0276-1205657</p>	<p>CH Magnifikat Strike the Gold Seal Pt 0272-1094055</p>
		<p>RW, GC Geishagoll Evaleigh, DM Seal Pt 0273-0837653 4/24/1993</p>
	<p>CH Crystabel Camille White Tornado Blue eyed White OSH 2301-1183314 7/16/1997</p>	<p>GC Woodmeadow Arowhon Blue eyed white OSH 2300-1023580</p>
		<p>Woodmeadow Betty Rose of Crystabel Ebony ticked tabby OSH</p>