



# The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc.

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

---

## Are There Responsible Breeders?

Recently a major animal rights organization began a campaign to end all breeding of pets. The premise of the campaign is that all breeding is bad all of the time. The campaign is called: "There's no such thing as a responsible breeder."<sup>1</sup> They state that as long as *any* animals are euthanized in shelters, no breeding can ever be considered responsible. Any breeding is deemed the cause of shelter killing.

However, the facts do not support this assumption. Numerous studies now show that 85% to 92% of all owned cats and 70% of owned dogs are already sterilized. In some parts of the country there is such a shortage of healthy, adoptable pets that shelters are "relocating" dogs from other cities, other states, or even overseas. "... shelters have begun importing animals from as far away as Puerto Rico, Mexico, Taiwan, Okinawa, and other distant locations."<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Customs Service has estimated that over 10,000 puppies from Mexico are smuggled into just one city, San Diego California, each year.<sup>3</sup>

Why do pets die in shelters while there is a shortage of pets? The situation has been compared to the problems with children in foster care. The adoption of a healthy newborn human baby can take years. There is a shortage of adoptable babies and most agencies have long waiting lists. Yet there are thousands and thousands of older children in foster care in need of homes. Does this mean that for every healthy baby adopted it drives an older child into foster care? Obviously this is not the case. The kids in foster care arrive there for a variety of reasons. There may be financial or housing problems in the home that push children into foster care. There may be drugs or alcohol abuse in the home. There may be physical or mental abuse. None of these are caused by the adoption of healthy babies. To treat the problems with foster care we need to treat the problems that drive children into foster care. We need to deal with unemployment and homelessness. We need to treat drug and alcohol addiction. We must improve the family situations and protect the children. Outlawing adoption of healthy babies would do none of these things.

---

**Why do pets die in shelters while there is a shortage of pets?**

---

Similarly, to reduce shelter killing of pets we must address the problems that drive people to give up their animals. Many owned pets entering shelters are relinquished because of personal issues such as job loss, owner relocation, housing, landlord problems and other issues having nothing to do with the pet himself.<sup>4</sup> Other reasons for relinquishment include behavioral issues such as inappropriate elimination, damage to property, poor breed choices, the pet's illness or old age or simply the "wrong" pet for this living situation.

## Responsible Breeders Help Reduce Shelter Populations

It is the responsible breeder who helps keep shelter numbers low, and growing lower all the time. Education and low cost spay and neuter programs are working to reduce the over all population of pets. Despite a shortage of adoptable pets in many shelters, pets continue to be given up for other reasons. The reasons why animals are in shelters are complex and differ for dogs and cats. It is clear that one necessary goal is to be sure pets will stay in their homes. More must be done to determine a proper match between pet and owner to assure a close bond and to avoid later problems.

Some people want big dogs, some want small dogs. Some people want cats that are energetic, some want lap cats. One of the main goals of responsible breeding is to match the right pet with the family's needs and living situation. Responsible breeders know the characteristics of their breed. This includes physical traits, personality and health. A mis-match could lead to that pet being taken to the shelter later. Responsible breeders reduce this risk by placing the right pet with the right home, and they do it the first time. Responsible breeders help prevent the problem before it starts and they provide ongoing advice to be sure the new pet adjusts well to his home or resident pets

---

**Education and low cost spay and neuter programs are working to reduce the over all population of pets.**

---

Responsible breeders help reduce shelter populations in other ways too. Many breed rescue and foster care groups are run and supported by breeders. CFA breeders and clubs have donated money to local shelters, hosted adoption events for homeless pets, contributed to feline health research, collected food donations for local shelters and other worthwhile activities. Responsible breeders help educate the public. Breeders are often the best source of knowledge concerning the breed's nature and the "how to's" of taking care of that breed.

### **Responsible Breeders Improve Animals' Health**

Contrary to popular myth, random-bred cats are not necessarily healthier due to "hybrid vigor." Feral cats often congregate near a food source and therefore suffer from excessive inbreeding that can lead to health problems. It is not uncommon for a free roaming "Tom" to establish himself as the dominant male in the area. For years he will drive away other, competing males to breed with his own daughters, granddaughters and so on for generations until he is replaced, often by one of his own offspring. Inbreeding rates are high. Selection for positive traits is non-existent. Kitten mortality can be more than 50% among those born in the wild.

Responsible breeders have been working for centuries to produce pets with the positive traits people most want. These include not just body type, color, or coat, but good health, long life and predictable dispositions. Responsible breeders use health screenings and DNA testing to breed away from unwanted health problems, and produce healthier, happier and longer living pets. Thanks to donations from responsible breeders, research has led to genetic tests for inherited diseases such as polycystic kidney disease, hypertropic cardiomyopathy and others. With proper testing many unwanted health problems can be identified and removed from the gene pool *before* a breeding is done.

---

**Responsible breeders preserve the historical background, unique look and style of their breeds.**

---

These pedigreed animal breeds also serve as an important genetic resource, and when breeds become extinct, their unique genes are lost forever. This applies to physical traits, temperament and genes that regulate health. Responsible breeders not only preserve the historical background, unique look and style of their breeds, but by maintaining variety within the pet populations, they also help to preserve valuable traits within the species so that future generations of pets can enjoy good health.

### **Animal Rights Opposes Pet Ownership**

For Animal Rights activists, the real agenda behind this campaign to eliminate responsible breeders is to eliminate pet ownership. "[W]e believe that it would have been in the animals' best interests if the institution of "pet keeping"-i.e., breeding animals to be kept and regarded as "pets"-never existed." (PETA on 'Pets') Their ultimate goal is the complete elimination of pets.<sup>5</sup> Rather than assisting in the goal of reducing shelter euthanasia, they completely oppose efforts to make shelters no-kill sanctuaries for

homeless pets.<sup>6</sup> They prefer death to other solutions, and have themselves killed over 14,000 dogs in the past 7 years.<sup>7</sup> Don't be misled, their only goal is to eventually eliminate pet ownership.

So are there responsible breeders? Yes, they are the ideal source for healthy pets with predictable type and personality. Responsible breeders are continuously working to improve their breed's health. Responsible breeders are the best source of information about their breed, to educate the public and create better matches between person and pet. This leads to a strong and lasting human-animal bond resulting in fewer pets who wind up in the shelter.

---

**Responsible breeders are the ideal source for healthy pets with predictable type and personality.**

---

#### Footnotes:

1. [http://peta.org/campaigns/ar-responsiblebreeders.asp?c=weekly\\_enews](http://peta.org/campaigns/ar-responsiblebreeders.asp?c=weekly_enews)
2. <http://www.naiaonline.org/articles/archives/redefining.htm>
3. [http://www.cbp.gov/xp/CustomsToday/2006/jun\\_jul/other/puppies.xml](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/CustomsToday/2006/jun_jul/other/puppies.xml)
4. <http://www.petpopulation.org/topten.html>
5. Their President, Ingrid Newkirk states: "...eventually companion animals would be phased out, and we would return to a more symbiotic relationship - enjoyment at a distance." - The Harper's Forum Book, Jack Hitt, ed., 1989, p.223  
"One day, we would like an end to pet shops and the breeding of animals. [Dogs] would pursue their natural lives in the wild ... they would have full lives, not wasting at home for someone to come home in the evening and pet them and then sit there and watch TV." - The Chicago Daily Herald, Mar 1990  
"The bottom line is that people don't have the right to manipulate or to breed dogs and cats... If people want toys, they should buy inanimate objects. If they want companionship, they should seek it with their own kind." - Animals, May 1993
6. <http://peta.org/campaigns/ar-nokillshelters.asp>
7. <http://www.petakillsanimals.com/>

By George Eigenhauser  
CFA Legislative Information Liaison  
Fanc-e-Mews, September/October 2007

---

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