

## **The Real Costs of Cat Breeding**

by Lynne Thomas

Do you think that cat breeders charge too much for their purebred kittens? Do you think that you might like to start breeding cats for fun and profit?

Breeding Purebred Cats is rewarding but it's a true labor of love, a hobby and not a business that makes money. To be a reputable breeder who sells the healthiest kittens, raised in the best possible environment, you may be interested to know the costs; not just the financial outlay but the cost in terms of the breeder's time, effort, lack of sleep and heartache as well. This is not a joke. Everything listed here are legitimate and quite normal expenditures required to breed quality kittens. Cat breeding is not an endeavor for the faint of heart or the light of pocket.

### **FOR EVERY LITTER THE MOMCAT NEEDS:**

- FeLV/FIV testing for both Sire and Dam
- Blood Type testing for both the male and the female
- Travel: taking or shipping the queen to stud and the return fare
- Stud Fee, usually the price of a pet kitten
- Extra Food (3 times the amount of a cat's normal diet)
- Supplements for the Queen during the pregnancy and while nursing.
- Extra feeding means extra cat litter. Lots of extra cat litter
- Veterinary check-up and vaccination two weeks before the kittens are expected
- Possible complications at birth, e.g. caesarian, uterine inertia, hysteria, milk failure
- A caesarean section at the emergency clinic will cost you more than you paid for your queen and the kittens aren't likely to survive. Sometimes your queen dies too.

### **THE OTHER COSTS BEFORE THE KITTENS ARE BORN:**

- To buy a queen, you probably need to spend 2-3 times the price of a pet kitten.
- All the expense of raising a cat until she's a year old and can get bred
- Driving to the Airport or the Stud Owner's house
- Driving to the Vet and/or the Emergency Clinic
- Lack of sleep for 7-10 days out of every month when the queen is in screaming season until she can be safely bred. Your family will complain and your neighbors might call the SPCA
- Extra cleaning and the cost to replace ruined things when the Queen sprays during her heats
- Zero sleep for two or three day and nights in a row waiting for the kittens to be born
- Time off work when kittens are expected. If the birthing is unsupervised, there will be kitten mortality in almost every litter.
- No time for friends or family when kittens are expected

**FOR EVERY LITTER THE KITTENS NEED:**

- Registration of the litter and each kitten
- Blood typing
- Kitten milk replacer for weak kittens/hand-rearing
- Supplements
- Veterinary treatment for common kitten ailments, e.g. swollen eyes, gastro-intestinal upsets, lack of appetite
- Special weaning formula for kittens at 3-5 weeks

- Feeding kittens 3-4 times a day from weaning until they're ready to leave
- Even more extra cat litter for kittens

- Kittens' litterboxes need changing and washing every two days.
- Inoculation: Vaccines at 7 wks., 10wks., and 14 wks.

- Rabies vaccine
- Worming at 10 and at 12 weeks
- 14 weeks: Spay or Neuter, Veterinary check up

- Kitten (and cat) destruction like antiques, vases, lamps, upholstery, torn curtains, etc.
- Toys for kittens
- Advertising: The cost of membership to breeder listing websites, business cards, pamphlets, flyers, magazine ads, yearbook ads....

### THE OTHER COSTS OF HAVING KITTENS

- The emotional price of the grief you will suffer when kittens die?

- The cost of a necropsy for every kitten that dies.

- When you will breed kittens with heritable genetic defects like Cardiomyopathy or Spasticity and you will have to refund the money for the affected kittens, spay and neuter both parents, and every cat from those lines. This has happened to me twice. Can you afford to start over?

- Ringworm. Sooner or later you will get Ringworm in your cattery and you will have to buy very expensive oral meds. You must bathe every cat every day and dip them in Lyme Sulfur and your whole house will stink. You must fog with anti-fungal treatment every room, every day. In about three months, your cattery might be clear of fungus if you're lucky but many breeders have a constant battle with it for years.

- The cost of keeping every kitten you breed that has a defect or special needs.

- Supplies: kittening cage, kittening box, bedding, fogger, towels, heating pads, hepa filters, reverse osmosis water filtration system, air exchange unit, cleaning products, betadine, forceps, hemostat, surgical scissors, nursing equipment, tube feeding equipment, nebulizer etc.

- Tube feeding blood type incompatible kittens for the first 24 hours.

- Digital camera and imaging software to send pictures to you prospective kitten buyers and to keep your kitten buyers updated with weekly pictures

- Keeping your house constantly warm enough for your cats and kittens to thrive

- No vacation or nights away for at least 16 weeks
- Lack of sleep to feed kittens every two hours if they can't nurse
- Extra cleaning; scooping, feeding, fresh water bowls, sweeping, washing
- Socialization time to cuddle, talk to and play with the kittens many times every day
- Tons of extra laundry
- Keeping small or sickly kittens longer
- Keeping kittens to honour new owners' vacations etc.
- Time for kitten inquiries by phone and Email
- Time for visiting kitten buyers. Say goodbye to your weekends.
- The costs of refunds, return shipping and Veterinary requirements if, for any reason the cat is ever returned
- Care, feeding and re-advertising cancelled or returned cats / kittens
- Caring for and feeding any kittens that you don't sell or have health problems and can't be sold
- Refund or replacement kitten if a one you sold has a congenital or hereditary defect or if the kitten dies
- The cost of surgery if a kitten of your breeding has a congenital or hereditary defect like luxating patella or hip dysphasia

#### THE COST OF KEEPING ONE MALE

- Your stud should be the best cat in your breeding program and he must be unrelated to your queens. That means you will have to pay more for him than any other cat, which may translate to 4-5 times the cost of a pet kitten
- Each male needs at least three females per year to breed
- The expense of raising him until he's old enough to breed
- Show expenses
- The replacement and/or cleaning of all the things in your house that he will spray

-A room of his own or pen big enough to house him in comfort because he can't run free once he is actively breeding

-Some breeders have stud houses built on their properties. They are fully self-contained, with poured concrete foundations are heated and have electricity.

-Vet bills for him and Doctor bills for you if he gets near another whole male and you have to break up a fight

-Yearly testing for FeLV and FIV

-The time it take every day to clean up his urine from the floors and walls and every surface in the room

-Washing the bedding he's urinated on every day

-Changing his litter and washing his litterbox every day or every second day

-Replacing drywall, baseboards and flooring ruined by his urine

-Replacing the bedding every few weeks as it gets tattered from too much washing

-The smell: If you don't clean up properly and constantly, your family and friends will complain about the smell of a male cat. No one will come to visit you any more and the TV repairman might call the SPCA

-Lack of sleep and general stress from having to listen to the screaming of a tomcat day and night

-Your neighbors are going to complain about the noise and might call the SPCA

#### IF YOU DON'T KEEP YOUR OWN MALE

-You will have to pay a stud service of at least the price of a pet kitten and that is if you can find someone who will allow you to use their male

-You will have to pay the costs of getting your female there and back

-Your female might not get pregnant the first time or the second time and you may lose your stud fee

-You are responsible for any Vet care that your cats needs while being boarded at the stud owner's house

-Your cat is very likely to come back sick and she can make all your other cats sick because every cattery has it's own viruses and your cat has no immunity to those diseases.

#### GENERAL COSTS:

-Registration fees for each cat and kitten

-Purchase of five-generation pedigree for each cat

-Supplies: cages, carriers, carrier covers, beds, toys, scratching posts, cat trees, pedigree program, filing system, litter boxes, grooming equipment, cleaning and disinfecting products, water filter system, air exchange/filter system etc.

-Food and litter. Every week you need more food and litter. If you spend the extra money for the best food, you will have fewer Vet bills but the weekly costs never go down and when you have kittens, you can easily double your food and litter bills.

-Replacement of vases, and lamps that get broken by your cats. You most expensive and irreplaceable heirlooms are the first things to get knocked over.

-Replacement of furniture, blinds and curtains and everything that can get chewed, peed on scratched or vomited on

-Re-painting the interior of the house twice as often as people with no cats

-Cattery helper / pet sitter if you ever have the time or money to take a vacation

-Annual subscriptions to cat associations & registering bodies

-Annual dues for all the Cat Clubs you belong to

-Subscriptions to cat magazines

-Books

-Lectures and courses on genetics, cattery management and breeding practices etc.

-Long Distance phone bills to call your Vet, your breeder friends, your prospective kitten buyers, your follow up calls to kitten buyers and calls to get cats out of rescue situations

-Internet, Website Designer, Domain Name yearly registration fee, Domain hosting

-Your life will become a routine based on the needs of the cats. Foods, water, litter duty three times a day. Every day. Day in day out.

-On at least a weekly basis, you will need to groom all of your cats: bathe, clip claws, clean ears, etc.

- A thorough Veterinary exam and inoculations once a year for all your adult cats
- Every year or two, your adult cats will need dental work
- Time: time to learn about cats, cat breeding, the standard of your breed, research, communicate, follow up and more. You will never stop learning and you can't afford not to take the time
- The time and money you must spend to rescue any cat of your breed in trouble if it is in a shelter near you
- Legal fees for advice on writing a binding contract for your State or Province
- Legal fees to pursue buyers who break your contract

#### CAT SHOW COSTS:

- Cattery helper / pet sitter while you are gone.
- Dues to more cat clubs
- Travel and time to go to club meetings
- Entry fees for shows when exhibiting
- Traveling to & from shows (can be very long Distances)
- Hotel accommodation, airfare and meals
- Grooming bench, grooming and conditioning products
- Time off work to attend shows. Say goodbye to more weekends.
- Show supplies: cages, carriers, drapes, beds & furnishings
- Extra time for training & handling show cats
- Veterinary examinations before each show

If you've ever considered breeding cats for a hobby or a business, please read the above three or four more times and ask yourself if you can think of three good reasons why you would want to do this.

Perhaps now you can see that this is a hobby for the truly committed or for those who ought to be committed. Your pet kitten, raised with love and care by a dedicated professional breeder, is priceless. Whatever the breeder charges is not enough.

This is a general idea what a breeders work consist of..... Every breeder has their own way of raising their babies and what is best for them. Not all breeders agree with the same protocol. But we all have the same interest in mind. That is to raise the healthiest of babies.

By Theresa Abeita