



The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc.

"World's Largest Registry of Pedigreed Cats"

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

BREEDER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Helping people help themselves

Legislation is popping up around the country, increasingly more stringent it seems, to restrict or even ban the breeding of ALL cats and dogs. These proposals are often in response to demands to "do something" about problems at the animal shelters. Usually communities face a surplus of homeless cats in the shelters. Since it is well known that less than 1% of cats at shelters are pedigreed; hobby breeders are not the source of the problems at shelters¹.

However, sometimes pedigreed cats do end up in a shelter and the reasons (perhaps the only reasons in most communities) are often related to human problems rather than cat problems. It is this part of the overall challenge that CFA hopes to address - intervene to help our own participants who are breeders, before any of their cats end up in shelters or become neglected. The general public and cat fanciers ask: "what is CFA doing to help assure that our breeders are not contributing to the problem?"

The Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) is an organization that has among its objects the welfare of all cats². There are many programs in CFA designed to assure the proper care of cats among people who participate in CFA activities:

- The CFA Mentoring Program pairs "mentors" (experienced breeders) with less experienced protégés to head them into the proper care of cats³.
- The CFA Approved Cattery Environment Program⁴ provides guidelines and voluntary inspections of catteries to meet humane and reasonable standards.
- CFA Minimum Cattery Standards (based largely on the USDA standards) as a criteria for our disciplinary actions and for conducting environment inspections⁵.
- In high volume catteries (that register litters representing 75 kittens or more in a year) this triggers a required veterinary inspection.
- The CFA Animal Welfare Committee (AW) investigates claims of animal cruelty or neglect. If problems are uncovered the matter is referred to the Protest Committee and then on to the CFA Board for discipline. The CFA Board can fine, reprimand or permanently expel anyone found guilty of animal cruelty or neglect, or conduct seriously and patently detrimental to the cat⁶.
- The AW Committee can demand additional cattery inspections based on complaints received. The committee also publishes timely articles about topics of concern, such as hoarding⁷.
- The CFA Breeder Code of Ethics⁸ provides guidance as to responsible conduct of breeders.
- The CFA Purebred Rescue Committee helps clubs and individuals promote the placement of pedigreed cats who are found temporarily homeless or in need of a new home⁹.

- CFA Disaster Relief provides assistance in situations of natural or man-made disasters, when other agencies focus on human relief and pets seem to fall between the cracks¹⁰.

Newest among the CFA programs to improve the welfare of cats is the CFA Breeders Assistance Program. Created in June, 2006, it is still a work in progress but growing by the day. The program is designed to fill the gap between existing CFA programs. It is not breed rescue, it is not mentoring, it is not Animal Welfare, it is not disaster relief.

CFA Breeders Assistance is intended to help individuals help themselves when faced with temporary or permanent setbacks beyond their control. The mission statement of CFA Breeders Assistance is as follows:

"The CFA Breeders Assistance Program is here to help CFA breeders and catteries in a time of need for a variety of reasons beyond their control. This assistance will be provided in confidence and with compassion to the individuals involved and with the well being of their cats foremost."

This new CFA program is designed to fill the gaps between existing programs. The CFA Breeders Assistance Program is to help CFA breeders and catteries in a time of need for a variety of reasons beyond their control. Assuring confidentiality and compassion, and with concern for any cats involved, the program is intended to provide help and support for catteries that find themselves temporarily overwhelmed for various reasons.

This is not rescue; it is breeders helping other breeders get back on track. The kinds of setbacks envisioned in the creation of CFA Breeders Assistance include:

- Acts of government, such as new legislation in the area that requires an immediate reduction in cattery numbers
- Cases of serious illness
- Temporary or permanent disability (including age-related disability)
- Temporary or permanent loss of home, such as from a job loss, divorce, etc.
- Death of spouse (particularly if the spouse was caretaker of the pets)
- Acts of nature
- Death without provision for the animals post mortem
- Normal retirement
- Number of cats beyond care capacity

CFA Breeders Assistance is not intended to be a rescue organization. While there may be times (such as with the death of a fancier) when local volunteers in the program may assist with the placement of cats; or do interventions for catteries beyond their care capacity; that is not the primary function. Breeders Assistance will be there for people to assist them with placement, not to take in the cats. They will offer help, advice and guidance on good cattery management, advertising cats and help with re-homing. They can offer new ideas, such as how to get people interested in adopting their older cats, or cats with special needs. The breeder will help financially with the costs that are accrued and remain responsible for their own cats. Performing an intervention to downsize a cattery when the breeder wants to continue breeding may be done on occasion, but such interventions would be one time only.

CFA Breeders Assistance is not the Animal Welfare Committee. Animal Welfare would only get involved if Animal Control or a local SPCA became involved because of inhumane conditions. This does not

mean that something could not escalate into an Animal Welfare issue if circumstances warranted. But their primary goal is to help, not to judge. This is breeders helping other breeders to avoid the need for Animal Welfare action.

The Breeders Assistance Program is intended for breeders who breed and register cats meeting CFA breed standard. It is not intended to be a rescue or foster care group to take in rescues from the general public who may be unable to take care of their pets. To initiate a request for assistance, the breeder should contact Breeders Assistance Chair, Linda Berg <BreedersAssist@aol.com> or one of the seven Regional Coordinators¹¹.

There is an old Chinese saying: "Give a man a fish you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." The CFA Breeders Assistance Program is designed to give breeders in temporary distress the tools and the help needed to work through their problems. It can also help breeders with permanent, one-time changes in their circumstances or lifestyle make the transition while protecting the well being of the cats.

By George Eigenhauser
CFA Legislative Information Liaison
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¹ <http://www.cfa.org/articles/legislative/breeder-permits.html>

² CFA Constitution, Article II <<http://www.cfa.org/org/constitution.html#objects>>

³ <http://www.cfa.org/mentor/index.html>

⁴ <http://www.cfa.org/cattery-environment.html>

⁵ <http://www.cfa.org/articles/cattery-standard.html>

⁶ <http://www.cfa.org/org/constitution.html#discipline> A list of current CFA disciplinary suspensions may be found at:

<http://cfa.org/org/disciplinary-suspensions.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.cfa.org/articles/hoarding.html>

⁸ CFA Breeder Code of Ethics:

As a breeder who uses the services of the world's largest registry of pedigreed cats, I understand I have certain responsibilities to pedigreed cats and to the Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA).

I am aware that I am representative of CFA breeders in my community.

I will breed my cats with the intent of improving the breed and to produce healthy, happy kittens.

I will deal honestly with the purchasers of my kittens and cats.

To the best of my knowledge and ability I will not, without prior disclosure, sell any kitten/cat that is sick or has been exposed to an infectious disease.

I will not sell or place kittens prior to their attaining a proper level of immunity against common infectious diseases.

I will place cats directly to the new pet owner or in a manner that will enable contact with the ultimate owner to provide on-going education and advice.

I will strive to house my cats in a manner exceeding the CFA Minimum Cattery Standard.

I will ensure my cats are kept in a healthy environment and I will ensure they receive the proper veterinary care as needed.

I will maintain appropriate cattery records and will correctly register litters and cats.

I will work honestly with my fellow breeders and provide timely and correct litter registration information to those who use my cats for breeding.

I will mentor new breeders to ensure they have a solid information foundation.

⁹ <http://www.cfa.org/purebred-rescue.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.cfa.org/disasters.html>

¹¹ Region 1 (North Atlantic) Carolyn Menzel CDMenzel34@yahoo.com

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To correspond with the CFA Legislative Committee, please email Legislation