

## **Why are registered cats so expensive?**

People see that pedigree, pet kittens are sold for more money than they would pay in a pet store or shelter, and assume that breeders must be making a profit. It's hard to understand how expensive breeding is without actually trying it. Reputable breeders will never make money; this is a hobby. I hope this outline will provide insight to pet owners who question prices & profits of breeders:

### **GETTING STARTED**

#### **1. One female kitten with breeding rights**

To purchase at least one very good female kitten with breeding rights from an established breeder can be very difficult to find. Finding a female (queen) who is registered and has an excellent pedigree can also be quite a task. In addition, the queen needs to be an outstanding example of her breed, absolutely sound and cosmetically much better than pet quality.

Outstanding examples of the breed don't grow on trees and so the price of a breeding queen is much higher than a pet quality kitten.

Next, every time a breeder buys a new kitten or cat for breeding he/she must make certain that the cat is healthy and won't transmit any diseases, parasites, or genetic defects to the kittens (or to other cats already living in the home). The veterinary testing includes a physical exam and a stool exam for parasites. When you start with a kitten, that baby will need its annual vaccinations and deworming in addition to the check-up. Our breeding girls and boys have been tested clear for HCM (heart disease), PKD (kidney disease) and FIV/FELV. Hip x-rays must in my opinion, be graded by a professional.

#### **2. Stud Service. It's MORE expensive and much more work to keep your own stud, so this cost is assuming you can find a good stud to use.**

The new breeder must both purchase an excellent stud and build him stud quarters, or he/she must locate a breeder with an excellent stud who is willing to provide stud service. Stud owners will ask that the queen come to the male's home for breeding. That means travel, driving or flying, food for the cat, etc.....

Owning a stud outright not only costs the initial expense of the purchase price, but most breeders want their male cats to be shown to the title of Grand Champion or higher. To do this means more expense. And if the title wasn't a requirement, the only way other breeders would want to use your male (which could provide some inflow of money), is if he's known on the show circuit. That cost would be two to three times as great as it was for a female. And most important, the upkeep of a stud male is also much greater than a female.

### **3. Registration fees (Will vary according to the association you belong to).**

The breeder must pay to register their cattery name with at least one cat association (I am registered with Cats QLD Inc. and yearly renewal is required), register their new breeding queen, register their Stud male and must register each kitten produced. It is compulsory for the breeder to belong to at least one cat club to be able to register kittens.

### **4. Kitten rearing equipment**

The breeder needs special equipment to rear litters of kittens. The breeder needs clean rags for bedding and disinfectants, feeding tubes and feeding syringes for weak or sick kittens, Wombaroo Cat Replacement Milk (if there is a kitten who needs supplementation or if the mother had a C-section), life booster for new-born kittens, a whelping box, at least two small litter pans for kittens, an accurate scale to weigh kittens, first aid and kitten delivery kit (latex gloves, Betadine, millions of paper towels, eyedroppers, tweezers etc.).

### **5. Advertising, breed promotion, networking etc.**

The breeder needs to advertise her kittens, promote her cattery, promote her breed, and network with other breeders. Most catteries now have as their primary form of advertisement, a webpage. These can be professional or not. A professionally designed site can be very expensive.

Our primary advertising is done on our Facebook page and website.

### **6. Forms, phone calls, and other modes of communication**

The breeder must have a sales contract and other cattery forms and must take photos of breeding cats and all kittens for cattery documentation, advertising, and other purposes. The breeder must make many phone calls, including long distance phone calls, as a courtesy in returning calls received from kitten clients and even those merely curious about the breed. The breeder must also do long-term follow-up on every kitten sold, telephoning or emailing new owners regularly to answer questions and nip problems in the bud. All these forms of communication come at a cost that is hard to estimate accurately. Luckily, with the advent of the worldwide web, email saves time and money towards communication.

### **7. Showing, supplies and the travel associated with showing**

Reputable breeders can be found exhibiting their cats at a few cat shows per year. Showing your cats is a tool used to verify you are producing pedigree cats that meet the breed standard. There is almost always travel involved, not to mention supplies such as shampoos (or sending the cats to a parlour), cages, combs, travelling crates etc....

## **MAINTAINING ADULT CATS**

### **8. Routine care for breeding cats**

Food, litter, routine veterinary bills, and other basic maintenance costs will vary depending on the quality of the food and litter, the number of toys and special furniture items purchased for the cats and more.

### **THE COSTS PER LITTER**

Even once you have the kitting equipment and other overhead expenses taken care of, there are additional costs incurred per litter. They include:

Litter for the kittens

Wet Food

Dry Food

Toys

Feeding bowls

Litter trays etc.

### **9. Feeding the queen**

A Queen will eat up to twice as much as usual during her pregnancy and up to three times as much as usual while she is nursing the kittens. She needs special premium quality food that is approved for pregnancy and lactation (I use Hill's kitten or Royal Canin kitten dry food).

### **10. Kitten Formula**

Kittens can die within hours if they don't get enough to eat because of a feeding problem. So you need to keep emergency formula, feeding tubes, and feeding syringes on hand. The formula needs to be purchased fresh nearly every time you have a litter. I use Womboroo cat milk replacer for any newborn kitten's requiring extra help if need be.

### **11. Total food for kittens**

The kittens will begin to eat solid food at age 4-6 weeks and will be eating almost entirely solid food at age 8 weeks. At age 8 weeks, each kitten eats about two 85-grams wet food per day rated for growing kittens and will eat perhaps 1/8 cup of dry premium kitten food each day. What they don't eat, they spill soil, scatter, or play with until it must be discarded. The kittens will stay with the breeder usually until age 12 weeks - and sometimes for much longer.

## **12. Vaccinations, deworming & microchipping**

The kittens will require two vaccinations (one while they are with the breeder, possibly both). The kittens will also be wormed at least twice and be microchipped.

## **13 Spaying/neutering kittens prior to placement**

We spay/neuter each kitten prior to adoption. We believe this is responsible breeding that prevents new owners from unintentionally failing to spay female kittens in time to prevent accidental litters and also prevent sicknesses like cat AIDS, Pyometra and Ovarian cancer. Breeders aim to preserve their breeds but they also wish to avoid adding to the numbers of homeless cats on the streets and in shelters.

## **14. A vet visit for a minor problem with a kitten**

In virtually all litters there is at least one kitten who during his 12 weeks living with the breeder requires veterinary attention due to an umbilical infection, getting poked in the eye, falling off a table the wrong way, developing an upper respiratory infection, developing a minor eye infection during the period when the eyes are starting to open, needing a re-examination after neutering or many other possible calamities. Kittens are like small human children. They have a talent for getting themselves into scrapes or picking up bugs.

## **15. Possible C-section**

Occasionally, the queen requires a C-section to deliver her kittens or may require treatment after the birth of the kittens due to diarrhoea, intestinal obstruction, mastitis, haemorrhaging, uterine infection, or other complications. The costs associated with treating these problems may run very high for an emergency after-hours C-section. Also, if a C-section is required up to half of the litter may die due to side effects of the anaesthesia. Kittens may also be lost due to the effects of complications on the queen's milk production.

## **16. Pyometra (A uterus infection, that can become fatal)**

Female cats can go into season every 2 – 12 weeks. Obviously they cannot be mated every time, as they also need a break from breeding to regain condition and to “rest” the uterus. The more a female comes into season without being mated, the higher the risk is for Pyometra. Most vets will spay a cat as this is the preferred treatment, but it is not economical to spay a breeding queen whom you have spent thousands on to import, thus there is a very expensive treatment available.

## **17. Registration**

Each kitten must be registered and one kitten might be kept for breeding.

## **ECONOMIES OF SCALE?**

Well, you say, maybe if a breeder buys more than one breeding queen and starts raising more litters per year, THEN a profit can be made. Unfortunately, it turns out that with cats the more breeding cats, the higher the cost climbs.

First of all, there won't be a best-case scenario with all the litters produced by every cat; breeders are usually more in debt from some cats than others. A percentage of the breeding cats purchased will also turn out to be un-breed-able, die unexpectedly, develop pyometra [here are 2 links (the 1st link may upset sensitive viewers): <http://www.breeding-cats.com/pyometra.html>

<http://www.vcahospitals.com/main/pet-health-information/article/animal-health/pyometra-in-cats/330>

As the number of cats climb beyond one or two, it becomes nearly impossible to continue using stud service. Multiple queens can't ALL be shipped long distances on a regular basis. Also, the stud service provider may be unable to offer the stud services needed when the queens are in season. They have cats of their own which need breeding. So a stud is purchased. That means special stud housing that will cost at least several hundred in materials and several hundred more in equipment (e.g. special cleanable surfaces, cat scratch posts, trees and other niceties for the stud house). Now the stud must be maintained all year round whether he is siring litters or not.

If multiple queens have been purchased, problems may arise with them all co-existing. In some cases, an unhappy cat can be confined to a room, separate from the stud quarters, or she may just need to be spayed and adopted out to keep the peace.

Usually, breeders find home remodelling a necessity. With multiple breeding cats and several litters of kittens born per year, separate rooms are needed to isolate not only a stud, but young fragile litters. Cleanable, bleach-able surfaces are essential for disinfecting because having litters around all the time greatly increases the risk of infectious disease. It becomes extremely difficult to keep carpets clean in a house of multiple cats, especially with young ones underfoot all the time, and is why many breeders choose to replace the carpets with tiles or similar cleanable surface.

It is possible to keep a home sanitary and odourless when having multiple healthy and happy breeding cats, but it requires money and time.

With multiple cats and multiple litters there will, despite the best of vaccination and quarantine systems, occasionally be epidemics. These may be minor or they may be serious, but they always mean large vet bills. It's very much like running a day-care centre full of young children who succumb to every new virus and bug that's out there. A common, minor case of upper respiratory running through the house will run the costs of the antibiotics plus the consultation fee at the vet. Another common, yet worse, case is ringworm in a cattery. Good breeders, even with excellent sanitation in the cattery, occasionally bring infectious disease home from cat shows, the vets, etc. To properly treat ringworm, all cats in contact

with the infected cat should not only be cultured, but treated over a long period of time. Proper treatment will last months and cost hundreds. Additionally, the cattery must be “closed” which means no cat or kitten can leave during the infected time (thankfully this has never happened in my cattery).

### **So why do breeders bother to breed multiple cats and litters?**

Because we want to keep the breed going, also hopefully improve the breed and we love our cats more than our money!

A **backyard cat breeder** or **kitten mill** is **not registered** with a cat registry and has **no affiliation to a cat club or association**. Whilst some may have 'purebred' cats, they follow none of the guidelines or breed standards laid down by the cat registries. These cat breeders have no interest in the cat's welfare, health or breed standard. Backyard breeders produce as many kittens as possible for monetary gain and sell their poor quality kittens via internet 'shops' or via pet shops. They give reputable cat breeders a bad name!! All registered cats come with a pedigree that will be stamped/signed by Cats QLD Inc.

Kittens are sold as follows:

- With a contract
- Spayed/neutered
- Duly checked by a Veterinarian
- Treated for worms & fleas as a precaution
- Vaccinated x 2
- Microchipped
- Litter trained
- Registered with Cats QLD Inc.
- With a kitten food starter pack
- Kitten leave our home at 10-12 weeks of age

### **General**

There is absolutely no denying that your kitten will live a longer, safer life if kept indoors. Kittens allowed to roam freely are subject to a number of risks from sources including sickness, vehicles, dogs, predators, or humans who would steal them or harm them. Your kitten can live very happily indoors, and there are ways of giving him or her the best of both worlds – **Rather indoors and fat than outdoors and flat...**