

TIPS ON FINDING THE PERFECT KITTEN



Bringing a new pet into your family involves a long-term commitment of time, energy, and money. Buying your kitten from a responsible breeder is one step in getting off to the best possible start with your new family member.

What can you expect from a responsible breeder?

You can expect a responsible breeder to guarantee that your kitten is in good health, but will suggest that your own veterinarian examine your kitten within a few days of purchase to confirm its health. You will be required to have your kitten spayed or neutered at an appropriate age. Some breeders will have already done this for you! You will be required to sign a sales agreement, which outlines the conditions of releasing the kitten to your care. Finally, a responsible breeder will be intensely interested in the welfare of your kitten and encourage you to call whenever you have questions or concerns about your kitten.

How can you tell if your kitten is healthy?

Handle the kitten. It should have good muscle tone, a clean coat, and bright, clear eyes. The kitten should not be sneezing or sniffing. Its eyes should be free of discharge and the ears clean and pink inside. There should be no bald patches or signs of dry, flaky skin. Check behind its ears, low on its back, and at the base of the tail for possible flea dirt, which looks like black sand.

How can I tell if a kitten is well socialized?

Play with the kitten using a non-threatening toy such as a feather or ribbon. After a period of normal caution toward strangers, the kitten should relax into a friendly, active and playful attitude. Many perfectly friendly kittens would rather play than be held; however, after becoming acquainted with you, the kitten should let you hold it, at least for a short time.

When can I take the kitten home?

Most responsible breeders allow their kittens to go to new homes at 12 weeks of age or older. This is a perfect age to make the transition to a new home. At 12 weeks, a kitten is weaned, litter trained, and has been vaccinated at least twice. Don't worry, it still has plenty of comical, lovable kittenhood to go!

Will I receive the kitten's "papers?"

When you get your kitten, you'll receive its health/vaccination record and a written sales agreement. After you have the kitten altered and

send the breeder a veterinarian's certificate of neutering or spaying, the breeder will send you the kitten's TICA registration form. You should also receive a pedigree for the kitten. To register the kitten, you fill out the registration form and send it with the proper fee to TICA.

What should I do after I bring the kitten home?

When you bring your kitten home, make sure you follow the breeder's instructions carefully. Making the transition to a new home can be very stressful for any cat. Changes in food, water, litter, and overall environment can cause minor ailments, even in healthy cats.

Why is the breeder asking me questions?

Don't be offended if the breeder asks you questions. The breeder is not trying to embarrass or intimidate you; they are simply striving to find the best possible home for each kitten.

Why buy from a responsible breeder?

While no one can guarantee that your kitten will never have a medical problem, a responsible breeder's commitment to ethical/responsible breeding increases your chances of getting a healthy, well-adjusted kitten.

What about the pet overpopulation problem?

A responsible breeder is acutely aware of the vast numbers of unwanted cats and kittens, and breeds for quality rather than quantity. Breeding a cat with less than ideal "show conformation" adds to the pet overpopulation problem and degrades the quality of the breed. Don't feel you can offset the cost of the kitten by having "just one litter." Alter all your pets!

How do I decide on a breed?

Visit a cat show in your community. You can find a calendar of shows by going to the TICA website at www.tica.org. At the show, take the opportunity to talk to breeders of various breeds. Find out how much grooming each breed requires, its needs and special characteristics. Cat books, magazines, and the internet are other good sources of information.

If you can't decide on a breed, or the expense of a purebred kitten is beyond your budget, consider adopting a cat or kitten from a local shelter. There are many lovely and loving cats in need of good homes. Plus, if you would like to join the fun of showing a cat, TICA welcomes nonpedigreed cats in Household Pet competition.



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Some Questions You May Want to Ask

What are the characteristics of this breed?

A responsible breeder will be happy to discuss the breed's characteristics and special requirements with you.

Some breeds require more grooming than others. Some are more active or vocal. Others may be shy or aloof. Be sure you discuss not only the breed's characteristics with the breeder, but also the personalities of individual kittens. Choose the right breed and kitten for your lifestyle and personal preferences.

Do you provide a written sales agreement that includes a health guarantee?

A responsible breeder sells a kitten only with a written contract that includes a health guarantee. Make sure you both understand the terms of this guarantee.

What diseases and conditions does your health guarantee cover?

A responsible breeder will vaccinate the kitten at least twice against Panleukopenia, Calicivirus and Rhinotracheitis. Be clear about who is responsible for conditions or other illnesses that might arise.

How are the kittens raised?

A responsible breeder puts careful thought and much care into raising healthy, outgoing kittens, and will be happy to discuss their methods with you.

Can you provide references from people who have purchased kittens from you?

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