FaQ: OPEN OR CLOSED CATTERY – AND WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

Answer: I have an OPEN cattery.

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A CLOSED cattery only allows people to visit when they’ve paid a deposit on a kitten. They also don’t accept other breeders’ queens to come for stud to one of their males, nor send their own queens to other breeders for stud. This means their genetic pool is smaller, because they’re only breeding with cats they own. However, these breeders usually have more stud cats than an open cattery does, to allow for outcrossing among their own breeding stock.

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An OPEN cattery is one which allows other breeders’ queens to come for stud, as well as sending their own queens to other breeders for stud, when an outcross is needed. This keeps their gene-pool large. They also allow potential customers to visit, to meet the breeder & their cats, before paying a deposit.

This is not always when kittens are on the ground, since deposits are usually paid before I start accepting visitors to view the litter. Visits to meet kittens are at 9 weeks old – 1 week after 1st vaccination. I start accepting deposits at 4-5 weeks old though, so quite often the whole litter is sold before kitten visits are possible. So if you’re not sure whether you want to buy from me, you should organise a visit BEFORE kittens are born. Between breeding seasons, and the start of breeding season (when cats are being mated), are good times to do this.

I’m open for visitors Friday to Monday, from 2pm onwards (until about 7pm).

FaQ: WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PUREBRED CAT & A PEDIGREED CAT, AND WHY IS A PEDIGREE IMPORTANT?

Answer:

A PUREBRED cat is one that has 2 parents of the same breed, or parents of different breeds that are allowed to be inter-mated to increase the gene pool. It’s purebred whether or not the parents are club-registered, and whether or not it has a Pedigree. However, without pedigree papers, you have no proof that the animal that’s \*claimed\* to be purebred, IS in fact purebred.

A PEDIGREED cat on the other hand, is same as above but is club-registered and has a Pedigree (often referred to as Pedigree Papers, or just Papers). So if an ad says an animal comes “with papers”, that means it’s pedigreed & registered.

Pedigree papers are important because:

- You know the kitten you’re buying really IS purebred.

- You know it comes from a Registered Breeder (unregistered breeders CANNOT club-register cats/kittens).

- You have your cat’s family tree for 4 or 5 generations, which is just interesting :)

- For breeders, it helps us make informed choices about which cats can be paired together, and which shouldn't.

Pedigrees will look different according to which Club issued them, but are all the same document.

Breeders don't always register kittens going to pet homes - some only register them if going for showing or breeding. If you're buying from a registered breeder but Pedigree isn't automatically included with your kitten, you can request one, but it's the breeder's choice whether they'll agree to provide one. If you want Pedigree papers with your kitten, check whether they're included before paying deposit.

**What do the terms “Registered breeder”, “Backyard breeder”, “Domestic Animal Business” etc, really mean?**
Author: Angela Watson, Anjayma Cattery

If you’re on a pet group/page or looking to buy a kitten/cat (or puppy/dog), no doubt you’ve seen a lot of different terms for breeders. What they all mean can be confusing, especially since the meaning of some of them has changed from when they were initially coined, and that the scale of breeding establishments has also changed a lot over the past 100 years or so.
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Registered Breeder:

A “Registered Breeder” is a person registered as a breeder with a cat club / controlling body / applicable organization, eg ANCATS, FCCV, GCCSV, etc. In Australia the clubs vary from state to state, with the exception of ANCATS which is a National club.

A Registered Breeder will have a "Prefix". This is both the name of their cattery, and the prefix (or suffix) in the name of all cats bred by them.

My Prefix, for example, is Anjayma. My cattery is known as Anjayma Cattery or Anjayma Tonkinese & Maine Coons, and Anjayma is part of the name of all cats bred by me: Grand Ch Anjayma Xiao Gui, Grand Ch Anjayma Kusa, Anjayma Gwenhwyfar Pendragon, and so on.

A registered breeder must:

- Be a member of a club; and
- Be registered as a breeder with that club; and
- Adhere to the rules for breeding & the breeder-ethics of that club; and
- DNA test & vet test their breeding stock as appropriate (varies breed to breed);
- Adhere to a “Breed Standard” for their cats/kittens; and
- Comply with State law for breeding establishments; and
- Only breed with pedigreed cats registered for breeding; and
- They are answerable to the club/organization they belong to if they don’t do these things

It’s not a necessity that Registered breeders show their cats, but it’s generally accepted that the better & more ethical breeders do so. Buying from a breeder that shows their cats, ensures that their breeding stock (and the kittens they produce) are of best quality, and are of correct “breed type” – ie they are in line with the “Standard” for that breed.
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Backyard Breeder:

100-120 years ago, breeding & showing dogs & cats was the province of the rich. Registered Breeders generally had huge kennels with 80-100 animals, and they employed staff to care for the animals. Even back when I first started breeding dogs in the early 1980s, big kennels of 60+ dogs weren’t uncommon.

Having this amount of breeding stock meant that breeders could develop “kennel/cattery type” in addition to “breed type”. What this means, is that all the animals from a certain kennel/cattery would have a particular “look” within the specified “look” for a breed – which was the breeder’s vision for what the ideal Persian/Siamese/Dachshund/Labrador should look like. So, I could see a dachshund anywhere in Australia, and immediately tell you who had bred it – Charlemagne kennels, Lebonstern, Elysium, etc, simply from what it looked like.

In those days, the term “Backyard Breeder” was a derogatory term for a small breeding concern with just a few dogs or cats, who may or may not have been Registered breeders. Having only a small number of breeding stock, small-scale breeders weren’t able to establish a definitive “type” or “look” for their animals, with type often being all over the place & varying from generation to generation. (Note that it’s the norm now for most breeding establishments to be on a small scale, with 20 or less cats/dogs.)

By the time I started breeding in the mid-1980s, the term Backyard Breeder had changed to mean any unregistered breeder, no matter how many or few animals they had. In Australia, the term was the basic equivalent of, and synonymous with, the American term “Puppy mill”, (since we didn’t really have a problem with puppy/kitten farms here in Aus at the time).

Nowadays, we do have puppy/kitten farms here, so the term has reverted to meaning simply “unregistered breeder”. It’s still a derogatory term inferring the person is unknowledgeable, unethical, and/or produces poor quality stock, which may or not be the case. Synonymous with “puppy farm” on a smaller scale.

Because they’re not registered as a breeder with a Club/Applicable Organisation, they don’t have to adhere to all the club rules, regulations & ethics a registered breeder does. They do however, have to abide by the same state laws as registered breeders do.
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Kitten/Puppy Farm:

This is a person or “breeder” with a large-scale establishment, and is synonymous with neglect, cruelty, poor health, and poor quality of the kittens/pups they sell.

I don’t particularly like the term “farm”, because there are still many ethical, registered breeders that breed on a large scale or have a lot of breeding cats (regardless of how many litters they actually breed each year) - as most breeders did 100 years ago when breeding was reserved for the rich. Coming from a farming family (beef cattle), I don’t see farms as something bad!

Likewise, having known many reputable breeders with 60-100 dogs or cats, I don’t see large breeding concerns as “farms”.

I prefer the American term of “mill” (or factory) – a place where the main focus, is the amount of stock they produce & the PROFIT MARGIN, not the health or wellbeing of that stock or the animals they’re breeding from.

Signs a breeding establishment is a factory/mill, not a large-scale reputable & registered breeder:

- Animals will be permanently or almost-permanently kept in a small cage.
- Animals are probably not registered/pedigreed & are not necessarily purebred
- The owner is a registered Domestic Animal Business, but not a Club-registered breeder
- They have more than, say, 6 different breeds

The worst kitten-factory I’ve visited was in the Sunbury (Victoria) area. We've all seen pics of animals living in filthy conditions in puppy/kitten mills - but these are the extremes. Conditions don't have to be dire though, for them to be cruel. On the surface, the place I visited was quite clean & the cats & kittens I saw all looked healthy ... BUT:

1. The cages were TINY. The law states that the minimum size for runs/cages is 1.5m square per cat, and it should be on more than one level (so the cat can jump & climb). However, the powers-that-be made a mistake by not giving a Minimum Floor Space. So, this farm/factory had adhered to the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law … Each cat was in a cage 1m x 1m wide, and 1.5m high, on two different levels. So basically, two 1m square x 75cm high weldmesh boxes, one on top of the other. Yes, the cats could jump/climb up and down, but they could only walk in a very small circle – and keep in mind at least half the floor space on each level was taken up by litter trays, bed & food/water bowls. For ease of cleaning, there was no solid floor, so that debris would fall to the bottom – so unless they were in their bed or the litter tray, the cats had to stand/lie on wire mesh. There were no enclosed sleeping areas – all the cats were completely exposed to the hundred-odd other cats in the shed, 24/7. This is just cruel.

2. There were several large farm sheds on the property. The largest shed (which was the one I saw inside), contained over 100 of these cages. There was NO view to the outside, anywhere. The cats spent their whole lives in artificial lighting, within a cage within a shed, with no toys or anything in the cages. No enrichment of life whatsoever.

3. In just the one shed I visited, there were probably 30 or more different breeds (plus different cross-breeds), each breed having 2-4 cats of that breed. I was only allowed in one shed – the shed containing cats of the breed I said I was looking for – so I don’t know how many different breeds & individual cats were in the other sheds.
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Domestic Animal Business (DAB):

This is the most confusing category, because technically ALL the above categories of breeders are DABs, along with pet shops, shelters & “rescue organizations”. (It’s worth noting here that “Rescues” are in exactly the same category as pet shops & breeders – they’re in the business of selling pets! The ONLY difference is that they’re selling strays & animals handed in, not animals they’ve bought or bred – and that many of them euthanise any animals they don’t sell!!!)

All businesses & individuals that sell dogs/cats, are classed as DABs. BUT, not all of them have to register as DABs.

And being registered as a DAB is most definitely NOT the same thing as being a Club Registered Breeder.

Here in Victoria, all breeders (whether registered or unregistered) must also register as a DAB with their local council, IF they own more than 9 breeding females. If they own 9 or less, they don’t have to register as a DAB. (They still have to apply for a permit to keep more than 2 cats, if they have more.) Note that these numbers can vary from state-to-state.

So whether a business or individual is registered as a DAB depends entirely on the number of breeding females they have – it has nothing to do with whether they’re a club-registered breeder, a “backyard breeder”, or a “commercial breeder” (puppy/kitten factory).

(Note that the number of breeding males isn’t counted – only the females.)
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So, in conclusion, who should you buy from? That’s really up to you, the buyer.

Reg’d Breeder:

With a “Registered Breeder” you have the highest guarantee of getting a healthy, well-adjusted & good quality specimen of the breed … but it’s not guaranteed. As with everything, there’s good & bad reg’d breeders. Check into your chosen breeders bona fides – Do they show their cats? Do they DNA test & can you see the test results? Do they test for other breed problems where applicable, eg heart scans and hip-scoring for dysplasia? Are the kittens raised in the house and if so, do they have free roam of the house or are they confined to a single “kitten room”? What sort of diet are they on? … and so on.
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Unreg’d Breeder:

With a “Backyard breeder” (ie unreg’d breeder) you also have a good chance of getting an excellent kitten, depending on how knowledgeable & responsible they are as breeders. Some have pedigreed breeding stock & used to be registered breeders, but stopped registering for one reason or another. Some have been registered breeders, but are now de-registered because they’re working on developing a new breed that their former club won’t recognize, like the Australian Tundra cat (note that those breeders are usually members of an international club/organization like TICA or the Rare Cat Breeds Assoc., as with the lady who developed the Tundra)

The main problems with “Backyarders”, is that often their breeding stock has been purchased either from other Backyarders, or as “pets” from reg’d breeders that don’t desex pre-sale (ie they're NOT breeding quality as determined by their breeder), and that they don’t DNA/health test – all these things mean your kitten probably isn’t going to be the best quality.

As far as “breed type” (how correct it is against the breed standard) goes, you may not think this matters for a pet … but if you’re going to pay purebred prices for a purebred cat, surely you want it to be good quality & conform as closely as possible to the Breed Standard? Otherwise, you may as well buy a pretty moggie. But as far as health testing goes, it definitely does matter!

Questions should be the same as for Reg'd breeders, with the addition of whether their breeding cats have Pedigree papers (so that you know that what you're buying as a Ragdoll or Burmese, is in fact a purebred Ragdoll or Burmese).
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Kitten Farms/Mills/Factories:

First, check whether the large-scale operation is run by a Reg’d breeder. If it isn’t, just don’t buy from them, period!

Yes, they’re quite often much cheaper – but it’s at the expense of their breeding stock. They can afford to sell cheaper because they don’t spend money on premium breeding stock, vet care, DNA/health testing, premium food, toys, large runs where the cats can have a healthy & enjoyable life, etc.

FaQ: DO YOUR CATS LIVE INDOORS, OR OUTDOORS IN RUNS?

Answer: Both

MALES: There are 2 reasons why males are generally in the run permanently.

1. It’s usual for stud cats to live in the outdoor run full time, except when they’re brought inside a day or two beforehand to prep for a show. This is because most stud cats “spray”. I’ve been lucky with my current Maine Coon stud Wolfie … because he doesn’t spray he’s allowed inside every few weeks, for up to a week at a time. All my previous stud boys sprayed though, so all lived in the runs permanently. This doesn’t mean they don’t get interaction with me though – I have chairs in the runs so I can sit with the cats, giving them pats & cuddles.

2. Quite often, stud males are aggressive towards kittens, or queens are aggressive towards males (& sometimes other females) while they have kittens.

FEMALES: All my girls spend time both indoors & outdoors. They take it in turns to have time in the house with me, so they all get individual attention. This is sometimes 1 at a time, sometimes 2 or more at a time. This depends on whether they get along, how many cats I feel like having inside at any given time, and whether I have kittens here.

KITTENS: All my kittens are raised in the house, and never spend any time outside.

All my runs have an "airlock" to prevent escapes.

FaQ: HOW ARE YOUR KITTENS RAISED?

Birthing:

Kittens are generally born in my bed. A few queens I‘ve had over the years have preferred to kit (in privacy) in my wardrobe. Most want to be in the bed though, with me, and insist I’m with them for the duration of their labour – and quite often for the couple of days following birth. They stay in my bed for a week.

1 Week Old:

At a week old, kittens are moved from my bed to the wardrobe. Their eyes are opening at 7-10 days old, so the dimmer light is better for their light-sensitive, newly-opened eyes. It also prepares them for the transition to a crate in the kitchen.

3 Weeks Old:

At 3 weeks, kittens are becoming more mobile, learning to walk, and starting to leave the nest. The kittens are moved to a large crate in the kitchen, which has litter-tray, food & water in it, so the kittens see their mother using these things, and learn to try them for themselves. Litter is always paper at first, until the kittens learn it’s not for eating!

4-5 Weeks Old:

Kittens are becoming more mobile now, and spend progressively longer time out of the crate for exercise & exploring, while still being confined to the kitchen. They’re learning to recognise household activities & appliances such as dishwasher & vac. They also begin interacting with whatever other cats are in the house.

6-8 weeks Old:

The kittens are now allowed to explore outside the kitchen, spending time in the front hall & lounge-room. They’re also learning to climb & use the cat tree/scratching poles. I have a litter tray in every room they’re allowed in, because at this stage they don’t have the bladder/bowel control to make it to another room – like a toddler potty-training, when they need to go, they need to go NOW, and the litter tray must be in view. After their meal & play period, they’re put back in the crate. They’re also beginning to be weaned.

8-12 weeks Old:

At this stage, the kittens are learning to be independent from their mother, and becoming fully weaned. The mother begins spending time each day outside in the run, both to facilitate this and to give her relaxation time away from the kits. The kittens have learnt bladder control now and know to go into the next room (kitchen) to use the litter tray. They have full run of the house and are rarely crated, sleeping wherever they like. They’re also learning that they are NOT allowed on coffee tables, dining table, or kitchen bench. They have their 1st vaccination at 8 weeks old, desexing at 11 weeks old (if they weigh minimum 1kg), and go to their new homes at 12 weeks old (if they’ve been desexed by then). 2nd vaccination is also done at 12 weeks old, prior to going to their new home.

16 Weeks Old:

Kitten is in its new home and should have it’s 3rd & final vaccination now. Owners can either take kitten to their vet, or if they live close enough, bring their kitten back to me for vaccinating free of charge.

(Note, I do the vaccinating myself. Kittens are vet-checked at time of desexing, or of course at any time prior if they need vet attention.)

FaQ: WHAT HEALTH TESTING DO YOU DO?

Answer:

For Tonkinese, all my breeding cats are DNA tested for inheritable diseases that can affect Tonks. This is the only health-testing they need.

For Maine Coons, they need DNA testing for inheritable diseases that can affect Coons, x-rays at 12 months old to be hip-scored (for hip dysplasia), and a heart-scan for non-DNA Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy at around 3yo.

FaQ: WHAT IS YOUR GUARANTEE POLICY?

This is Really long, so I’ll simply give you the link to the Guarantee page on my website:
[https://www.anjaymatonks.com/guarantees](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.anjaymatonks.com%2Fguarantees%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR2SJGEYxfqfUsGS-GjXWU3XP4nH3nd7_NZgc04uw9I9gW-5TUaVU7pzLDk&h=AT3iEuDKnRX1z1ciwWGfHvr54LOyrTvOPXma8ICeQG6BfyhrbPqqlmbDeSMPLrinV7cR8_llxxfaZV8TRqytLemMeBURtL9zBCf-RparqwgYe-xVLbrCm6ctmrz_dUH90a58HSSbgHTX7reuLOv21HrhCJioIw7ICFJmAJcfWS-XBkbaE79cqWjWtR5DOVHw3Lblz5CQJ27wGDPK5DM_JT3_eqtm1xGBKNtvdf6N8gKihSY_HF5rfx_9c7JWLzeuLpwZOOQHUh4ne-oyHDdOBoQ1zgRrQm9a8sNHh4oiY3tU8d9Gq7WWiQmXRkUcX5x9A6lrH7W2POHjRQmdOABMGuGmsPQRM5K7_bk34jOI8J7PHcNqc4IRGZzZgtJlR2efiJO30lQB_OZ1DHh3oHSf2yg6PUjCUb22loHqV5Lp6pPWVrhmBtas4bgGQTD6gEmzWq1tHU3AVbxzHGfvvp6WWwWj6M3ulX8AWbE1OQsZMgW47dRH0jw29e931aVFcnEwRSDeWyYasXo5LmwyUMP7ZiW6GlBpCvcvSSGQBG8fRzpONkR3KxDalvEa87Xr_q7wAP4k7wxCBv82kiA_v2EXh6trpS3YJXal5mTf-CkPRYpJbsr2L7uu0_mWg2HwEB9O)

FaQ: I WANT MY KITTEN BY A SPECIFIC DATE (FOR CHILD’S BIRTHDAY ETC). CAN I TAKE IT EARLY?

Answer: Sometimes

This can sometimes be arranged, on a case-by-case basis. You need to request this before paying a deposit, and give the reason for it. Kittens MUST be a minimum of 10 weeks old – absolutely no younger under any circumstances, and certain criteria must be met. For example, you must live close enough to me, to be able to bring your kitten back to me for desexing, and agree to do so. (You can pick kitten up again a day or 2 later.)

Note: Under some circumstances, eg delay in weaning or growth, kittens are NOT able to leave on the arranged/expected leaving date. Whether any kitten can leave early (or even at 12 weeks old) is entirely at my discretion, and my decision is final. I don’t allow kittens to leave until they’re mature enough both physically & emotionally enough to do so.

FaQ: I HAVE A HOLIDAY (AWAY) PLANNED – CAN I TAKE MY KITTEN LATE?

Answer: Absolutely, IF agreed on before paying your deposit.

I can hold kittens for up to 1 month (ie until 16 weeks old). I don’t hold them longer than that, so if you’re going away in say 6 weeks’ time, better to wait on purchasing a kitten until AFTER your holiday. Please DON’T pay a deposit without telling me about a planned holiday, and then expect me to hold the kitten for you on short notice.

I need to be able to make plans for when I’m going to breed cats, according to how many kittens I have here at any given time, and according to my own plans. I may want to have a holiday myself - even if that’s just an overnight visit with relatives - or have guests coming to stay. I may want to go interstate to a cat show. I may have a new breeding cat coming in. I may just need a (planned) break from looking after kittens!

So if a customer pays a deposit without telling me about going away near collection date, and then tells me a week or 2 beforehand that they won’t be able to pick kitten up on the collection date, I reserve the right to return deposit and sell the kitten to one of the many other people after one.

It may sound harsh, but I hope you can all be understanding of that. Please remember this is my hobby, not a business.

FaQ: WHAT HOUSE- PLANTS ARE SAFE FOR MY CAT?

POT-PLANTS

**AIR PLANTS**

(*Tillandsia* varieties)

If you don’t have air plants yet, you’re missing out. They look delicate but are easy to take care of—just soak them in water every week or two. Since they aren’t rooted in soil, kittens might think they’re toys, so keep an eye out for any wanderers.

## AMERICAN RUBBER PLANT

(Peperomia obtusifolia)

Not only is the American rubber plant non-toxic to felines, but it literally [removes toxins from the air](https://www.purewow.com/home/best-air-purifying-house-plants). A little bright sunlight, regular watering and a pot large enough for a four-foot-tall tree (they can grow up to 10 feet!) is all you need. (Be sure to go with the American version, rather than the Indian Rubber Plant, which is actually part of the fig famil

## BABY’S TEARS

(Soleirolia soleirolii)

Yes, the name implies sadness, but these teeny tiny green leaves are perfect for hanging planters and window sills.

## BLOODLEAF

(Iresine varieties)

If you have to ask how bloodleaf got its name, you haven’t seen one. The deep red and purple leaves on this plant make it a luscious choice during the fall and winter months, as long as it gets plenty of sunshine.

## CAST IRON PLANT

(Aspidistra elatior)

This is perhaps the perfect house plant for a cat owner. It requires very little attention (in fact, its name alludes to how much neglect it can handle), adds subtle personality to a room and requires an occasional wipe down of the large green leaves.

## CHRISTMAS CACTUS / ZYGOCACTUS

(Schlumbergera varieties)

Not all cacti are chill for cats, but the Christmas cactus is. Its gorgeous red flowers make it a great alternative to poinsettias during the holidays, which are not chill for cats.

## CLUB MOSS

(Cassiope lycopodioides)

If you’re a terrarium person, you’ve probably used club moss or seen it before. Its bright green leaves grow quickly, and it doesn’t need direct sunlight.

## FERNS

(Pteridophyta varieties)

OK, ferns are perfect indoor plants, but one of the trickier varieties to tackle for pet owners. Some ferns are safe while others are not, which makes attentive selection important. Stick to Pteridophyta varieties, and you should be good. For the record, the following are safe for felines: Boston, Maindenhair, Bird’s Nest, Staghorn, Asparagus, Ball, Blood Sword, Rabbit’s Foot, Duffii, Dwarf Feather, Verona and Christmas.

## IMPATIENS

(Impatiens varieties)

Impatiens are some of the most popular garden stars come spring. Potted versions—in orangey-red or deep purple—can brighten up your place without destroying your cat. Also, they like shade, which works well for spaces with limited light

## ORCHIDS

(Phalaenopsis varieties)

Nothing says elegance like a tall, regal orchid. It demands respect, just like a proud feline. Keep the soil moist but not soggy, the sunlight ample but not scalding and your orchid will thrive. Maybe.

## (SOME) PALMS

**Parlor Palm**(Chamaedorea elegans) and**Bamboo Palm** (Chamaedorea seifrizii)

Palms are terrific house plants because they make a statement without requiring too much maintenance. We recommend the parlor palm with its chic, sleek lines and the tall, slender bamboo palm. Avoid fern and sago palms, which could harm cats if ingested.

## PRAYER PLANT

(Maranta leuconeura)

These plants are lush additions to decor as their big leaves offer tons of texture. They also love humidity, so do really well in a bathroom.

## PURPLE VELVET PLANT

(Gynura aurantiaca)

The leaves of the purple velvet plant are, you guessed it, a bright plum purple, making it the perfect accessory to your many green house plants. Sometimes, it produces tiny orange flowers, too.

## SPIDER PLANT

(Chlorophytum comosum)

Spider plants are very 70s-80s, so you may remember them from your mothers, grandmothers, or even great-grandmothers garden. My grandma had several of them, and they always remind me of her ☺ They’re like mini green explosions - dangle them from the ceiling or let them overflow as a centerpiece. They like it cool but can thrive pretty much anywhere. Kinda like your cat.

## (MOST) SUCCULENTS

Succulents are trendy, easy to care for and the perfect addition to everything from a bookshelf to a bathroom. Just take note and avoid the few that are unsafe for cats: Aloe, Jade, & Pencil cactus.

**VINES**

**Sweet Potato Vine**(*Ipomoea batatas*) and **Swedish Ivy**(*Plectranthus verticillatus*)

Vines add so much “oomph” to an indoor garden. Hanging planters are pretty much made for overflowing bright green tendrils like the sweet potato vine or long, dangling glossy green leaves like Swedish Ivy. Be sure to keep the soil moist (and steer clear of toxic ivies like branching, California, English, needlepoint and sweetheart).

VASES

## BABY’S BREATH

(Gypsophila paniculata)

Chances are if you get a mixed bouquet of flowers, you’ll end up with baby’s breath in it. It’s simple, elegant and kinda reminds us of snow. (Make sure it’s not maiden’s breath you’re displaying! Looks similar, but the flowers are larger and dangerous for cats.)

## CORNFLOWER

(Centaurea cyanus)

These periwinkle-hued beauties are the perfect detail to a farmhouse- or rustic-chic decor. They add color without being too presumptuous (also a good substitute for carnations, which are bad for cats).

## HIBISCUS

(Hibiscus rosa-sinensis, Hibiscus syriacus)

These beauties have big personalities and about 1,000 colorful options (yep). For a taste of the tropics, go for hibiscus instead of amaryllis, which is poisonous to cats. If you’re feeling really brave, go for a potted hibiscus tree, and bring inside when it’s flowering.

## ROSE

(Rosa varieties)

Thank goodness these are safe around cats! Its best to cut the thorns off to make sure kitty doesn’t prick a paw by accident.

## SNAPDRAGON

(Antirrhinum varieties)

Snapdragons make gorgeous centerpieces. Be sure you’re getting Snapdragons and not the similar-looking Foxglove, which is very toxic.

## SUNFLOWERS

(Helianthus annuus)

Nothing says “happiness” like a bouquet of sunflowers on the dining room table. Even a single yellow blossom can improve a space! (Just be sure you’re buying the real deal and not a daisy in sheep’s clothing. Daisies are toxic to kitties.)

A word of warning: Be sure to quadruple check the scientific name of any plant before buying, as some varieties within the same family aren’t as safe as others.

FaQ: WHY DO YOU GIVE PREFERENCE TO BREEDERS OVER PET OWNERS?

Central to a Breeders ethics & reasons for breeding, is the aim of “improving the breed”. The breeder may be working on correcting a fault in their lines, increasing their gene pool, helping to eradicate a genetic disease or deformity in their chosen breed, or even establishing a new breed (under an approved & licensed Experimental Breeding Program).

In all cases, from time to time we need to buy new breeding stock from other breeders. And it has to be top quality breeding stock, with as few minor faults as possible. So with the aim of “improving the breed”, it’s a breeders RESPONSIBILITY to either keep the best quality kittens when needed for their own breeding program, or to make them available to other breeders … this means 1st or 2nd pick of the litter.

That’s why, if you read the litter listings on the Kittens pages of my website, you’ll see that EVERY litter has 1st and 2nd pick kittens reserved for breeders. They’re not necessarily sold to a breeder yet … but they’re reserved in case I want to keep one, or another breeder wants to buy one. If one or both become available to a pet home, all the “pet” buyers are moved up the list, and the last 1 or 2 kittens are listed as available.

Beyond this though, if a kitten is going to a PET owner who wants to show their kitten, that person is moved to the top of the pet-buyers list. This is because as with breeders, they need the best quality kitten in a litter. However, the best quality kitten isn’t necessarily going to be show quality. If it’s not, then that person is moved to the Next litter.

FaQ: HOW DO I GO ABOUT PURCHASING ONE OF YOUR KITTENS?

Firstly, I don’t do individual announcements except for breeders – pet buyers Must either follow FB or website. I also don’t advertise Kittens Available anywhere except FB & website. I advertise my cattery, but not kittens.

I don’t keep a waiting list. When I announce I’m taking deposits on a litter, everyone has the same chance to obtain one, but with a bias towards those people who follow my Facebook page or website regularly (since those are the people who’ll see my Taking Deposits Now announcement quickly). I start taking deposits at 4 weeks old.

When I announce I’m taking deposits, you should send an application via email, Contact Form on home page of my website, or Message from my FB page. Include information such as:

* Sex, colour & pattern you’re after, and whether those are fixed, or preferred but open to anything.
* Preferred temperament & personality of kitten
* Whether you work full-time, part-time, from home, or don’t work.
* Your approximate age (young, middle, elderly)
* Number of children & ages (or grandchildren if they visit frequently)
* Whether you have a disability that will affect the temperament/personality you’ll need in a kitten/cat.
* Whether cat will be indoor only or indoor/outdoor, and if indoor/outdoor whether you have or will have a cat run/enclosure.
* Whether you’d like to show your kitten, or are open to trying it.
* For Tonkinese, whether you want Pedigree papers. For Maine Coon, they’re always included.

Please note that I don’t judge against anybody based on the information provided. It’s all simply to help me decide which kitten will be best suited to each different home. Eg a gentle one for very young children or elderly; a very playful one for older kids & teens. However, I generally have 20-30 applications for 2-5 kittens, so whether your application is successful will depend on if I have a kitten I believe suited to you. If not, try again next litter.

I do individual notifications for each applicant. If you’re successful, I’ll give you banking details to pay deposit by direct-debit. While I understand that some people would prefer to meet kittens before paying deposit, I don’t accept visitors to view kittens until they’re 9 weeks old (1 week after their 1st vaccination). But, most kittens are sold within a week of my Taking Deposits announcement, with people choosing by photo & my recommendation. So if you prefer to visit before paying deposit, it’s likely you’ll miss out unless one of the buyers drops out. Deposit is $100 for Tonks and $200 for Coons. Balance is payable IN CASH on pick-up.

FaQ: WHAT’S INCLUDED IN PURCHASE COST?

Inclusions:

2 x vaccinations. 3rd vax is included in purchase price if you live close enough to me to bring kitten back to me to have it done. Otherwise, you’ll need to take it to vet for 3rd vax (Not included in purchase price)

Microchip

Treated for all internal & external parasites

Registration papers.

Sample bag/s of Raw Meow Mix vitamin powder, to add to kitten’s meat. You’ll need to order your own full-size bag if you’re going to continue feeding raw meals.

FaQ: WHAT DO I NEED TO HAVE & DO, WHEN I TAKE MY KITTEN HOME?

Your kitten comes litter trained, and has been started on training to use scratching post & stay off tables. It’ll be used to being allowed on chairs & beds. Although the kitten is litter trained to the point of going to another room to use the tray, it’s trained to the point of a potty-trained toddler … that is, it knows to use the litter tray, but when it needs to go, it needs to go NOW. For that reason, when you first take your kitten home, I advise having a tray in whatever room the kitten is in, until it learns the layout of your house. If you put food & water bowl in the room that will be the permanent litter-tray room (laundry, bathroom, or kitchen), that will aid the kitten in knowing which room to go to for tray.

Kitten will also be very used to dishwasher & vacuum, and somewhat used to washing machine & dryer.

Kitten may want to rest & have some quiet time when you get home, or it might be keen to explore. Either way, initially put kitten in a room where there are no hiding places it can get under or behind. Leave the crate in the room for kitten to retreat to, if it wants to hide away & have a sleep.

You should have a litter tray already set up in case kitten needs to toilet – which is likely if you live more than 30 mins away from me. There should also be a bowl of water & a SMALL meal. Don’t be concerned if kitten doesn’t want to eat straight away. It may still be full from its last meal, or may be a bit stressed & not feel like eating.

Having some FELIWAY spray on hand is a good idea. This is a pheromone spray that relieves stress. Available online from pet suppliers, large pet stores, & vets. Kittens crate will already have been sprayed with it by me, but it won’t hurt to spray it on a few surfaces around the room/house.

Don’t introduce kitten to your other pets straight away – give it a chance to get used to all the new sights, sounds & smells first. When you do introduce them, have kitten in its crate at first, to keep it safe from any aggression by the existing pets. Drape a cloth over 3 sides of crate, so kitten can retreat to the back if it needs to feel safer. If after 20-30 minutes there’s been no growling or retreating, you can let kitten out of crate. Don’t force kitten to leave the crate, let it come out when it’s ready. Hold the existing pet at first when kitten exits crate, to be double-sure there’s not going to be aggression (or overly keen, rough, or in-your-face overtures to play). It’s always tempting to pay a lot of attention to the new kitten, but make sure you continue to give the existing pets MORE attention than the new one is receiving. This will help to avoid jealousy towards the newcomer.

You'll need:

FOOD:

3-4 meals per day:  1-2 meat, 1 tinned, 1 dry.

* Leave dry food out all the time, for ad-lib feeding
* Breakfast/dinner, it doesn't matter in which order you give the tinned or meat meal.  1 for breakfast, the other for dinner.

Head to the Taking Kitten Home page of my website to see the foods your kitten is used to eating
<https://www.anjaymatonks.com/taking-your-kitten-home>

LITTER:

* Crystals.  I use The Catessentials Crystal Litter from Pet Circle, but CatSan from Coles is also very good.

TOYS ETC:

They're using & love the Jute Dome Scratcher, the Melody Chaser Bird, and the Bliss Tweet Mice from Pet Circle.

I buy most of my products online from Pet Circle.

GROOMING EQUIPMENT:

​Tonkinese:  A slicker brush and a bristle brush.  Brush once a week; daily during moulting.

Maine Coon:  A slicker brush, a bristle brush, a wide-tooth comb and a narrow-tooth comb.

Give a light brush/comb daily, and a thorough brush/comb weekly.  Pay special attention to front armpits,  groin & behind back legs, and tail, since these are the areas that tend to mat.  It's a good idea to also give a bath once per week, so your MC is used to bathing when it NEEDS a bath.  Your kitten will already have been bathed once or twice before leaving home, and MCs do love water! **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

FaQ: HOW MUCH SHOULD I FEED MY KITTEN/CAT?

I often get asked this question, and it’s a bit difficult to answer. Because I have so many cats, I count it in kilos of meat & number of tins per day, so it’s hard for me to quantify how much to give individual kittens & cats.

It also depends on a variety of factors: the cats age, size, activity level, whether its desexed or not, type of food given, and so on.

As a general rule, an adult cat should eat 2% to 4% of its bodyweight per day.

- If cat is overweight, feed 2% of bodyweight until it reaches ideal weight.

- If its underweight, give 4% of bodyweight until it reaches ideal weight.

- If its weight is ideal, give 3% of its bodyweight. Then adjust accordingly if the cat begins to gain or lose weight.

EASY QUANTITY GUIDE

2% of 1kg is 20g, so cat should have 20-40g per day, per kilo of bodyweight.

1kg cat = 20-40g meat ... avg 30g

2kg cat = 40-80g meat ... avg 60g

3kg cat = 60-120g meat ... avg 90g

4kg cat = 80-160g meat ... avg 120g

5kg cat = 100-200g meat ... avg 150g

6kg cat = 120-240g meat ... avg 180g

For kittens, they should be fed as much as they want to eat – NEVER limit the quantity for a growing kitten.

If you’re feeding tinned or dry food, go by the feeding guide on packet. If feeding meat, weigh the meat raw.

I raise my kittens on a variety of different foods (including raw meat, cooked meat, tinned fish, air-dried/freeze-dried meat, and kibble), because I want them to be able to adjust easily to whatever diet their new owner wants to give them.

But without question, the healthiest diet for cats is human-grade meat with a vitamin/mineral powder added to it, with some fish a couple of times a week, and this is the main diet for all my cats. My recommended meal completer is Raw Meow Mix.

FaQ: WHY IS SHOWING IMPORTANT, AND WHY SHOULD I BUY FROM A BREEDER THAT SHOWS THEIR CATS?

Cat (or dog, horse, rabbit, poultry etc) showing isn’t just a beauty contest. No matter what sort of animal, all breeds have a Breed Standard. This describes what the perfect specimen of that animal & breed should look like. The Breed Standard describes everything from head & body shape & size, to ear size & placement, length of tail, angulation of joints, length & texture of the coat, allowed coat colours & patterns, and the colour & shape of eyes.

At its core, a show is an exhibition of breeding stock. All breeders must breed to the Breed Standard, and at a show each animal is judged according to/against that Standard, and against each other.

* First the animals in each class are judged against each other.
* Then the winners in each class are judged against the winners of the other classes, to get the Best Of Breed.
* The Best Of Breed winners are judged against each other to get the Best In Group.
* The Best In Group winners are judged against each other to get the Best In Show winners in each section (Kitten, Adult, Neuter, Companion).
* And lastly the 4 Best In Show winners are judged against each other to get the single Supreme In Show winner – the Best of the Best.

Now, when you’ve been breeding for generation after generation, it can be easy to get used to the look of your own animals, and stop noticing faults. It’s easy to notice major faults – tail kink or cross-eyed, but it can be difficult to notice minor faults when all your animals have that fault – something as small as the ear shape, size or placement being not quite right. We call that being “cattery-blind”. Showing alerts you to the fact that your animals ARE or AREN’T adhering to the Breed Standard; to their good points & bad. If you never win, you know you’ve got a problem. And if you win consistently, you know you’re doing it right.

But what does that mean for you, the customer?

You may think “I’m not planning to show my cat, so it doesn’t matter if its show quality” – but if you’re going to pay the money for a purebred & pedigreed cat, you should want one that’s a good representative of its breed. ALL animals have faults, minor or sometimes major, but if you’re buying from a breeder that shows & consistently wins, you can be sure that any kitten you buy from them is going to be a good representative of its breed. Whereas if you buy from a breeder that doesn’t show, the animal may be good, but it may be atrocious (compared with the Breed Standard), with numerous major & minor faults.

You can simply ask the breeder whether they show, but how do you know whether they consistently win, and whether their breeding stock is of good quality? You ask to see the Kittens Pedigree Papers (or, if kitten isn’t registered yet, the parents Pedigrees). It can be difficult to read a pedigree if you’re not sure what you’re looking for. For the purpose of generational quality & whether the cats come from breeders that show, you’re looking for the cats’ Titles. It’s common for females not to have a title, since you can’t show them when they’re in season, pregnant, or lactating (which accounts for about 75% of the year!). But most if not all of the males on the pedigree should have the minimum title level of Champion. This means their name will be proceeded by the letters Ch or CH for Champion, Gd Ch for Grand Champion, Dbl Gd Ch for Double Grand Champion, and so on.

So a cat that isn’t titled yet will have just its name - Anjayma Quin Song.

- When it’s got a Champion title, the title preceeds the name, so it’ll read ANCATS CH Anjayma Quin Song or (FCCV CH Anjayma Song Li, etc). The first set of letters is the club – Ancats, FCCV, GCCFSA, etc. The second set of letters is the title.

- When it’s a Grand Ch the name will read ANCATS GD CH Anjayma Xiao Gui. (Gr is sometimes used in place of Gr for Grand– depends on the club.)

- When it’s a Double Grand Champion the name will read ANCATS DBL GD CH Icecoons Wolfsbane.

- The highest title level is I think Diamond Triple Grand Champion. Very few cats attain this level.

- A cat may have titles with more than one club. In that case both are listed, so it would read ANCATS Sapphire Dbl Gd Ch & CCCA Gd National Ch Kodiakcoons Almighty Avalanche.
The cat is a Sapphire Grand Champion with one club, and a Grand National Champion with another club.

- A National title is much more difficult to get than a standard one, because the cat has to win in a certain number of States, which means travelling to shows interstate.

FaQ: WHY DO YOU GIVE PREFERENCE TO PEOPLE WHO WANT TO SHOW THEIR CAT (OR ARE WILLING TO TRY SHOWING) ?

Initially, shows (whether dog, cat, cattle, sheep, horses, or any other animal) were exhibitions of Breeding stock (and at their core still are). Cat shows have moved beyond that now though, with classes for desexed animals and even Companion animals (purebred cats without a pedigree and domestic cats). So you no longer need to be a breeder to show your cat – pet owners are very welcome.

When I open a litter for applications & deposits, I give preference to those who will show the cat, because:

1. I love my hobby, and would like to get other people interested in it.
2. The more people that enter shows, the more shows a club will be willing & financially able to hold, benefitting everyone that shows their cats, whether breeder or pet owner.
3. Similarly, the more entries there are in each show, the better the quality & number of prizes the Club can afford to give.
4. If only breeders are showing their cats, then the Judges are only seeing the quality of breeding stock – not the overall quality in a breed. I believe it’s important for them to see the overall quality of the various breeds.
5. It’s advertising for us & increases our standing with other breeders.
6. Breeding cats are only eligible for some Titles and Awards, according to how many Champion progeny that cat has produced. So the more progeny of any one breeding cat that are being shown (& Titled), the more awards that parent cat is eligible to gain.

FaQ: IF I WANTED TO GIVE SHOWING A TRY, WHAT WOULD BE INVOLVED?

1. You don’t have to be a club member to enter the club’s shows, you just need to have the cat registered to you, if it has a Registered Pedigree.

It’ll say on your Pedigree Papers whether the cat is in your name or the breeder’s name. If it’s in the breeder’s name, the breeder will be listed as both the Breeder and the Owner. If it’s in your name, the breeder will be listed as the Breeder and you will be listed as the Owner. If your cat came with Pedigree papers & the breeder is listed as the Owner, send them to the club to have the cat's registration transferred to your name.

So you don’t need to join a club to try out showing, but if you decide you want to go on with it, you should join, because show entry fees are cheaper for members.
2. Look on the club’s website for its Show Calendar, and choose a show to enter.
3. Fill out form (on the website) to enter the show. In all Aus states bar SA,

- Longhairs are Group 1,
- Orientals Group 2,
- Everything Else except domestic is Group 3,
- Domestic (or unregistered purebred) is Group 4.

Your cat should automatically be entered in correct class according to the breed, DoB, sex, neutered/entire etc info you put on the entry form.
4. You'll need a show cage with curtains. Enquire with the club if you can hire a cage - you often can for your first show. For the curtains & cushions, there's usually a stand at the show selling them, so take say $50 cash with you to buy some. Make sure you get a satin curtain set not plush, especially if you have a Longhaired cat (it’s a real nuisance removing fur from plush.) If you can’t hire a show cage, you'll need to buy one from a pet-shop or online. You should get a metal folding crate large enough for your cat to lie down fully stretched out.

(Note: For people in Melbourne who’ve bought a kitten from me, I lend you show cage & curtains etc if we’re going to the same show.)
5. For the week or 2 before show, brush/comb your cat Every day, to remove as much loose coat as possible. For longhairs, a bath 2 days beforehand is best. For shorthairs a rub over with baby-wipes is usually ok, but a bath is better. Two days before the show you should also cut claws, clean ears, nostrils & eyes with baby-wipe or damp cotton-ball. On the day, check again that nostrils, ears & eyes are clean, and give cat a final brushing before placing in show cage.
6. Stuff you'll need to take to the show:

- Grooming equipment; brush, comb, baby-wipes

- Feliway - spray the cage/curtains with this before putting your cat in. No spraying allowed in hall - do it outside.

- Small bowls of food & water for kitten, or just water for adult

- Show crate with curtains & cushion.

- Litter tray: a tupperware container with lid. Litter MUST be either paper pellets or wood pellets (no crystals, clay, sawdust, wood shavings, sand, etc).

- Some $ for canteen and stalls

Chairs are provided, you don’t need to take those.

When you arrive at the show, it's best to leave everything in the car, and go into the hall to find where your cats will be placed.  There will be Entry Numbers on your show confirmation email.  Inside the hall there'll be benches that the cages go on, and number cards placed on the benches.  Find your number card/s, and put each cat's cage where its entry number is.  Then take the number card & put it onto the cage.  You can either just thread it through the bars, or you can use a bit of tape to tape it to the cage.

Put the tray, food &/or water in the cage when you arrive at show. Just before judging starts, remove all 3 from the cage. When judging breaks for lunch, put them back in cage, and remove when judging is about to recommence.

Puppy & kitten scams are a huge problem, as in this article:

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/sydney-arrested-over-alleged-role-in-91k-puppy-scam/79321945-bb17-4418-875c-adbae513f897?fbclid=IwAR0ggd2gyLeFJtKYMy_BSmlzHL6WeBWc3MHOrhqmvz-gMk4es2b31jcxX9U>

Ways to make sure you're not caught out by a scammer:

1 - Don't buy off Gumtree. It's backyard (unregistered) breeder & scammer central. Instead go to sites like Perfect Pets and Cats Of Australia.

2 - Don't look at the kitten ads on those sites - instead look at the Breeder listings, and enquire with the breeders.

3 - Google "cat clubs Australia". Go to the Breeder Listings on each club's website, and enquire directly with the breeders listed.

4 - If you are looking at buying from a kitten ad, ask for the person's name, phone number, email, website/Facebook page, Prefix (cattery name), Club, and Membership No for that club. All Registered Breeders will be happy to give you those details (except some won't disclose phone number, or their address unless you've booked an appointment to visit). Then go to the Club's website & look at the Breeder listings. All the details the person has given you should match the Breeder Listing.

5 - It is possible for a scammer to steal someone's details from a club's Breeder Listing, and then give a fake street address. To make doubly sure, phone or email the club and check that the street address the person has given you, matches the club's records for that breeder.

6 - Scammers will copy photos of pups/kittens from a Breeder's website, or images from an image-search on the net. To see if the photo is from someone else's ad or website etc, you can do a Reverse-Image-Search, and that will show you the photo's source. If there is no source, you can be sure the photo is of the person's own animals. How to do a Reverse-Image-Search is here - it's very easy

[https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/1325808...](https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/1325808?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en&fbclid=IwAR28A-BaT_m1ws-DL6T4mjTdDjXqpWEPyNqV6XLj56J9jyYW_oF1PhSrmQg)

**CATS AND EMOTION**

Most people realise that animals have emotions, but many don’t equate them to being EXACTLY the same as our own. They imagine that although animals feel, they don’t feel emotion as strongly as we do.

GRIEF:

I often have people enquiring about a new kitten to “fix” the loneliness an existing cat is feeling after losing a companion. It’s important to realise that your cat isn’t just lonely or missing having A companion. It’s grieving the loss of THAT companion.A new kitten isn’t going to just magically stop your existing cat’s grief – they need to go through the period of mourning exactly the same as we do. A couple of examples:

Personal grief:

As a breeder, I obviously have a lot of cats. When I lost my first Tonkinese Lucy [at 21 years old], my grief was intense, for months. In spite of having 5 or six other cats in the house, the house felt empty without her. I had a couple of litters of kittens on the ground at the time, but they didn’t fill the void Lucy left either. They didn’t fill me with the joy kittens usually do. They didn’t stop me grieving the loss of Lucy. If your cat loses a close companion of 15 years, it’s going to feel exactly the same way as I did then, with the same intensity.

Cat’s grief:

Eight years ago, I was very ill, and couldn’t care for all my cats. All except one were either sent out on loan to other breeders for a year, or sold. I kept just Lily. Lily’s mother and daughter both left at the same time, and she was bereft. She grieved strongly for abut 6 months, and the intensity of her grief surprised even me. Birthing a litter didn’t stop her grief. Bringing her daughter back home didn’t either, as she was still grieving her mother. A new cat in the home won’t stop your cat grieving the loss of the one that’s gone.

What should you do?

1. Recognize that your cat is feeling the same grief as you are, and possibly even stronger – particularly if they’ve been together for their entire lives, if they’re siblings or parent/child.
2. Allow your cat to deal with its grief in its own way. It may walk around the house, calling constantly – recognize that it needs to cry, even if the noise is bothering you. It may be withdrawn and want to be left alone – let it, even though you may want to cuddle it for comfort. It may want to be comforted with more cuddles and affection than usual – give it, even if it’s annoying you that the cat is being clingy.
3. Allow yourselves that period of mourning. Realize that just because you feel ready for a new pet, your cat may not be. This is not to say you shouldn’t buy a kitten when you’re ready. It won’t replace your old cat, but will be of comfort, especially if you have children at home. But it won’t necessarily comfort your cat.

LEAVING HOME:

When customers come to choose [and/or collect] their new kitten, they’re meeting kittens that are happy, playful, and confident. Sometimes the customer will contact me a day or two later, upset that their kitten isn’t the same happy confident kitten that it had been at my house. Maybe it’s crying all night, or it’s not eating, or it’s hiding and won’t come out, or it’s struggling to get away every time you pick it up. “Put yourself in their shoes” is such a trite comment, that we generally don’t actually do that. It can be hard to imagine how someone feels, especially if it’s something that’s totally foreign to you. Imagine this scenario:

You’re say 8 years old. Suddenly, strangers kidnap you. They don’t speak your language, so you can’t understand anything they’re saying – not even your name, since they’re calling you something else. They’re kind, give you cuddles [that you don’t want], new toys, and don’t hurt you. But you don’t know them, and you’re terrified. You don’t know where you are. You don’t know where your parents and siblings are, nor understand why you’ve been taken away from them. You don’t know when you’ll go home, or whether you ever will.

You try to hide, but they keep finding you and dragging you out. You struggle to get away, but they’re too strong. You might scratch them in defense, and then they yell at you, frightening you even more.

You don’t want to eat because the food tastes funny – it’s not what you had at home. You were able to grab your favourite toy or blanket, but they’ve taken it away and given you a new one [or washed it] and it doesn’t smell like home anymore.

There might be an older child there, but when the adults aren’t looking, the child bullies you. They may push you over, hit or bite you, take your toy or blanket or food. It might not even be human [cat] – it could be an alien, or a wolf!

As well as the fear & bewilderment, you might also be feeling grief, the same as if someone had died. You cry and cry for your mum – but she doesn’t come.

This is how your new kitten feels. A new home, at first, isn’t the joy for them that it is for you.

What should you do?

1. Ask the breeder what food the kitten is used to and give it that food. Don’t change the food for at least a month, and then introduce new foods slowly. Ditto milk, litter, litter-tray type, plate/bowl type, etc.
2. Don’t immediately change its name. Instead add the new name to its old one. Say the kitten is called Lily, and you want to call it Bean. For a few weeks, call it Lily-Bean, and then slowly drop the “Lily”. In my case, I don’t name kittens unless I’m keeping them – I call them all “Kitten”. So call it Tom Kitten, or Kitten-Joe, then after a few weeks slowly drop the “Kitten”.
3. If the kitten comes with a toy &/or blanket from home, do NOT wash it, or throw it away because it’s old. Kitten needs it for the smells and comfort/familiarity of home.
4. Give kitten a small, quiet area, safe from children and other pets. Make sure food, water and litter tray are close by [in the same room]. Don’t relegate it to the bathroom or laundry just because you don’t want litter on the carpet or whatever. The room needs to be warm, comforting and quiet, with places to hide if the kitten wants to.
5. If kitten wants to hide, you can try to coax it out, but if it doesn’t want to come out, don’t force it.
6. You can pat kitten or pick it up for cuddles, but as soon as it wants to get down or go, let it. Don’t force it to be held because you want a cuddle.
7. Don’t leave it alone with other pets or young children. Always supervise, and remove it from other pets or children if they’re being too rough.

Sometimes too, people ask to take a kitten young [younger than I let them go]. The thought and comments are “so that the kitten bonds with them better” or “so that it adjusts quicker/more easily”. It’s actually the opposite. The younger a kitten is, the less equipped it is to leave home, and the greater the danger that it’ll have emotional problems at first, and possibly ongoing throughout its life.

LEAVING HOME - From the mother's point of view.

I also have the mother’s emotions and physique to take into account. If kittens are suddenly taken away when too young, the dam experiences grief, and spends all her time pacing around, searching and calling for them. She also won’t have had time for her milk to dry up enough. She needs time to emotionally & physically separate from them naturally, which happens as a process beginning at about 6-7 weeks old. This is when natural separation Begins, not ends.

• It starts with her beginning to wean them at around 6 weeks old. She’ll start refusing to feed them whenever they want it, only feeding them when she needs milk taken off.

• At 8-9 weeks old she starts wanting to spend time away from them, for longer periods, and in a separate room instead of just out of their reach in the same room. At this stage, she’s also becoming less tolerant of them “rough-housing” or annoying her, and begins to teach them discipline. This period of teaching & discipline given by their mother, is a vital part of a kitten’s development.

• By 10-11 weeks old she’s usually spending very little time with them – just going to them twice a day [morning and night], when she needs milk taken off.

• From 11-12 weeks old, she usually doesn’t see them at all, but they are still there for her to visit, if she’s stressed. This is more common with first-time mothers, and those old enough to be having their final litter.

• 12-14 weeks of age is when they’d naturally be driven off if they were in the wild, and this is when I allow them to leave.