

## CHOOSING A HEALTHY KITTEN

Sadly, there are some breeders who do not supply healthy kittens or cats. As a future kitten/cat owner, you should educate yourself before embarking upon a decision to introduce a healthy feline companion into your family. You should also look into whether the cat breed you wish to buy will suit your circumstances. Pet Net's "Select a Pet Website" can help with this:

<http://www.petnet.com.au/catselectapet.html>

Firstly, ensure you purchase your kitten from a registered breeder. Registered breeders will be able to supply Certificates of Registration and Pedigrees from their National or State body. Always ensure that you receive this as you are entitled to your kitten's "Birth Certificate". All reputable bodies have rules that no kitten is to be sold under the age of 10 weeks, preferably 12 weeks. Check your kitten is up-to-date on its vaccinations. It is usual for a kitten to have received 2 vaccinations prior to leaving their breeder. In NSW breeders must microchip and register the kitten with the Companion Animals Board through their local council. They may also desex their kittens as well which will save you a considerable amount in veterinary bills at a later date. In NSW microchipping of all kittens is mandatory.

There are a few things that you as a prospective owner can look for in a kitten you are considering.

Check your kittens ears for signs of ear mites. If the kitten is infected it is often quite easily identified by the black (dried blood like) substance caked within the ear. The kitten may also shake its head vigorously if its ears are touched or may continually scratch the ear area.

Look for any redness within or around the eyes. This could be a sign of conjunctivitis (which is contagious to humans and other animals) or could possibly indicate symptoms of viruses such as Feline Chlamydia, Herpes or Cat Flu. Check for any bare patches on

your prospective kitten. Small bare patches void of hair or broken hair shafts, could indicate the presence of Ringworm, Fur Mites, Flea Infestation or skin conditions which all could prove expensive and lengthy in treatment. However, you need to be aware that breeders who leave their kittens with the mother until they are twelve weeks of age can run the risk of the mother dragging the kitten around by the scruff of the neck to attract the breeders attention if she wants something - usually time away from the litter. This will also produce baldish patches on the neck if the kittens struggle.

Tip up your prospective kitten and check for signs of faeces around its bottom and the pantaloons (hair around the back of the hind legs). Signs of diarrhoea could indicate Feline Enteritis, FIV or FIP which can all be fatal diseases.

Open your kitten's mouth and check for signs of ulceration on the tongue or the roof of the mouth (small pimple like spots) which could indicate Cat Flu or Herpes and is also often seen as symptoms of other fatal feline diseases. Also check your kitten's gum line to ensure there is no swelling or redness. Redness around the gum line can be caused by Gingivitis which in itself can prove to be quite a problem for the cat causing great pain, lack of appetite due to pain and even in some cases the loss or removal of teeth.

Listen for prolonged sneezing and/or coughing as these symptoms could indicate an Upper Respiratory Disease of which your kitten could become a life long sufferer or carrier.

These are just a few of the things which are all too often seen in kittens just placed into pet homes. You are going to pay quite a sum for a new companion and you must ensure you are sold one of good health. Another good rule of thumb is to purchase from someone who has come recommended to you via a person who has purchased from that breeder previously. Discreetly try to ascertain the health of the kitten upon arrival.

Normally we would recommend that you do not accept a supply of drugs from a breeder to treat any condition.

However, many buyers are anxious to take their new kitten home as soon as possible and like little children, kittens can be subject to "kittenhood" illnesses. If you think that the breeder is reputable and has carefully and fully explained what the problem is, if it is a minor problem and he/she has explained what course of medication the kitten is on and when it will be complete, then you may wish to take the kitten at that time. Always follow this up with a veterinary consultation with your own vet. If the problem has been misrepresented you have the right to take it back for a full refund. It is a good idea to get your vet to write a letter detailing her/his examinations and conclusions.

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU HAVE PURCHASED A KITTEN THAT IS SICK?**

You as a consumer HAVE rights! You must fully expect to be sold a kitten or cat in good health. This is naturally tempered by time and whether you allow the kitten free access to the outside where it can pick up some diseases. When you consult your vet you should always ascertain whether the problem is something the kitten may have come in contact with after your purchase or whether it is something likely to have happened before you picked the kitten up. If it a case of something which the cattery is responsible for, send a veterinary certificate to the breeder from whom you purchased, along with the account which you are entitled to have reimbursed. I would also suggest sending a copy of that correspondence to the "Registering Body" to which the breeder belongs. Many feline diseases, viral, bacterial, fungal and even parasitic conditions, require that the breeder undergo a quarantine period and a veterinary clearance. This is very important in ensuring that the breeder does not expose other people's animals to these conditions at functions such as cat shows etc.

If you have been provided with a healthy and happy kitten, let others know who your breeder was. If you were not sold a healthy or clean kitten DO NOT

recommend this breeder to others.

GOOD LUCK TO ALL ... may you find a feline companion who is well in all ways.