

# **BACKYARD BREEDERS AND FREE-ADS**

By Annie Wedge

A prospective kitten buyer's first port of call is often the papers offering advertising for free such as Free-ads and the many free online advertisement websites such as Pets4homes, Preloved, Craigslist, Gumtree etc. There are also many Facebook pages popping up these days selling kittens.

You would think this would be the ideal place to find your pedigree kitten, but **BEWARE**. Contrary to being the ideal one-stop shop for buyers, these are often also the ideal one-stop shop for unscrupulous kitten sellers too. These are known as 'backyard breeders' and they sell under age, unregistered, un-vaccinated and often sick and unhealthy kittens.

Some reputable registered breeders also use these paths for selling kittens and these decent breeders generally stand out a mile from the backyard breeders. But don't be confused, even if the seller is a registered breeder, it does not necessarily follow that they are reputable and do everything properly.

A backyard breeder's main interest is money. Unfortunately, this is usually at the expense of the health of the kittens they are selling. They will sell to anyone who is willing to part with their cash and sell to anyone regardless of the type of environment the kitten will end up in. Here are some warning signs to look out for:

## **Re-homing before the age of 12 weeks:**

The Registration Authorities, GCCF, TICA, FIFE and GCCFI (Ireland), stipulate that their registered breeders are breaking their Code of Ethics if they allow kittens to leave for their new homes before the age of between 12 or 13 weeks depending on the Registry, and if they find a breeder doing so the breeder may be disciplined by the Registering Authority should they find out. Many backyard breeders sell their kittens way before this age, usually as young as 8 weeks old.

## **Unvaccinated:**

Registration Authorities stipulate that kittens go to their new homes after having their two sets of vaccinations, usually at the ages of 8 weeks and 12 weeks, and some Registries recommend that the kitten should not go to their new home for 7 days after the course has ended. A breeder who doesn't adhere to this could be endangering the kitten's future life by sending it out into the world without the immunisation it desperately needs and could be disciplined by the Registering Authority should they find out.

This type of breeder also has little or no consideration of genetic or health problems in the breed.

## **Registered or not:**

For whatever reason the backyard breeder tells you, if the kitten's mother and father are registered and on the Active Register, there is **NO** reason why your kitten shouldn't come to you already registered by one of the Registering Authorities and with a Pedigree Certificate with at least 3 generations of ancestors.

Backyard breeders sell unregistered kittens for a number of reasons:

## **The mother and/or the father aren't registered.**

If either the mother or father or both aren't registered by one of the Registering Authorities, none of their offspring can be registered either. No kittens can be registered with any Registering Authority if this is the case.

### **The mother and/or father are registered but on the Non-Active register.**

This means that they were sold as pets and no progeny from them can ever be registered. In other words, a reputable breeder may have sold the mother and/or father as pets and it would stipulate on their registration slip that the kitten is on the Non-Active register. This is because they are of inferior quality to that expected of the breed. Unfortunately some dishonest people will tell a reputable breeder that they want a kitten as a pet only. They do this because they get the kitten at 'pet price' knowing full well that they will flout the Kitten Contract they sign with the breeder that states that the kitten has to be neutered by a certain date. They later breed from their inferior kitten knowing that they can't register any kittens or sell them via the Breed Club websites. Consequently the backyard breeder will then tell a prospective buyer that they are selling the kittens unregistered because that way they can sell them cheaper, whereas in fact it costs only approx £9 per kitten to register with the GCCF! It won't be till later, if the new owners try to register their kitten, that they find out the truth. They won't get any recourse from the backyard breeder, who was previously all sweetness, and who is now silent or abusive and won't want to have anything more to do with you now that they have pocketed your hard earned cash.

*Remember, if your kitten isn't registered you will never know if you have a pedigree kitten or not.*

### **Cross-breeding:**

Another reason a backyard breeder is so called and cannot sell their kittens via the legitimate route is because they are cross-breeding. This means that they are crossing a pedigree cat of one breed to either a pedigree cat of a different breed or to a bog standard everyday moggy. Apart from a myriad of health risks, all you end up with is a non-pedigree kitten, or in other words, a moggy.

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### **Websites:**

A lot of backyard breeders have their own fancy websites and some are elaborate and highly convincing. But **BEWARE**, this does not mean they are a legitimate breeder.

It just means they are good on the computer!

All the above send backyard breeders to the free-ad papers and free advertising websites, so **BEWARE**. Study the advert closely to decipher whether the seller is a reputable breeder or a backyard breeder – the signs are there if you look closely, or if you don't get the right answers when you phone them.

### **A tip for you:**

If you see an advert on one of the free advertising websites with a phone number, type the number into Google and see how many times it comes up. If there are loads and loads of results showing, with different breeds of kittens and cross-bred kittens, I would steer well clear – it's sure to be a backyard breeder advertising!