

# Dealing with Kitten Buyers

I have been very fortunate to have been able to indulge in my hobby of breeding and showing Abyssinians with my husband for almost four decades. There have been highs and lows; the highs fortunately far out riding the lows.

There is, however, one aspect which has always remained on the low side, and that is finding suitable homes for the kittens which we do not want to retain for our breeding program.

We often have people waiting for the right kitten to come along; they know what they want as far as colour and gender are concerned and they come unsolicited because they have had a Merindalee kitten before or they have been recommended by someone who owns one of our kittens.

Before the Internet we had few avenues open to us for advertising the availability of our kittens. Usually it was an advert in the paper or a pamphlet pinned up at the Vets clinic or on display at a cat show. Now we can access the world through the many websites available to advertise our kittens. This has been very helpful, but it also creates the problem of the “casual browser” who is not very serious about buying a kitten but makes contact as if they are. We partially solved this problem by asking them to fill out a form on our website and submit it to us; this gives us some information about them and their life style. We have been criticized for asking people personal questions, but our answer to this is that anyone who is serious about buying a kitten from us must prove that they are going to provide a suitable home and are worthy of having one. Some of the questions we ask are about their living accommodation, is it near a main road? Are they going to allow the cat to go outside? Do they have children? Do they own any other pets, etc.

I spend many hours emailing people or talking to them on the phone. I send them photos of the kittens and invite them to come and meet them when they have had their first vaccinations. This is the part that I don't like, in fact I **hate** it.

Most buyers want to visit before they buy which is fair enough; they need to be happy with the kitten they have reserved. It's fitting into a time that suits both them and us. Most want to visit at weekends or evenings if they are working. The evenings we have now clamped down almost entirely as by 7pm both Karel and I have had it for the day. We have little interest in talking cats, holding off our tea until they decide to turn up or showing them the father of the

kittens after dark. We are also concerned about complete strangers visiting after dark these days too.

Weekends, we have to fit in with their kids' netball, footy, their shopping or anything else they put before visiting us. This usually means it ends up in the afternoon. Even though we can do other things ourselves during the day, it breaks the day and is something you have to get back home for.

Then there are the buyers that waste our time visiting when they really have no intention of buying and plan to visit other breeders to see exactly what breed they want first. They walk out and most do not even telephone or email to let us know their decision, leaving us wondering if they actually want one of our kittens or not.

Then there are the people that order a kitten but when we ring to arrange a viewing time they have bought a kitten from another breeder... grrrr. This leaves us swinging when we have reserved a kitten for them that could have been offered elsewhere.

Most annoying are the buyers that delay pick up time. They are perfect buyers in every way and have ticked all the boxes and left a deposit. They then ring a few days before the due pick up day to say they have either a business trip or are going on holiday and could we hold the kitten until they return – often very inconvenient.

The biggest gripe of all is buyers' time keeping. A large percentage, are rarely on time. If the appointment is made for say 2pm. one is looking at the clock at 2.20pm and wondering if they have forgotten and whether we should ring them to ask. By 2.45 the phone rings, we know immediately that there will be an excuse for their late arrival. The usual one is, oh we didn't realise the traffic would be so bad and we are still 15 minutes away. We know darn well that they started out late in the first place – that doesn't matter to them they are only looking at kittens! Bang go any arrangements you have made for the rest of the day. If you have someone else visiting on the same day, and they are on time, then there is often a clash causing an awkward situation.

Some people come prepared for a long stay; they have photos of their past and current cats etc, and long stories of how wonderful they are and what tricks they used to get up to. We do like to know about their pets but when they have arrived an hour late and spend another two hours visiting I tend to glaze over.

Then there are the people that call with all the family in tow. You open the door to find mum, dad, two kids, their two friends plus mother in law.... You feel like this is a day out at the zoo for them.

When they collect their kitten at 12 weeks we have it all to go through again. Yep. Not happy, Jan ☹

On the brighter side we have met some very interesting and lovely people and enjoyed their company. A few have remained firm email friends and regularly send us photos of their kitten(s) as they grow. It gives us a warm feeling to see a photo of our kittens asleep with a dog or in bed with its "Mum and Dad" or the children

*A couple of anecdotes – Very few people who come and view the kittens go away without buying one. There have been times when we have refused to sell kittens to people because they did not meet our requirements though. Here are two of these instances:*

### ***Eileen Pittaway***

Merindalee Abyssinians, Melbourne

*:: A very rich horse breeder from the East of Victoria arrived in his very expensive car to collect his kitten. He was very loud and arrogant and made the remark that every animal on his property had to earn its own living and he wanted a cat to keep the vermin population down. He was a very large man weighing about 120 kg and 190 cm tall and Karel then had the unpleasant job of seeing him out of the door and into his expensive car without the kitten. When he returned I poured him a very stiff whisky!*

*:: A lady arrived with a young boy about 5 years old. The lad came into the room, walked up to the first kitten and gave it a hefty kick. Thirty seconds later they were walking out of the front door without the kitten. Mum was crying but the boy could not give a hoot and gave the front gate another hefty kick as they left!*

## **A LITTLE NEWS FROM NEW ZEALAND**

Hi George,

I can report that the NZCF has now officially changed ruddy to tawny and sorrel to cinnamon. Otherwise, due to earthquakes, I have no show news to pass on.

:-) Gail Warwick

## **Whatever Happened to Sue Jentsch?!**

I have been asked that a number of times, by people wondering why her name has disappeared from winners' lists. I can assure everyone that the answer is simple and not at all sinister. In early June, Sue and Queensland Aby breeder Michael Shawn were married in Brisbane, and Sue became Sue Shawn. She moved to Brisbane – kit and caboodle – the following week, and as far as I can tell, has been happily living there ever since. Here are some photos

*George Kennedy*





**The newlyweds**



**Sue with son, Cory, and Wendy Newton**