

Proteges "GOTTA HAVE IT NOW" syndrome

I have noticed that the primary interest of most Protégés is to acquirebreeding "stock" as fast as they can, often without doing enough research into the quality, lines, health, genetic diversity and other concerns that a more experienced breeder would have investigated before adding any new cat to their cattery. I call it the "Gotta Have It Now" syndrome.

New persons to breeding/showing are terribly flattered if any breeder offers them initial cats/kittens for their program. They want to have an instant cattery, and cannot conceive that a breeder would sell them unsuitable cats for their program. It doesn't occur to them to think about the kinds of questions they ought to be asking about the kitties, in regards to their suitability to the goals of the new person's cattery program. Often, they are intimidated by the "Big Name" breeder's reputation, into not feeling free to ask the kinds of questions that they ought to be doing, to be sure the kitty in question, is the one they really NEED to be a proper foundation for their program.

Compounding this, there are some truly nasty breeders out there, some with very winning cats in their own cattery, who are perfectly thrilled to take advantage of a new person, selling them substandard and/or chronically ill kitties at inflated prices! Apparently there is NO disciplinary function available in CFA or other registries, to rein in those who do this over and over to unsuspecting new breeder/exhibitors. We are unable to keep new persons from making these tragic mistakes, unless our Mentoring Program gets to them first.

We must, as the CFA Mentoring program, impress upon ALL newbies that they need to SLOW DOWN in the acquisition of initial cats, get a working Mentoring relationship going FIRST, and then let their Mentor guide them to learn how to investigate whether a particular kitty is appropriate for their particular vision of the colors/breeds of cats they wish to produce. The contacts of an ethical Mentor, whom is not looking to merely make "satellite" catteries down from their own, can be valuable starting points for new persons to see what styles are out there

that will fit the standard for the breed. Meeting a variety of successful breeders who work in their chosen breed, talking with them about their breeding/showing philosophies, and having them evaluate their cats in person, to help the new person start to learn their "living standards" is invaluable to the process of becoming knowledgeable in their breed. How can new people possibly hope to know for themselves whether a given kitty is really suitable for their program, without going to shows in the company of their Mentor, and meeting everyone they can in their breed? It is vital homework for all breeders/exhibitors.

It is popular these days for protégés to surf the internet, looking at cats from cattery websites, and think that they can skip the "hands on" experience of going to a show, and evaluating living cats, and talking to real breeders/exhibitors. How else can they understand the politics of whom is working with whom, what styles are winning, what lines are healthy, if they don't have this mentoring experience? It is our task as their mentors to guide them through the minefields of ongoing breed disputes, helping them to stay out of problems until they can make up their own mind about what stand they want to make, if any. It is our tasks to not only teach the the basics of animal husbandry for cats, but to inspire them to the highest standards of personal conduct in all their dealings with the Cat Fancy, and to enable them to embody their vision of the breed standard into healthy, well-socialized kitties that will build a sound foundation for the future of the breed. We need to emphasize our commitment to building the great breeders of the next generation, by helping them see that slowing down in acquiring initial cats, is in THEIR best interest!

Cheers, Candice Massey
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