

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF AN "IDEAL" CATTERY

Diana Fineran © 1987

For many breeders their cattery is simply their home, with ample quarters for their stud male in a large room or play pen within the home. For others queens are kept within their home and the stud male enjoys his own house at another location on their property. Still others construct warm and comfortable buildings with attached play pens on their property for all of their breeding cats. All are acceptable to the Traditional Cat Association, Inc.

These simple guidelines are being written to avoid the horror of large numbers of cats being kept in small unsafe cages in filth and stench, under abuse and neglect. One reported case was where 60 cats were kept under a tree in small cages on the ground with little or no weather protection or warmth. Another case was the use of the family home where 30 cats were kept in small, dirty, smelly cages, which were stacked to the ceiling in various rooms. In yet another case a breeder knowingly and deliberately sells cats infected with Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) to unsuspecting buyers, who end up with a dead cat, no refund of the purchase price or payment for their Veterinarian bills and are left with the possibility of any other cats they may own coming down with the disease too. These conditions and conduct are unacceptable to the Traditional Cat Association, Inc.

Like any serious hobby, that of cat breeding should not be entered into lightly or for the wrong reasons. BEFORE making any purchase do make a thorough study of cats through your local library, where a wealth of information is available about every facet of their care, genetics, nutrition, and breeding. You must desire to breed cats for personal satisfaction rather than financial gain, and you must have sufficient funds available to feed and house the cats adequately and safely, and be prepared to gain enough knowledge to care for your felines in sickness as well as in health, as newborn babies and as geriatrics. Breeding purebred cats is a hobby full of rewards, even though these will NEVER BE FINANCIAL! The Traditional Cat Association, Inc. does not support kitten mills, which is the mass production of cats in squalid conditions, abuse and neglect for supposed (though non-existent) profits.

A novice might consider the purchase of a breeding pair. Also, using any female and any male is not advisable. A complete study of the pedigrees of both must be done FIRST BEFORE the purchase to avoid passing on any defect or lethal gene. A male is not content with one queen, and can be a nuisance as a pet due to his adult tendency of spray-marking his territory. Keeping a stud male is the job of an experienced breeder. Complete knowledge of the breed you chose must be attained through lengthy study of books amply available through your public library. Once you have chosen the breed in which you want to specialize, the purchase of one or two of the very best kittens that you can afford is recommended. Two kittens will keep each other company and will provide healthy competition for one another during their formative months of growth. It is a good idea to buy UNRELATED kittens, and always use a written sales contract. In later years, having kept further stock, you can mate together unrelated offspring with your own TCA, INC. Registered Cattery Name.

Maintaining a public stud male is a matter of choice, time and facilities of the owner. Since representatives of Traditional Cats are still very rare, each breeding adult cat holds great value. Some owners choose not to have their stud male available to the public to protect him from any possible harm or disease. This is perfectly understandable given his contribution to the breed. Still,

suitable males at stud, with experienced owners, can be found, when females belonging to others are ready for mating. It is recommended to always use a written Stud Contract.

A kitten for eventual breeding should be purchased at about three months of age, but do not pass up an older kitten that shows good potential, when compared to the Breed Standard. The kitten should be properly registered with the Traditional Cat Association, Inc., and have the usual course of vaccinations. Look for a well grown, healthy kitten free from parasites that comes from a cattery or home where a program of testing for freedom from feline infectious leukemia and other diseases is carried out.

ALL CATS MUST BE KEPT SAFELY INDOORS AWAY FROM HEALTH HAZARDS AND TRAFFIC. ANY OUTDOOR ACTIVITY MUST BE DONE IN A FULLY ENCLOSED OUTDOOR PLAY PEN, OR ON A LEASH.

QUARANTINE quarters must be available, because every new cat or kitten introduced to a home or cattery must be guaranteed, fully away from all other cats for at least two weeks. This gives any disease a chance to manifest itself BEFORE the cat is introduced into the cattery. Even problems like fleas, ear mites, etc. can be discovered by a recommended visit to a Vet and medicated during this time. This is vital to saving the lives of all of the other cats in the cattery. Much heart ache is avoided through following this requirement.

All cats must be fed a sensible, well balanced diet, and encouraged to play in order to keep fit. Daily grooming will help keep their coats in good condition and their muscles toned. Such sessions also help to strengthen the bond between cat and owner, and maintain the cat's emotional needs of love, companionship, and friendship. The owner of a cattery is regarded by the cats as the "leader" of their pride, much like African lions follow a head lion in the African bush!

Before mating, a Veterinarian must check your female to make sure she is physically fit for motherhood. This is a good policy to follow for the Stud Male at the beginning of each mating season too. For those using a public stud male a Veterinarian Health Certificate is usually required before the female is brought to the male's cattery.

Though the brood queen plays a vital part in the breeding program, the stud male's role is perhaps even more important, for he may be responsible for hundreds of kittens during his working life, while even the most fertile queen is likely to produce a maximum of one hundred kittens. For this reason the stud male MUST BE an EXCELLENT example of his breed, selected for his good looks, which should approximate closely to the Breed Standard of excellence, for his general health and stature, and for his gentle temperament. He should have been well reared and from a strong litter with no genetic lethal genes. The qualities and fertility records of both his parents should be known.

STUD QUARTERS

These outlines can be used to house the whole breeding population of a cattery or just the stud male.

Keeping a stud male properly requires experience and understanding. These cats are generally loving and affectionate, but their habit of spray-marking their territory and possessions means that they usually have to be housed well away from the family's rooms, or in his own separate room. If a separate building is used, the setting is critical. The area should be sheltered from cold winds or extreme heat, and it should be possible for the cat both to sit in the sun and to find a shady spot. It is important for the stud cat to be kept occupied and interested in life during the periods between visiting queens. He needs lots of affection, daily handling and grooming. His accommodation must

be as pleasant and spacious as possible, with plenty of exercise areas, toys, a scratching post and access to suitable spots for sunning and running.

A stud accommodation should be adjacent to areas of general daily family activity. Kennels, stables, summerhouses, a separate room within the family home or workshops have all been successfully converted into stud homes. The basic requirements are a room or building, insulated against both heat and cold, tall enough to allow you to stand inside and with a large enough floor area to enable you to comfortably attend to the daily needs of the male and his visiting females, and to adequately supervise matings. It should be large enough for the male cat to take exercise during long winter months, when he may not wish to use his outdoor run, and contain vertical shelves for play. All interior walls should be lined and insulated, and all the surfaces should be completely washable. The floor, in particular, will receive very hard wear and be subjected to urine spray. The walls may be lined with laminated board or may be sealed and painted with washable paint. The floor may be tiled, cement or fitted with impervious vinyl coated flooring. All cracks and crevices should be adequately sealed. A shelf or high stool must be provided for the stud to jump to after mating. In this way he will avoid any injury from the queen's aggression after mating.

If more than one stud cat is kept, it is important that each one is housed separately, with a gap of at least three feet between each run and house. This accomplishes the easing of any tensions that may erupt.

In almost all climates, a heater with a thermostat or an over head safety heat lamp mounted in such a position that it can not be reached by the cat, and perhaps an air conditioner are necessary to maintain the cattery or stud quarters at continuously comfortable temperatures. The building or room must be ventilated properly. Clean fresh air is vital.

Before the queen is released from her quarters for mating a course woven rug should be placed on the floor and the stud house door closed to the outside run. Most stud owners keep a special mating rug for their cats. It is taken away when not in use so that it does not become impregnated with spray, and brought in specially for mating times. The stud soon recognizes the appearance of his rug and fully realizes its implication. Closing the door cuts down the area in which the queen may run around, pretending to avoid the stud cat's advances, while the rug gives her a warm place on which to roll and provides her with a surface to grip for stability during mating. After mating, the male cat will leap away from the queen on to his shelf or stool, and the queen should be allowed to settle down. Then she should be replaced in her pen to rest before a repeat mating is allowed.

The stud male's house should have an attached, safely, wired play pen or run in a pleasant location. The floor should be paved or concrete, for grass soon becomes soiled and is impossible to sterilize. It is a good idea to have part of the run covered to give exercise space in inclement weather, and the door to the stud house should be angled to avoid prevailing winds. Logs and shelves provide climbing, scratching and sunning facilities. The entrance gates must be well constructed and fasten securely. Safety is always first when building facilities for cats.

VISITING QUEENS CAGE: A pen or cage must be provided for the visiting queens in the stud cat's quarters. This cage should be draught proof, and cozy, with one side of wire mesh so that the two cats can get to know one another. It must be large enough to hold the visiting queen's bed and litter box, and have room for her to exercise and for her food and water bowls. It is best suited well above the floor, unless it is of walk in height, for the stud male may try to spray the queen's bedding and belongings if these are at floor level.

KITTENING BOX: A large cardboard box within a wire cage large enough to contain the queens litter box and food bowls serves well as a kittening place. The cardboard box and other items can be placed inside a small room in the home, also. The cardboard box is cheap, draft proof and totally disposable. The box must be placed in a spot which is kept at a warm, constant temperature, and draught free. The queen will be safe from being bothered by other cats and will feel at ease. The cardboard box should be filled with washable terry cloth towels or other soft material, which can be easily changed after the birth and frequently as the kittens grow.

When kittens get old enough to run around the house, they can be underfoot to the extent that they need a place to be put out of the owner's way for a few hours, so it is wise to maintain the kitten box for a while.

EQUIPMENT: LITTER BOX: Ideally each cat should have its own litter box filled with a clean, dry, dust free litter material. It should be kept clean at all times. When washed use a mild, unscented detergent, such as dish soap, then rinse thoroughly to make sure all soap has been removed. Dry it and then place new, clean litter inside. A good way to eliminate house soiling is having several litter boxes placed on each end of the house and in each story of the house. Providing convenience away from noise, traffic and other disturbances gives a cat the best opportunity to use the litter box. The use of harsh, strong smelling cleaners is not recommended, because these can cause lung damage to tiny, baby kittens. Also, severe cleaners can cause cats to avoid using their litter boxes. Their noses are very sensitive to heavy odors. As close to clean and natural is always best.

BEDS: Each cat must have its own bed made of soft, warm materials that are completely washable.

FEEDING BOWLS: Each cat must have its own food and water bowls. Change the water once a day. Water should be available at all times. Dishes, bowls and plates should be carefully washed after each use, well rinsed in running water to remove all detergent, and then allowed to dry naturally. NEVER offer a cat stale food!

CARRIERS: Every cat must be taken to the Veterinarian at least once a year for a check up and vaccinations. For this purpose a safe, suitable, sturdy carrier is essential. Make sure it is easy to clean, has a soft bed and is warm and draft proof.

GROOMING ARTICLES: grooming equipment must be chosen for the individual cat. Each coat type needs different brushes, combs and care. The longer the coat the coarser the comb that is needed. A rubber brush is used for taking dead hair out of a very short coat. A list of useful grooming supplies should include a comb, a flea comb, a soft brush, and nail clippers. A silk scarf or chamois leather can be used to buff the short haired coat into a bright shine.

FIRST AID KIT: Keep a first aid kit in a convenient cupboard or drawer completely inaccessible to cats. On the outside of the drawer attach a label with the telephone numbers of your veterinarian, the police and the local rescue services. Remember to replace items as they become used up or exceed their storage life. A first aid kit can include cotton swabs, hydrogen peroxide, a pair of blunt tipped scissors, antiseptic, cotton bandages of various widths, elastic bandage, a pack of small sterile dressings, elastic adhesive tape, square tipped tweezers, nail clippers, eye dropper, plastic disposable syringe, rectal thermometer, petroleum jelly, medicinal mineral oil, light anti-diarrhea preparation, antihistamine cream, pest spray made expressly for use on cats, and a roll of absorbent paper toweling. All of these items, especially the medications, can be recommended by your Veterinarian

PEST FREE: Every cattery faces the possible problem of flea infestation. Every precaution must be taken to keep the cattery free of fleas by careful and cautious use of the various products on the market. Always bear in mind that chemicals can be toxic, so follow directions exactly. A flea comb is a must. Any fungus, such as ring worm, must be treated immediately before spreading. Cleanliness and proper Veterinary care can avoid this problem.

VACCINATIONS AND TESTING FOR LEUKEMIA MUST BE MAINTAINED ON AN ANNUAL BASIS through your Veterinarian.

TOYS: Cats love to play and sharpen their claws, so an ample amount of cat toys must be provided for important stimulus and interest. Toys for cats and kittens must be non toxic, non allergic and must not have any components that can be chewed off and swallowed. The toys must be interesting and exciting to provide prey substitution for the cat. There is such a variety on the market, that these items are left up to the owners preference, knowing that the cat will always have the final say as to whether it is acceptable to her or not! A **SCRATCHING POST** is vital for the cat to maintain its claws and muscles. Most cats prefer to stand on their hind legs to scratch, so the post or board should be vertical, or very nearly so. Coarse grained wood, sisal rope wound around a post, or the back side of a piece of carpet are suitable. Powdered catnip sprinkled on the post or board helps to train the cat to scratch in the required place.

CAGES: A good cattery cage should be a minimum of six to eight feet long, six feet high and four feet wide. Each should be separated by an 18 inch space. Much like a dog kennel it should be constructed of stainless steel wire, with a sturdy, safe frame work and a cement, painted wood, or vinyl floor. The holes in the wire must allow for a free flow of air, but not be large enough for a cat or kitten to get through or to get caught in. They should be easily cleaned with shelves at different levels for the cats to jump up on and sleep.

Each cage or room must have a clean litter box, stainless steel or glass food and water dishes, a bed made from a sturdy box with a padded, washable, quilt type bed, a strong, large rope suspended from the top of the cage for climbing, and some assortment of play ground equipment and toys. A cat door can be provided to an outdoor, totally enclosed play pen, which can be sealed during severe weather.

Often females can live together in a very large cage or room. However, as each has kittens, she and the kits should have a cage or room to themselves.

Even with only two cats, a large cage or separate room to put one in, if it should become ill and need isolation is a necessity. No matter how few cats you have, this is a handy tip.

All cages, separate buildings or rooms must always be kept clean. This means almost constant work. They should be cleaned thoroughly at least every single day to minimize the possibility of disease.

An ideal cattery should have a "work area" with a table and cabinets to house various supplies.

No cattery can hope to survive without meticulous husbandry and constant vigilance on the part of the owner. The best buildings in the world, with all the sophisticated equipment one can buy, are totally useless unless the highest standard of hygiene and management is maintained. While this seems simple, in practice it is arduous, time consuming and requires a considerable amount of energy and dedication. Please be reminded that any cleaner used must be mild, and non-toxic to cats. Follow the advice of your Veterinarian.

AT NO TIME SHOULD ANY CAT OR KITTEN BE ALLOWED TO ROAM FREE!

CARE OF OLDER CATS: When a stud cat will no longer be used as a stud, the caring owner must have him neutered rather than let him live in a state of frustrated boredom. Though many neutered ex-studs may continue to spray, and are, therefore, unable to become house pets, their busy youth should have entitled them to a long and peaceful retirement. Ex-stud cats, which would have fought each other to the death during their working lives, often settle down to live out their days together.

A queen can breed quite satisfactorily for a number of years provided that she is kept fit and well fed and not allowed to produce and rear too many kittens each year. Once retired, a queen deserves the freedom of reproduction by being spayed. They make wonderful pets well into their elder years.

One of the greatest advantages of owning a Traditional Cat is their propensity to live long and healthy lives. Most live well into their teens. One was reported to be 24 ½ years of age!

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT TCA, INC.

The Traditional Cat Association, Inc. has a Mentoring Program operated by a few of our breeders. In this way new breeders have the advantage of the Mentors experience, knowledge and guidance.

The TCA, INC. Registry fully supports our breeders by issuing, Registration Certificates, maintaining a data base of all cats and litters, and publishing a Stud Book. The advantage of a central place for all Traditional Cats is essential in keeping them independent from the Extreme Types and assisting breeders in choosing breeding stock.

The goal of the Traditional Cat Association, Inc. is NOT to raise a large number of kittens each year, but to raise a VERY LIMITED number of outstanding kittens to insure each has the chance to go to a loving home. Quality NOT quantity is the goal.