

Scratching the surface:

A preliminary report into the breeding and sale of cats in the UK



Executive summary

Cats are one of the most popular pets in the UK. The latest survey shows that 25 per cent of the UK population has a cat with an estimated population of 11.1 million cats¹. They are also prolific breeders and can start breeding from around four months of age. While surveys show high levels of neutering of owned cats (between 88 per cent² and 92 per cent³) this still leaves approximately 900,000 unneutered cats (over 444,000 of which are female). One unneutered female can have up to 18 kittens in one year. Neutering is vital to reduce the number of unplanned litters. The age at which a cat is neutered is crucial. Traditionally, cats were neutered from six months of age, but as kittens can reach sexual maturity and breed from four months, a number of animal welfare charities are working together to support neutering at four months of age⁴. Education is also needed to dispel the myth that having one litter is good for a cat. The practice of cat breeding presents a complex picture, and breeding for sale is emerging as a significant factor affecting cat welfare and cat population. However this area remains under-researched.

A working group of the Canine and Feline Sector Group came together in 2015 to review evidence of cat welfare problems arising from the breeding and sale of cats, identify research needs and make recommendations. The working group comprises Cats Protection (chair), Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, Blue Cross, British Veterinary Association, the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy, International Cat Care, PDSA, and Wood Green The Animals Charity.

Evidence from classified advertising websites shows there are many who see a commercial opportunity from breeding and selling cats, particularly kittens. The evidence from online advertising sites also indicates the predominance of the kitten market over the market for older cats. This market will continue to exist (even if animal welfare charities offer cats and kittens). People now buy on impulse online. We

know that many purchasers want to avoid the adoption processes of welfare charities and prefer the immediacy of buying a kitten via the internet. In the context of an impulse purchase there is a concern that purchasers should remember that they are buying a sentient creature.

There is a significant online market offering kittens. Kittens are mostly offered for sale, not for free. The prices sought for kittens can be high, often over £50 and commonly into £100s. There is also evidence of a growing market in unusual kittens – those with some pedigree heritage or pedigree crossbreeds. Often if a non-pedigree is crossed with a pedigree the kittens are offered as being unusual, possibly being perceived as especially pretty kittens and these kittens can demand high prices of as much as £350 and more. It is important to note that kittens and cats offered as pedigrees may not actually be pedigrees but are often fake pedigrees offered for “pedigree prices” around the £1,000 mark.

Classified sites also report evidence of advertisers who repeatedly place advertisements for kittens over relatively short periods. These repeat advertisers, who can be detected by filtering out repeat names, addresses and phone numbers, are an indicator of large scale activity likely to be of a commercial nature.

The classified site Gumtree has picked up through online filters those who advertise different kittens for sale repeatedly, for example an advertiser advertising 432 different kittens over a period of just 8 months. At the lower end of the market (£50 per kitten) that would generate £21,600 and at the higher end (£500) £216,000.

A key concern is that kittens offered for sale may not be healthy or not properly socialised ie: they have not become accustomed to human contact and interaction as young kittens. Often the buyer is unaware of the possibility that

the kitten may be sick or diseased or have behavioural issues linked to inadequate socialisation. Poor socialisation may mean a kitten will be fearful of people later in life and not make a suitable pet. There is also evidence of kittens being offered for sale when they are not old enough to leave their mothers. There are no laws in the UK specific to cat breeding: cat breeding is unregulated even though regulation does exist elsewhere in the EU.

UK law on pet sales (including sales of cats and kittens) is currently out of date and has loopholes. Effectively a home-based 'pet shop' can avoid the need to have a pet shop licence, often claiming the kittens sold are offspring from the family cat and that the breeder is operating as a 'hobby breeder', not as a business. Without licensing there is little scrutiny of these 'hobby breeders' and 'pet shops' operating often from residential premises.

There is also evidence to suggest that those who breed and sell cats may not be declaring income from cat breeding and sale. More investigation is needed by HMRC.

Not enough is known about the purchaser experience and the range of problems (welfare and other issues such as

misrepresentation) that arise when kittens and cats are purchased from those who breed and sell. The whole area would benefit from further research. Some pedigree breeds are of special welfare concern if they are likely to have breed deformities and associated health problems or genetically-linked disease.

The focus needs to be on promoting good breeding practice and the prevention of cat welfare problems from the breeding and sale of cats (both non-pedigree and pedigree) rather than on prosecution. Consumers need more advice on what to ask when buying a cat or kitten to ensure they get a healthy and well socialised animal and that they actually get the animal they think they are buying.

Current legislation governing the sale of cats is not fit for purpose and there is no legislation on cat breeding. This report makes a series of recommendations which include the need for more consumer education, development of common standards for cat breeders, training and accreditation of cat breeders, a review and update of existing laws on pet vending and consideration of the case for regulation of cat breeding.

This report was prepared by a working group of the Canine and Feline Sector Group comprising of the organisations below:



Summary evidence featured in this report

Cat breeding and rehoming stray and unwanted cats

- There are approximately 900,000 unneutered cats in the UK (at least 444,000 unneutered cats are females)
- One unneutered female cat can be responsible for 20,000 descendants in just five years (Cats Protection calculation)
- In 2014 Cats Protection had a 16 per cent increase in strays relinquished to its adoption centres and a 20 per cent increase in unwanted litters
- Wood Green The Animals Charity record strays as the most common reason for relinquishment of cats into their care (2014)
- Blue Cross cared for 1,564 unwanted and abandoned kittens in 2014
- Battersea Dogs & Cats Home has seen an increase in those that walk into their centres with cats or dump them rising from 50 per cent to 60 per cent in 2014. This means they now only have 40 per cent capacity to take in strays.
- Cats Protection's National Helpline received 3.5 times more calls to give up a cat than to adopt a cat (2014)



Demand for kittens

- 60 per cent of the public go to Battersea Dogs & Cats Home wanting a kitten (2014) but only 20 per cent of the cats (700 out of 3,500) taken in were kittens under 12 weeks
- Battersea Dogs & Cats Home take five times longer to home an adult cat than a kitten (2014)
- Cats Protection finds that during kitten season, which runs between April and September, older cats take six times longer to be homed than kittens

Online advertisements and breeding for sale

- 71 per cent of adverts on classified websites are for kittens and cats under a year old according to a Blue Cross study of 6,000 cat and kitten online advertisements
- 98 per cent of adverts are offering cats and kittens for sale for money ie: not free (Blue Cross)
- 58 per cent of adverts charge more than £50 with a significant percentage of adverts charging over £200 (Blue Cross)
- There is evidence to show significant income potential from kitten sales, for example between £5,550 and £55,500 over 10 months
- Of the 58 per cent of advertisements charging over £50 only 15 per cent state the cats are registered as pedigree with a known breed organisation

“The same advertiser placed advertisements for the sale of 432 different kittens over an 8 month period”

Gumtree pers. communication 2014

- 66 per cent of branches that responded to a Cats Protection survey on breeding for sale (125 branches) KNEW of cats being bred for sale (rather than suspected)
- 39 per cent of branches that responded to a Cats Protection survey who knew of examples of cat breeding for sale knew because they had seen the same seller details appear on major classified internet sites
- 36 per cent of branches that responded to a Cats Protection survey who knew of examples of cat breeding for sale were told by the seller that they were breeding for sale
- 41 per cent of branches that responded to a Cats Protection survey and knew of examples of cat breeding for sale had experience of owners who refuse neutering vouchers or fail to use vouchers they are given

Cat welfare and behavioural issues

- Welfare issues arise for kittens that are separated from the queen too early and sold before they are at least eight weeks of age
- Wood Green The Animals Charity has seen a rise in kittens with health issues. Sixteen litters of kittens out of 103 in their care have had one or more kittens needing to be euthanased or died due to acute severe health issues (2015)
- The health of a female cat can suffer where there is repeat breeding with insufficient intervals over a cat's lifetime
- Behavioural issues can arise where kittens are poorly socialised during their first eight weeks making them potentially unsuitable pets
- There are cat breeds bred with exaggerated conformations or characteristics that give rise to welfare concerns
- Cats bred from limited gene pools can have breed related anomalies

1. The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2015
2. PFMA/Cats Protection survey data 2015
3. The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2015
4. <http://www.kind.cats.org.uk/>

Summary recommendations

1. BASOC members, in collaboration with pedigree registration bodies and Defra, develop a public awareness strategy to inform the wider pet purchasing public of welfare concerns and potential health issues that can develop in certain breeds of cat developed from limited gene pools.

2. Defra should review the case for regulations under Section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to regulate the breeding and sale of cats.

3. BASOC welcomes the recently announced review of The Pet Animals Act 1951 and consultation process due to take place in 2016. It is an opportunity to propose secondary legislation to update the 1951 Act, and review the exemptions contained therein, pursuant to Section 13 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

4. BASOC members conduct/commission research into the experience of those who have recently purchased cats or kittens (pedigree and non-pedigree). The research would identify the scale and type of welfare problems that arise that can be attributed to poor breeding practice (such as exaggerated features). The research should also enquire about non welfare issues such as misrepresentation of the cat or kitten advertised for sale.

5. Market research is needed of those who are seeking to or have purchased a kitten online in order to gain information about purchaser motivations and purchasing choices (including their criteria and price points).

6. The extent to which taxable income is being generated from the breeding and sale of cats needs further research by HMRC and this should include data-gathering from business intermediaries and electronic payment providers.

7. BASOC members, in collaboration with the Pet Advertising Advisory Group and Defra, should consider the merits of applying a system similar to that recently announced in France whereby those selling one or more cat (or dog) in the UK are required to obtain a valid tax number and exhibit it on online advertisements. This number should be capable of being checked as valid by those operating online sites and by purchasers.

8. BASOC members, in association with the Pet Advertising Advisory Group and Defra, should request current and ongoing data from major online classified sites (data to be picked up by filters and anonymised as necessary) to evidence repeat advertisements from the same advertiser for the sale of cats and kittens (and other pets).



9. BASOC members produce a 'kitten checklist' in collaboration with Defra to guide those who purchase a kitten or cat. This checklist would be endorsed and promoted by all animal welfare charities and professional organisations as well as by Government to ensure consistency of message to the cat purchasing public.

10. BASOC members develop a code of practice on cat breeding in collaboration with Defra. This code would be produced to accompany the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and sit alongside the existing Cat Code which covers the duty of care to ensure the five welfare needs of cats are met.

11. BASOC members to work in collaboration with Defra, animal welfare bodies and organisations offering training, such as Lantra, to develop mandatory training and accreditation for those that breed and sell cats as a business ("business" to be defined by Defra within new Regulations under the Animal Welfare Act 2006).

12. As part of a review of the case for regulation of cat breeding in the UK (see Recommendation 2) BASOC members will conduct further research into the effectiveness of current regulation in EU member states of cat breeding (in terms of cat welfare and the impacts of regulation on the commercial market for cats and kittens).

The wheel of welfare: Components to ensure good welfare for the breeding and sale of cats



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1. Introduction

Breeding and sale of cats working group

Background:

The Canine and Feline Sector Group (CFSG) comprises leading animal welfare charities, veterinary and other professional organisations from the sector. CFSG advises and reports to Defra and the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England on issues of common concern to the sector. There are concerns in the sector about welfare where cats and kittens are bred for sale in poor conditions. The scale of this is unknown but charities such as Cats Protection, Blue Cross and Battersea Dogs & Cats Home receive reports of kittens being sold too young to leave the breeding queen⁵ as well as diseased and or sick cats and kittens being offered for sale. Irresponsible breeding for sale also adds to the numbers of unwanted cats in need of good homes.

A working group, chaired by Cats Protection, was formed in February 2015 to review evidence of cat welfare problems arising from the breeding and sale of cats. Members shared a common interest in promoting good welfare standards and practice where cat breeding occurs and shared information and expertise about what is known and not known on the subject. This is a preliminary report summarising their findings and making recommendations for the way forward, including further research. The working group met six times during 2015.

Membership

The breeding and sale of cats working group, referred to in this report as 'BASOC' comprises: Cats Protection (chair), Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, Blue Cross, British Veterinary Association, the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy, International Cat Care, PDSA (from July 2015), RSPCA (until August 2015) and Wood Green The Animals Charity.

Remit:

BASOC agreed the following terms of reference at its first meeting on 20 February 2015:

1. To scope and agree collectively the problems for cat welfare and/or cat population (not replicating the work of the Cat Population Group or other groups such as the Cat Group or Pet Advertising Advisory Group) resulting from irresponsible breeding of cats for sale.
2. To share and collate evidence of the breeding of cats for sale and identify evidence gaps and ways to fill them.
3. To share information and summarise models from abroad for regulating, licensing, registering or self-regulating commercial cat breeding (including models which require breeders to train/qualify).
4. To scope and recommend solutions that might address the problems as identified including - legislative and non-legislative options, regulation, codes of practice re: breeding, education and consumer awareness. The role of public education and awareness would be included.
5. To report and make recommendations to CFSG for approval and submission to Defra and the Animal Health and Welfare Board.

Not neutering

BASOC was clear that it would not duplicate the considerable work being done by its members on the importance of neutering cats as a means of controlling cat populations and reducing unwanted litters. Failure to neuter is undoubtedly the primary contributor to there being more cats in the UK than there are suitable homes. The latest UK survey of the UK pet population by PDSA⁶ shows that 92% of owners have had their cats neutered (male and female) leaving 8% not neutered which is around 888,000 cats (based on a UK cat population of 11.1 million). This is consistent with a 2014 survey conducted on behalf of the Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA) and Cats

Protection⁷ that showed that of a population of 7.4 million cats 88% of cats were neutered leaving 12% not neutered (900,000). The 2014 survey showed the split between neutered male and female cats with 54% of the unneutered cats being female. This represents 479,000 unneutered females each capable of having up to 18 kittens a year. One unneutered female cat can be responsible for 20,000 descendants in just five years⁸. The same surveys also asked about numbers of litters per female cat. The table below shows the respective results of the PDSA and earlier PFMA survey of cat owners

There will be kittens offered for sale that are the result of unplanned litters or those born because of the mistaken belief that having a litter is good for a female cat (referred to as the ‘one litter myth’). The prime focus of BASOC was on those that repeatedly breed and sell kittens in poor condition, probably more motivated by money than cat welfare. Over 4.5 million cats currently live in multi-cat households with over 13 percent of households having

three or more cats¹⁰. Consideration of breeding and sale is therefore complementary to ongoing work on cat population control which many BASOC members are also involved with. This review forms part of a multi-faceted approach to promoting cat welfare in the UK.

Good breeding practice

While BASOC’s terms of reference focus firmly on breeding and sale it is important to note that members shared a common concern to encourage and ensure good breeding practice overall. This relates specifically to the reality that cats are sentient creatures and have welfare needs. It is possible for those who breed and sell cats to operate with good welfare and for those who breed and perhaps give away the offspring to operate with poor welfare standards and vice versa. While mechanisms to tackle breeding and sale will inevitably consider issues of scale and repeat activity other mechanisms, such as a code of practice on cat breeding, would provide guidance to help protect all cats that are bred and their kittens.

| PFMA/Cats Protection data | Unneutered female cat population | No litter | % females one litter | % females 2 litters | % females 3 litters | Females more than 4 litters | Don't know |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| | 479,000 | 83% | 38,320 (8%) | 14,370 (3%) | 4,790 (1%) | 4,790 (1%) | 19,160 (4%) |

| PDSA data (November 2015) ⁹ | Unneutered female cat population | No litter | % females one litter | % females 2 litters | % females 3 litters | Females more than 3 litters | Don't know |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| | 444,000 ⁹ | 81% | 9% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 7% |

Types of cat and types of cat breeder

Terminology is very confused around the issue of cat breeding. To facilitate a common understanding BASOC agreed a working set of terms both for cat types and types of cat breeder.

Non-pedigree and pedigree

This is the key distinction between cat types. This report uses these terms and not others which are less precise such as 'moggie' or 'crossbreed'. A pedigreed cat (usually known as a pedigree) is a cat whose ancestry is recorded in a document known as the pedigree. A purebred cat is one whose ancestors are all the same breed. Strictly speaking a pedigree cat does not have to be purebred although it usually is and vice versa.

In contrast to dogs with an estimated 64 percent of dogs in the UK being pedigree (2013)¹¹, estimates suggest 10 per cent or fewer of owned cats in the UK are pedigree¹². Perhaps because of false comparisons with dogs there is a public misconception that the term cat breeder refers only to those that breed pedigree cats. This is not the case. BASOC reviewed the activities of non-pedigree and pedigree cat breeders. Within BASOC the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) and International Cat Care (ICC) have particular expertise on issues relating to pedigree breeds and breeding and sale of pedigrees. GCCF were also able to share information from the pedigree sector about the extensive advice, ethics and breeding standards they recommend to their member breeders.

Types of cat breeder

Clarification and key characteristics of commonly used cat breeder descriptions such as 'hobby breeder', 'backstreet breeder', 'accidental breeder' as discussed and agreed within the BASOC group are at Appendix 1. These are clarifications, not definitions, and are simply used by BASOC to assist a common understanding.

BASOC's remit was to look at the evidence of and sale of pedigree and non-pedigree cats. Also, BASOC was keen to look at current good practice that exists within the pedigree cat breeding sector. GCCF, a member of BASOC, is the "premier registration body for the breeding and showing of pedigree cats in the UK"¹³. GCCF operates a membership breeders' scheme and has a code of ethics¹⁴. ICC, an organisation that advises and offers training on all aspects of cat care and specifically on breeding, is also represented¹⁵.

What is commercial breeding?

The term commercial in terms of cat breeding is used indiscriminately with no commonly agreed understanding. Commercial is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as an adjective which can be used to mean:

"concerned with or engaged in commerce"
(synonymous with trade, trading, business, private enterprise) e.g commercial agreement

"Making or intended to make a profit" (synonymous with profit-orientated, money orientated, materialistic) e.g commercial products

Commercial breeding is defined for the purposes of this report as breeding where the offspring are sold or advertised for sale. This is consistent with dictionary definitions. It is also consistent with the current law on licensing of dog breeding. During a debate on dog breeding in September 2014 the Minister clarified that it is business activity that triggers the need for a licence. A licensed dog breeder is: *"someone who is in the business of breeding and selling dogs, regardless of the numbers of litters produced in a 12 month period"*¹⁶.

The typology diagram below shows those breeder types that might be considered to be breeding commercially and those that might not. Those who hoard the offspring of litters would never be defined as commercial as they characteristically retain cats and their offspring rather than sell them or even give them away. The absence of a sale or advertisement for sale makes the breeding non-commercial for the purposes of this typology. The breeder terminology used is as clarified in Appendix 1.

Within commercial transactions BASOC's key concern is not the amount of money made by the breeding and sale of cats but instances where welfare is compromised, perhaps because breeding is more motivated by money than welfare¹⁷.

Commercial breeding: diagrammatic representation (terms all clarified in Appendix 1).



Any regulatory framework (and cat breeding is not currently regulated in the UK) would need to take a pragmatic look at appropriate thresholds for the application of regulation. For example, for a cat owner to sell the first and only litter from his female cat which he then neuters may strictly be a commercial activity but could fall outside any regulatory framework governing activity legally defined as either breeding for sale and/or pet shop activity. Regulation is discussed further in Section 4 of this report in the context of solutions.

Relevance to Government

Cats are a popular pet with 25% of the UK population having a cat¹⁸. There will always be a demand for cats and people are increasingly using the internet to look for their ideal pet. With so many kittens and cats now advertised on the internet the world has moved on from the days of the 'doggy (or kitten) in the window'. With a vibrant market in cats and kittens there needs to be adequate legal safeguards in place to protect the welfare of the cat and its kittens. Only Government can review and update the relevant laws.

There is broad recognition within animal welfare charities that the law on pet vending, which dates back to the 1950s needs updating. The recent confirmation by the Minister with responsibility for companion animal welfare that Defra is reviewing the Pet Animals Act 1951 as part of a wider review of some of the animal related licensing schemes is welcome. We also understand there will be a consultation on a set of proposals¹⁹. It is also timely to look at the effectiveness of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, given it is approaching its 10 year anniversary, and at its effectiveness including issues of enforcement.

Equally, with cat breeding still un-regulated, it is time to review whether self-regulation, existing legal frameworks and codes are ensuring good welfare standards amongst cat breeders. The current cat code does not cover breeding of cats. The market in cats and kittens also raises issues of consumer law and potentially revenue issues relating to undeclared income. All these issues are discussed further in this report.



5. An intact or entire female cat, i.e. one that is not neutered.
6. The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2015
7. PFMA/Cats Protection pet survey (April 2015)
8. Cats Protection calculation based on an average litter size of 6 kittens and 3 litters in one year
9. Pers. communication PDSA 1 December 2015
10. The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2015
11. <http://www.statista.com/statistics/299516/dog-owners-in-the-united-kingdom-uk-by-breed/> and pers.communication Kennel Club 2015
12. Pers. communication GCCF Chairperson October 2015
13. Other pedigree cat breed organisations are The International Cat Association (TICA) <http://www.tica-uk.org.uk/> and the Federation, Internationale, Feline (FIFe), <http://fifeweb.org/index.php>
14. <http://www.gccfcats.org/Welfare/Code-of-Ethics>, <http://www.gccfcats.org/Breeding-Information/GCCF-Breeding-Policy>
15. <http://icatcare.org/advice/breeders>
16. He also clarified that anyone producing five litters or more in a 12 month period also should have a licence regardless of whether they are in the business of breeding and selling dogs" (letter dated 13 November 2014 from Defra to Local Authorities)
17. Within non-commercial transactions the concern would also be instances of poor welfare.
18. The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2015
- 19 House of Commons – written answer- Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs- answered 16 November 2015. Mr Alan Campbell: What plans she has to amend the licensing schedule under the Pet Animals Act 1951 to make it species specific. [15209]

2. Problems analysis

BASOC identified two principal groupings of problems associated with breeding and sale of cats: those relating to welfare and those relating to supply and demand.

Welfare problems

Members reported a range of welfare concerns linked to cat breeding and breeding and sale. The most widely reported welfare concerns relate to the welfare of kittens sold, particularly to kittens being sold under eight weeks old when too young to be separated from the queen cat. Members also had reports of kittens sold with varying health conditions such as being underweight, suffering from flea infestations, eye infections, cat flu, gastro-intestinal disease, skin disease and of kittens dying shortly after purchase. For pedigree cats there was a particular concern about breeders who breed and sell pedigrees in poor condition and without reference to the breeding guidelines and ethics promoted by organisations such as GCCF²⁰.

Breeding of cats – welfare problems

- sale of under-age kittens
- sale of sick kittens
- sale of un-socialised kittens that may not make suitable pets
- queens bred repeatedly to the detriment of their health
- disease spread (especially mixed litters, multi-cat situations)
- conformations/genetic disorders/in-breeding (usually pedigrees but can also occur in other cats)
- queens bred at too old an age (sick kittens/health problems for the queen)
- Large multi-cat households may be the result of inbreeding and there may be health problems associated with this

“I took in a kitten yesterday, from a family who had travelled to Wallingford to buy her from an advertiser who had placed an advertisement on (major online classified site). The family had been told the kitten was eight weeks old - they had never had a kitten before so they didn't know any different. She was obviously half that age, her eyes did not look brilliant and she was frantic and hungry. I took her straight to the vets who said she was more like 4 weeks old, with conjunctivitis and raging diarrhoea, and jumping with fleas. We are now caring for the kitten who we have called “Twinkle”. There were several in the litter, so I hope all the others went to people who knew what they were doing...”

Volunteer,

Cats Protection Basingstoke Branch²¹.

- poor welfare of some pedigree male cats where they cease to get stud work and are not then neutered (resulting in behavioural issues such as pacing and calling if confined)
- stud cats kept permanently in a pen or outdoor shed with a very limited environment



Lily cat- Queen cat was bred repeatedly

Lily came into the National Cat Centre in Sussex gravely ill. The staff were informed that she had been used to breed kittens for sale. She had suffered years of neglect and on examination the vet suspected that she had had multiple litters over her 10 years. Blood tests showed her kidneys were failing and despite best efforts she died leaving four kittens behind. She was an attentive mother cat to the end trying to feed her kittens even when she was too sick and weak to eat.

“ We had a kitten in two years ago being offered for sale on (classified site). It was so badly infested with fleas we had to take it straight to the vets as it was anaemic, sadly it didn't survive the loss of blood. His new owner had him for exactly one day ”

**Glasgow Adoption Centre Manager,
Cats Protection**

Welfare concerns linked to certain cat breeds

Welfare concerns arise in cases where recognised breeds have very limited gene pools as this can result in an increase in the number of breed-related anomalies. Some breeds are bred for specific physical characteristics such as the Manx cat which is deliberately bred to have a short or absent tail. As this is a form of spinal defect, it can be accompanied by spina bifida, constipation, incontinence and other neurological disorders. Munchkins (pictured opposite) have been developed to look 'cute' with their short legs but this is a form of dwarfism (chondrodystrophia) increasing their chance of developing osteoarthritis and severely limiting their ability to hunt or climb. Some breeds are being bred to be more and more extreme anatomically, such as brachycephalic cats (i.e. flat faced, an example pictured opposite) which suffer from respiratory problems and constant overflow of tears due to compressed tear ducts.

GCCF is 'the premier registration body for cats in the UK' registering approximately 22,000 kittens a year most of which are pedigree. GCCF offer information, advice and expertise and have specific guidelines and policies on responsible breeding of pedigree and non-pedigree breeds. They promote cat welfare within breeding practices, particularly practices to avoid inheritance of any detrimental genetic traits by subsequent generations²². GCCF refuse to register breeds that are deliberately propagating unhealthy traits such as the Scottish Fold Cat (pictured opposite) where a defect in the cartilage that makes the ears fold, also leads to severe arthritis of the limb and tail joints. ICC also provides extensive advice and information on all aspects of cat care including advice on breeding and inherited disorders²³.



Munchkin



Exotic shorthair (a brachycephalic breed)



Scottish Fold

Recommendation 1

BASOC members, in collaboration with pedigree registration bodies and Defra, develop a public awareness strategy to inform the wider pet purchasing public of welfare concerns and potential health issues that can develop in certain breeds of cat developed from limited gene pools.

Supply and demand problems

Members of BASOC, particularly the homing charities and animal hospitals, are acutely aware that there are 1,000s of unwanted cats in need of suitable homes and consistently more enquiries to give up a cat than adopt one. While cat and kitten over-population relates to multiple factors, including a failure to neuter and socio-economic issues causing cats to be abandoned, breeding for sale will be a contributing factor. The group identified a range of problems relating to supply and demand for cats and kittens.

Breeding of cats – supply and demand problems

- oversupply of cats and kittens (more cats and kittens than there are homes)
- breeding for sale is contributing to the numbers of stray and abandoned cats
- demand for kittens exceeds demand for cats
- breeding for sale is contributing to numbers of cats/kittens coming to welfare charities
- high-value online market for pedigree crosses, (higher prices than standard non-pedigree) incentivises supply
- online non-pedigree sales – stimulate supply and demand (sellers motivated by money)
- breeding for sale contributes to the numbers of kittens coming to welfare charities that may not have been sufficiently socialised to make suitable pets

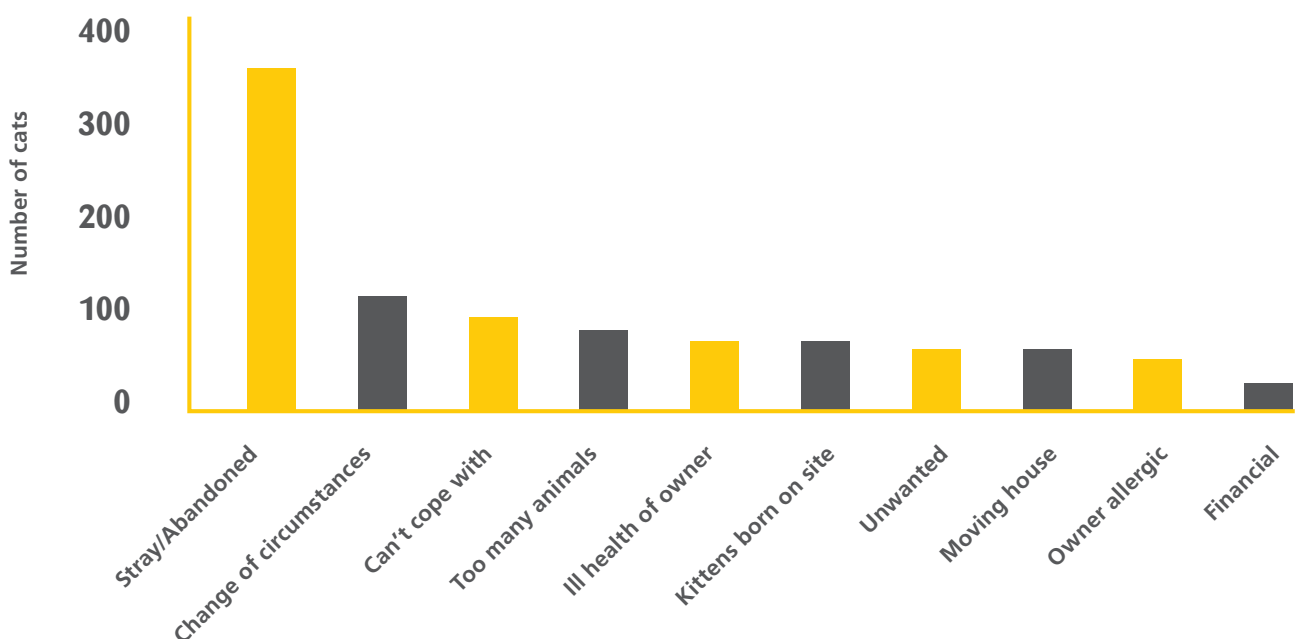
Charities under pressure: strays and unwanted cats

- Battersea Dogs & Cats Home has seen an increase in those that walk into their centres with cats or dump them at the gate rising from 50 per cent to 60 per cent in 2014. This means they now only have 40 per cent capacity to take in strays
- Cats Protection’s National Helpline received 3.5 times more calls to give up a cat as to adopt a cat (2014)
- Cats Protection had a 16 per cent increase in strays relinquished to its adoption centres and a 20 per cent increase in unwanted litters relinquished (2014)
- In 2015 Wood Green The Animals Charity has seen a rise in kittens with health issues. Sixteen litters of kittens out of 103 litters in their care have had one or more kittens needing to be euthanased or kittens that died due to acute severe health issues²⁴.
- Wood Green The Animals Charity record strays as the most common reason for relinquishment of cats into their care – see bar chart below

“A cottage industry in breeding cats for sale for as little as £5 and sold without being vaccinated, wormed or neutered has been blamed as a main reason why the branch has taken in a record 30 cats since Christmas”

Gloucester Branch, Cats Protection, 2014²⁵

Wood Green cat relinquishments 2014



Some kittens and cats will not make suitable pets

“If young kittens are not properly socialised with people, they will be frightened or stressed by human contact. A kitten learns what is normal and safe during a very sensitive period of development that occurs between two and eight weeks of age – the so-called ‘socialisation period’. Kittens which have not been exposed to positive, new experiences during this sensitive period are more likely to be scared of novelty and people later in life and they are not likely to make a suitable family pet”

Behaviour Manager, Cats Protection²⁶

“90 per cent of cat owners indicate that their pet has at least one fear, a slight decrease from 91 per cent in 2011. With no significant change over the years and with many fears developing as a result of inadequate socialisation, it is important that adequate socialisation by breeders and new owners becomes a higher priority”.

PDSA 2015²⁷

“In the last year we have sent over 50 very under-socialised kittens to farms or stables as they were too fearful of humans to live as pets. Unfortunately, farms are in short supply compared to the number of cats needing homes but who are not suited to living as domestic pets.”

Head of Cattery, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home²⁸

“It’s not uncommon for people to be drawn to buying unusual looking cats without considering the cat’s breed traits or specific needs. The Bengal is a good example of this, and unsurprisingly it is the most common breed that we see at Battersea. People tend to give them up as they cannot cope with their active and demanding nature.”

Head of Cattery, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home²⁹

Kittens

While 1000s of kittens are being advertised for sale on classified sites and on Facebook, kittens are relinquished to animal welfare charities too. The supply of kittens is a complex picture because there are clearly kittens that are being given over to charities and it's not always known if they are kittens that were bred for sale and did not sell or were simply bred accidentally and then relinquished. Often charities do not ask the question and even if they did charities suspect that for various reasons (eg: embarrassment, being seen in a bad light) people may not always be candid about the cat or kitten's history and the reason they are handing it over for adoption.

- Blue Cross cared for 1,564 unwanted and abandoned kittens in 2014. This represented a 22 per cent increase between 2009 and 2014
- in 2014 Cats Protection had a 20 per cent increase in unwanted litters relinquished to its Adoption Centres

“most kittens are taken in because owners are not able to find homes”

Head of Cattery, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home

BASOC acknowledges that there will always be a demand for kittens but members of the group shared common concerns to ensure that:

- when kittens are bred for sale they are healthy and only leave the queen when they are old enough (at least eight weeks)
- the queen is healthy and purchasers see the kitten with the queen
- buyers make an informed purchase asking questions about the kitten and queen (kitten age, health, vaccinations etc)

- BASOC members also shared a concern that often the consumer demand for kittens means that older cats, whether available for adoption from a homing charity or advertised privately, are overlooked.
- During the height of kitten season (April to September) some animal welfare charities find themselves inundated and do not always have the space to take in kittens offered to them for rehoming.

Demand for kittens from charities exceeds demand for cats

- 60 per cent of the public go to Battersea Dogs & Cats Home (BDCH) wanting a kitten (2014) but only 20 per cent of the cats (700 out of 3,500) taken in were kittens under 12 weeks.
- BDCH take five times longer to home an adult cat than a kitten (2014)
- Cats Protection finds that during kitten season, which runs between April and September, older cats take six times longer to be homed than kittens. Very young cats often only remain in care for around 10 days in comparison to older cats who are left on the shelf for an average of 59 days.

Space issues

The National Cat Adoption Centre is suffering from a cat pen shortage and is currently holding 177 cats in their care after taking in a large number of kittens during the summer. The pen blocking crisis is due to the cat breeding season and a decrease in cat adoptions.³⁰

Cats Protection's Cambridge branch is currently being swamped with kittens that need to be rehomed. A Branch spokesperson said: "We have just collected three kittens which we think were dumped. We currently have eight kittens ready for rehoming in pairs and in my case it's even more crowded. My foster cat has just given birth to six more."³¹

that cat breeding occurs on an intensive scale, as occurs with 'puppy farms'³³ or that kittens are being imported for sale in large numbers. However, there is evidence to show that smaller scale breeding, often from domestic premises, is occurring and that there are many examples of poor welfare.

Section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (AWA 2006) enables the Secretary of State and the National Assembly for Wales to make regulations to promote the welfare of animals for which a person is responsible, or the progeny of such animals. The reference to 'progeny' would enable regulations to be introduced governing animal breeding. No regulations have been made under Section 12 in relation to cat breeding. In Wales, the Welsh Government has shown a precedent by issuing Regulations under S.12 in relation to dog breeding (these updated existing Dog Breeding legislation in Wales).³⁴

Legal frameworks: are they protecting cat welfare?

BASOC reviewed current legal frameworks in order to determine the extent to which current legislation is safeguarding cat welfare where cats are bred and sold.

Cat breeding and the law: no regulation

Cat breeding is not regulated in the UK. There are UK bodies such as the GCCF and ICC which advise on good welfare standards with regard to cat breeding. However, there is no legislation regulating the breeding of cats which is equivalent to the dog breeding legislation³². This is possibly because commercial dog breeding is a more visible issue than commercial cat breeding, occurs often on an intensive and large scale on 'puppy farms', and can involve significant amounts of money. High value in puppies appears to be partly linked to the volume of trade and also to the fact many puppies sold are either pedigree or one of the new emergent and currently fashionable crosses such as "labradoodle" or "cockapoo". There is no evidence to show

"The concerns we have about poor standards of welfare and the conditions in which cats and kittens are kept and bred for sale are the same as those which underpin the regulation of dog breeding"

Director of Legal Services, Cats Protection

Recommendation 2

Defra should review the case for regulations under Section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to regulate the breeding and sale of cats.

Pet vending - The Pet Animals Act 1951 and its exemptions

The Pet Animals Act 1951 (PAA) applies to England, Wales and Scotland but not Northern Ireland. It regulates the selling of companion animals at any premises (including a private home), in the street or a public place. Those who 'carry on a business' of selling companion animals require a licence from the local authority to sell. Local authorities have powers of inspection of licensed pet shop premises and there are penalties for failing to get a licence or for breaching licence conditions.

The PAA 1951 is now over 60 years old and pet sales have changed. Fewer cats are sold in high street pet shops. The commercial market in kittens and other pets chiefly operates through small advertisements and online classified adverts. Moreover, the PAA and its licence scheme do not address the issue of breeding, only sale through pet shops as defined in the Act. The PAA also exempts from licence those who sell:

- pedigree animals³⁵
- litters of family pets
- animals bred for showing or breeding but which cannot be used for those purposes (ie: the rejects)

The practical effect of the PAA exemptions means that the majority of commercial sales of cats are unregulated and unscrutinised. There are, for example, no legal thresholds within the PAA for when the number of litters bred and sold from the family cat or cats might cease to be breeding defined as a 'hobby' and become a business activity requiring a pet shop licence. It is these loopholes within the PAA exemptions that are of concern as they potentially allow those in the business of breeding and selling cats to avoid scrutiny and compromise cat welfare.

Section 13 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 would enable secondary legislation (regulations) to be passed to repeal the PAA 1951. This would be an opportunity to introduce new regulations in respect of commercial sales of all pets, including cats and kittens. No regulations have been passed or proposed at the date of writing this report. There would also be scope for additional codes of practice under any new pet vending regulations, for example a code of practice specific to cat breeding. A new code specific to cat breeding is discussed further in Section 4 of this report.

BASOC members very much welcome the recently announced Government commitment to review and consult on the PAA 1951 in 2016. This will be an opportunity to address the issues raised above through repeal of the Act and passing of new secondary legislation.

Recommendation 3

BASOC welcomes the recently announced review of The Pet Animals Act 1951 and consultation process due to take place in 2016. It is an opportunity to propose secondary legislation to update the 1951 Act, and review the exemptions contained therein, pursuant to Section 13 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Animal welfare legislation

Duty to ensure welfare:

The Animal Welfare Act ("AWA") 2006 imposes a duty upon anyone "responsible for" cats, including pet-shop owners and those engaged in their breeding and selling, to ensure welfare in accordance with the 'five welfare needs'. Sadly, public awareness of the five needs is poor.

“26% of cat owners surveyed were familiar with their responsibilities as a pet owner as detailed in the Animal Welfare Acts³⁶ and the five welfare needs, which is lower than dog owners and rabbit owners, which were both 36%”³⁷

The problem is that breaches of the duty to ensure welfare may go uninvestigated either by the RSPCA or the police unless a person is reported for animal cruelty. RSPCA prosecution data does not record cat breeding as a specific topic so no data can be extracted easily. In 2014 the cruelty line received 4,260 calls relating to ‘kitten’, ‘breeding’ or ‘litter’. These statistics however, relate to a wide range of incident types, including unwanted or unplanned litters and failure to neuter, and there is no available breakdown of any element of breeding repeatedly for sale.

Most of the existing evidence of welfare concerns linked to cat breeding comes from the amassed evidence gathered through rescue centres from their own experience, that of their supporters and from the public. Welfare issues commonly only come to light after purchasers have taken a cat or kitten home. It seems a purchaser will often take it upon themselves to do all they can to take care of a sick cat or kitten purchased, often incurring significant heartache as well as expense for veterinary care. It is likely that many cases of purchasers acquiring sick or diseased cats or kittens

Hannah’s story – Deify survived

Hannah saw an advert on a major online classified site selling kittens, which suggested that the kittens were the offspring of the family pet. At the seller’s house Hannah saw up to 15 kittens, all in the same room and huddled together in groups. Hannah chose two kittens, Simba and Deify, and asked where the mum cat was but was told it lived elsewhere. The seller said that Simba was part Bengal and Deify was part Ragdoll, that they were both eight weeks old and weaned. Hannah paid £360 for the two kittens. When Hannah got home Deify was very ill, kept vomiting and had diarrhoea. The vet confirmed that the kittens were likely to be younger than eight weeks, not weaned and were in poor condition. Deify was admitted to the vet’s hospital and received critical care costing £2,000. Deify did eventually recover.³⁸

may therefore be un-reported as in the case of Hannah (box above) and never get reported to the RSPCA or other relevant organisations such as pedigree breed organisations or trading standards.

²⁰ <http://www.gccfcats.org/Welfare/Code-of-Ethics>

²¹ Pers. Communication November 2015

²² <http://www.gccfcats.org/Breeding-Information/GCCF-Breeding-Policy>

²³ <http://icatcare.org/advice/cat-breeds/inherited-disorders-cats>

²⁴ Pers. communication 2015 - Further information about the circumstances and range of kitten illnesses available from Wood Green

²⁵ Gloucestercitizen.co.uk 06/02/2014

²⁶ Further reading: Casey, R. A. et al (March 2008) The effects of additional socialisation for kittens in a rescue centre on their behaviour and suitability as a pet

²⁷ The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2015 www.pdsa.org.uk/pawreport

²⁸ Pers communication November 2015

²⁹ Pers communication November 2015

³⁰ Mid Sussex Times, 3.9.15, “Influx of unwanted cats sparks pen shortage in centre”

³¹ Cambridge News, 11.7.15, “Animal lovers’ homes littered with dumped kittens”

³² In England establishments used for the breeding of dogs are currently regulated by the Breeding of Dogs Acts 1973 and 1991 and by the Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999 under which a licence to breed is required. In Wales dog breeding is now covered by the Breeding of dogs regulations (Wales) 2014 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2014/3266/contents/made>

³³ A Dogs Life- Manifesto – P 6. http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/567749/a_dog_s_life_manifesto_web.pdf Puppy farms are, typically, commercial or agricultural buildings with many breeding bitches housed together and their puppies are sold at high value

³⁴ Animal Welfare Breeding of Dogs Wales Regulations (2014) replacing the Breeding of Dogs Act (1973) in Wales

³⁵ Those eligible for registration with a recognised club or society keeping a register of animals of that description – e.g. the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy

³⁶ This refers to the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and its devolved equivalents

³⁷ The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2015 www.pdsa.org.uk/pawreport

³⁸ Pers. communication with Cats Protection 2014

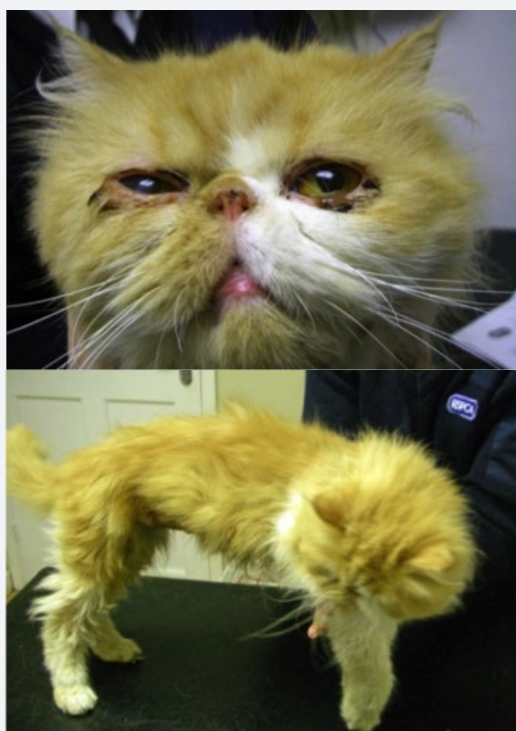
3. Evidence of problems

3.1 Welfare issues

Many cats and kittens, whether sold privately or online, will be perfectly healthy and find suitable homes. BASOC cannot quantify the percentage of cats and kittens bred and sold in poor welfare. We can only give examples based on our experience within the group and on information from the public, but there are enough examples to lead us to believe that poor welfare is widespread. There are further examples in illustrated in Appendix 2 to this report.

“Exotic cats” bred for sale suffering from various conditions including ear mites, skin disease, eye infections and flea infestations resulting in hair loss and skin disease.

(RSPCA investigation evidence – further details are provided in the picture annex 2 to this report)



“Siberian” kittens were so sick they died

A branch of Cats Protection that is in regular contact with the vet based at their local Pets at Home learnt of a case where kittens had been brought in by various purchasers. It transpired they had all been purchased from the same seller. The kittens had been described as being Siberian but were in fact non-pedigree kittens with no special “Siberian” features. They were very sickly and small – they were all under 8 weeks old and the kittens all died despite veterinary care. The purchasers were not shown the queen cat when the kittens were purchased.

Complaints about registered pedigree cats and their breeders

The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy monitors complaints received from individuals about cats or kittens obtained from members who register their pedigree cats with GCCF. GCCF have between 5,000 and 6,000 active breeders and register approximately 22,000 kittens a year.

In 2013/14 GCCF received 156 complaints of varying types which is low relative to the number of kittens registered. There may well be some under-reporting but numbers are not likely to be significant. 42 per cent of complaints received related to welfare issues and sick cats.

The majority of the 42 per cent involved sales of kittens less than 13 weeks old (which is the GCCF standard age for homing as GCCF recommend kittens are homed after full vaccination – two sets). All welfare issues reported were linked to insufficient or inadequate care of the cats as

Kitten offered for sale on Facebook
£10, malnourished and a swollen belly
due to a worm infestation



(picture shows kitten after being bathed) Leeds
Cat Rescue.

Recommendation 4

BASOC members conduct/commission research into the experience of those who have recently purchased cats or kittens (pedigree and non-pedigree).⁴⁰

The research would identify the scale and type of welfare problems that arise that can be attributed to poor breeding practice (such as exaggerated features). The research should also enquire about non welfare issues such as misrepresentation of the cat or kitten advertised for sale

kittens. GCCF also receive complaints relating to monetary issues, such as the non-return of deposits paid for kittens that are perhaps never delivered or delivered sick.³⁹

In order to get some measure of the scale of welfare issues arising when cats are bred and sold further research could be done to ascertain the percentage of cats or kittens purchased that exhibit welfare problems that are likely to have been present at the time of sale and known to the seller. Conditions linked to breeding could be identified as well as known inherited disorders. In addition, information regarding problems unconnected to welfare could be sought (such as misrepresentations or financial issues).

3.2 Supply and demand

As part of the evidence on this topic BASOC has access to two new pieces of recent research which help give an indication of the prevalence of breeding and sale..

Cats Protection survey of branches

Cats Protection conducted a survey in 2015 of its network of over 250 volunteer run branches: 50 per cent of branches responded to the survey. The survey went to branch welfare officers as well as branch coordinators as the welfare role often involves activity within the local community including visiting individual households with cats.

The survey revealed that 66 per cent of responding branches **knew** of cats being bred for sale, the remaining 34 per cent knew of instances where breeding for sale was **suspected**.

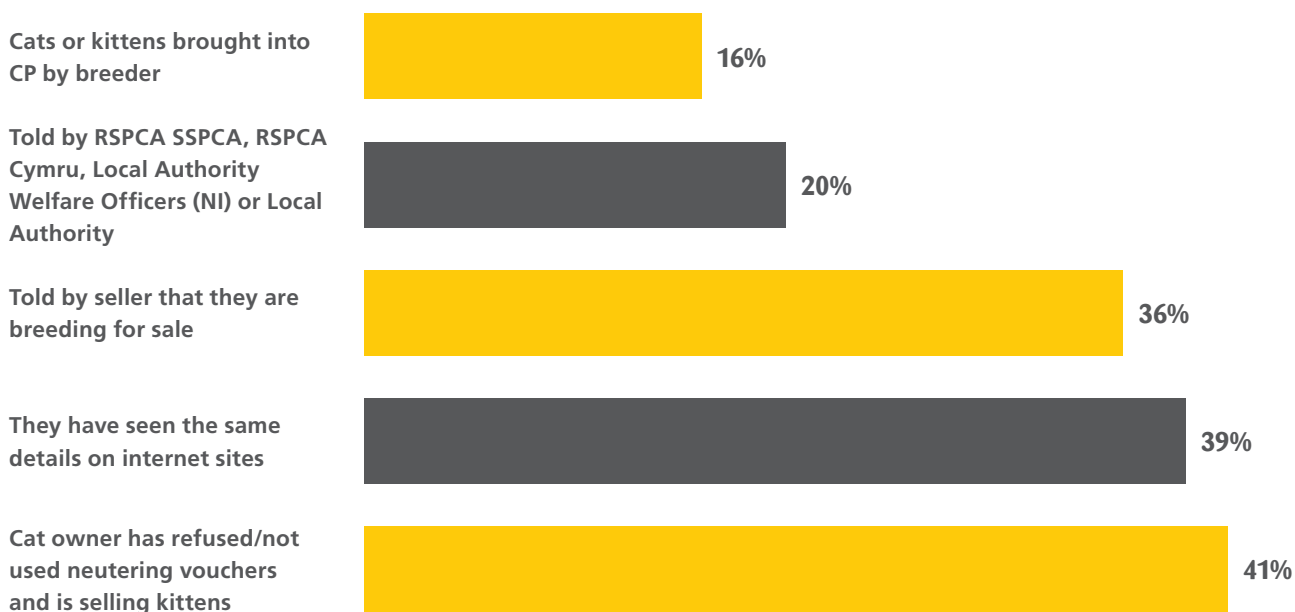
The survey specifically asked branches to indicate how they knew of breeding for sale (see graph below for the findings). Respondents could indicate multiple ways of knowing about breeding for sale.

A key survey finding is that 39 per cent of respondent branches knew of breeding for sale on the basis of seeing the same seller's details appearing frequently on advertising websites. Although this evidence of repeat breeding and selling is not conclusive, it does suggest advertisers who may be breeding in order to sell the offspring rather than having ongoing and repeated 'accidental' litters.

“There are a lot of people in this area who let their cats have one or 2 litters to sell on before they get her spayed but will then keep one of the female kittens for themselves and do the same again.”

Skegness, Spilsby and Alford branch: Cats Protection (survey response 2015)

Percentage of those branches that know of cats being bred for sale



Blue Cross – sampling of online cat and kitten advertisements

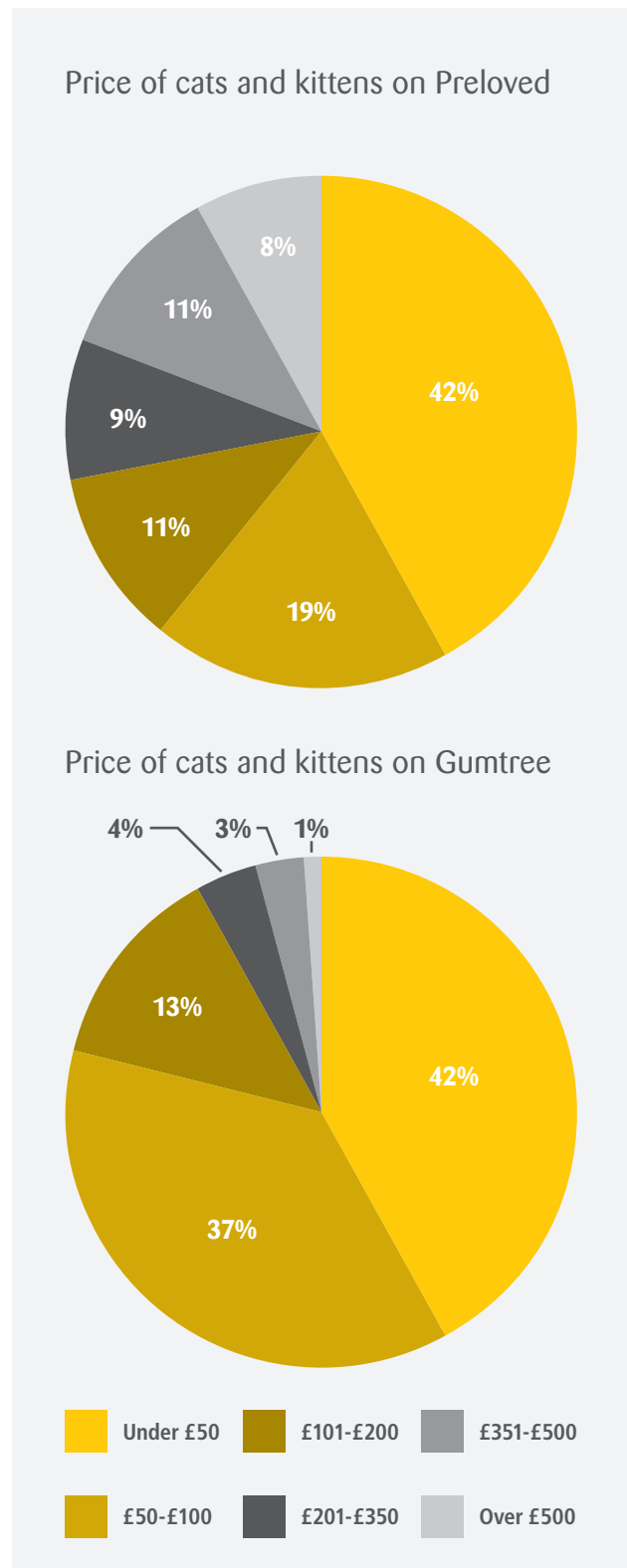
We know that the internet is now a major way consumers access goods of all types as well as pets. The internet promotes instant and often impulsive decisions, often without purchasers even seeing the animal in advance: 78 per cent of people would consider buying a pet from the internet without visiting the animal.⁴¹ The latest survey into pet purchasing shows that 25 per cent of cat owners did no research before purchasing a cat (this compares to 18 per cent of dog purchasers).⁴² For cat and kitten advertisements BASOC looked closely at the type of cat and kitten advertisements and prices sought.

Between February and May 2015, 25 Blue Cross volunteers fed back data based on reviewing 6,000 cat and kitten adverts across three leading UK classified sites (Preloved, Pets4Homes and Gumtree). Volunteers looked at factors such as how many adverts were for kittens, what sorts of price ranges there are for kittens and cats and how cats are described (pedigree and non-pedigree). This was a sampling and spot checking exercise for which volunteers received a clear brief and support from Blue Cross to ensure they all recorded comparable data.⁴³ The key results of this volunteer exercise across the three sites are:

Mostly kittens, mostly for money

- 71 per cent of adverts on classified websites are for kittens and cats under a year old (this clearly shows the popularity of kittens and young cats)
- 98 per cent of adverts are offering cats and kittens for sale for money ie: not free
- 58 per cent of adverts were charging more than £50 with a significant percentage of adverts charging over £200
- Of the 58 per cent of advertisements charging over £50 only 15 per cent are for GCCF and TICA registered pedigree cats

Blue Cross research of online advertisements for cats (2015)



“Part Pedigree”- premium prices

Blue Cross’s sampling research found there was a price premium for cats and kittens described in an advertisement as being part pedigree or having some sort of pedigree heritage, perhaps even one of the parents being pedigree. Examples included description of kittens as “part Ragdoll” or “Persian cross”. The purchaser perception is therefore that he or she is getting something unusual and especially attractive which seems to enable the seller to demand much higher prices than for a regular non-pedigree kitten with no pedigree heritage at all.



£275

Description: Stunning Litter of Russian X (only one left)
£275

(The full text of the advertisement is reproduced in the Picture Annex 2.)

Recommendation 5

Market research is needed of those who are seeking to or have purchased a kitten online in order to gain information about purchaser motivations and purchasing choices (including their criteria and price points).

3.3 Misrepresentations/ Trade description issues

BASOC members have evidence of a variety of misrepresentations when kittens are offered for sale. Some of these misrepresentations relate to cat welfare and others are simply misrepresentations with the buyer not purchasing or receiving what is described.

Common misrepresentations include:

- Not as old as claimed - kittens commonly advertised for sale as being over eight weeks when they are not old enough to leave the queen⁴⁴
- Not suitable as a pet as claimed (for example, not socialised and familiar with people and families)
- Not a pedigree cat as claimed, for example described as a pedigree but with no reference to documentary evidence: ‘fake pedigrees’

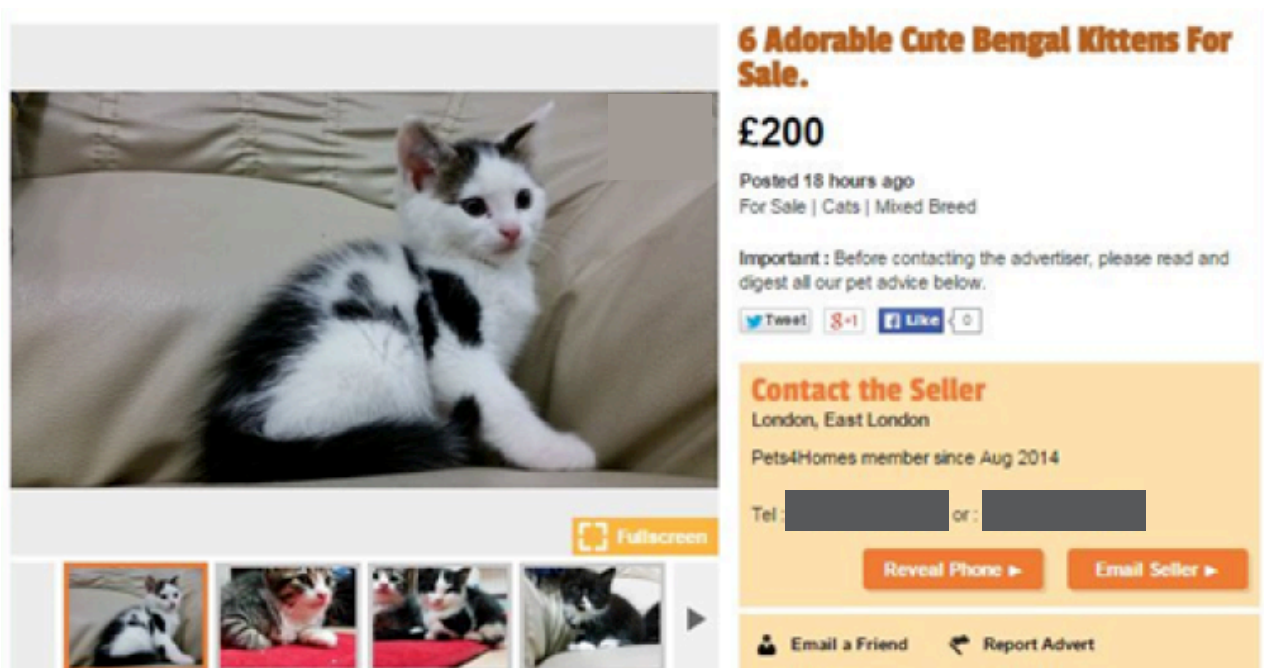
Many of these misrepresentations could be addressed by ensuring that purchasers are aware of the questions to ask of the seller when purchasing a cat or kitten. This reinforces the case for a widespread public awareness campaign to inform purchasers of the welfare issues they need to check to ensure they buy a healthy pet and one suitable to their home circumstances.

‘Fake pedigrees’

If a cat is a pedigree cat, a purchaser would expect to pay much higher prices than a non-pedigree because he or she is getting something that is less common place than non-pedigree cats and which should be evidenced. Registered pedigree cats can demand prices in the region of £1000 per kitten. A purchaser of a pedigree cat should normally expect to see pedigree registration papers from an organisation such as GCCF or The International Cat Association (TICA). Being a pedigree cat does not mean the cat is necessarily “better” in any way related to health or welfare, simply that it is pedigree and that the pedigree lineage can be evidenced. Some pedigree or purebred cats have been bred with exaggerated conformation or have a higher incidence of genetic disease which means that many non-pedigree cats have fewer health problems.

BASOC research (particularly the research by Blue Cross volunteers) found that many advertisements claim pedigree lineage for the cat or kitten advertised but with no reference to registration or membership of TICA or GCCF within the advertisement. Without evidence of registration there is no guarantee the cat or kitten sold is not in fact a pedigree.

The example below shows pictures of non-pedigree kittens that are clearly not Bengals (a pedigree breed) as claimed in the advertisement heading. Two hundred pounds is an elevated price for a non-pedigree kitten. There is no reference to any pedigree registration papers with either GCCF or TICA in the advertisement. In fact lower in the advertisement there is reference to “mixed breed”. There are more illustrated examples of advertisements for alleged pedigree breeds but with no reference to any documentary evidence of pedigree in Appendix 2.



The image is a screenshot of a pet advertisement. On the left, there is a large photo of a black and white spotted kitten sitting on a light-colored surface. Below this photo is a row of four smaller thumbnail images showing other kittens. To the right of the main photo is a 'Fullscreen' button. The advertisement text is as follows:

6 Adorable Cute Bengal Kittens For Sale.

£200

Posted 18 hours ago
For Sale | Cats | Mixed Breed

Important : Before contacting the advertiser, please read and digest all our pet advice below.

Tweet 5+1 Like 0

Contact the Seller
London, East London
Pets4Homes member since Aug 2014

Tel: [redacted] or: [redacted]

Reveal Phone ▶ Email Seller ▶

Email a Friend Report Advert

3.4 Income generation

Evidence regarding generation of taxable income from the breeding and sale of cats is based on identification of repeated advertisements by the same seller of cats or kittens online. We know that pedigrees, fake pedigrees and pedigree crosses can demand much higher prices than non-pedigrees so there can be a linkage between misrepresentations and income generation based on false information.

Cats Protection and other Members of the Pet Advertising Advisory Group⁴⁵ recently submitted evidence to the HMRC consultation on the “Hidden Economy” giving examples of where revenue is being generated by the sale of cats and kittens.

Recommendation 6

The extent to which taxable income is being generated from the breeding and sale of cats needs further research by HMRC and this should include consideration of and then it runs on data gathering from business intermediaries and electronic payment providers.

The Grazia phenomenon: breeding kittens and puppies for extra cash

In a recently published letter in *Grazia* magazine the writer explained how income from breeding puppies and kittens has boosted her annual income by £2,500 per year for two years.

“ My salary at the estate agent is £18,000, which means we are comfortable with my husband’s salary too, but breeding gives us extra pocket money. It’s the difference between Ikea furniture and Habitat ”

“ Everyone is looking for ways to make extra cash, and it’s surprising the assets you’ve already got ”

The article promoted significant public outrage on social media. The magazine published a letter from Cats Protection expressing concern at the original letter.⁴⁶

Income from kittens to pay off debts

A woman came into the practice with four female unneutered cats. She had neutering vouchers which she had obtained to help with the costs of neutering. The woman explained that she had not had the cats neutered so far as she had been breeding the cats and selling the kittens for money to help pay off her debts. She said she had been selling the kittens for between £30 and £40 each.

Communication Brighton veterinary practitioner⁴⁷

In France a new law has recently been announced that will clamp down on breeders of dogs and cats making taxable income. It will require anyone who wants to sell one cat (or dog) to declare themselves to the tax services. We understand other member states are considering a similar approach.⁴⁸

New French law requiring cat and dog breeders to register with the Tax Services

On 7 October 2015, a French ordinance “related to the trade and protection of companion animals” has been published. It aims to limit the uncontrolled private/non-professional breeding of dogs and cats and the resulting trade, most of the time done through online classified ads. Up to now, the French law provided that private people were allowed to breed dogs and cats without respecting any requirements or paying any tax, as long as they do not sell more than two litters a year. In practice, enforcement of this law proved to be impossible, resulting in unfair competition to license/professional breeders and uncontrolled online market. Therefore the new law aims to re-evaluate the status of breeder and make the dog and cat market more secure and controllable.

With the new law, up from 2016, anybody who wants to sell one dog or cat will have to be declared at the Tax Services, and get a unique tax number (called SIREN). This number will have to be written in all classified ads for selling dogs and cats and online platforms will have to create checking systems to check the validity of the SIREN number. Moreover, potential buyers will be able to check themselves the validity of this tax number and will have access to the data of the seller (like his complete name and his postal address).⁴⁹

Recommendation 7

BASOC members, in collaboration with the Pet Advertising Advisory Group and Defra, should consider the merits of applying a system similar to that recently announced in France whereby those selling one or more cat (or dog) in the UK are required to obtain a valid tax number and exhibit it on online advertisements. This number should be capable of being checked as valid by those operating online sites and by purchasers.

3.5 Inadequate legislation

The absence of regulations governing the breeding and selling of cats can present enforcement challenges where poor welfare standards of commercial cat breeding are reported.

Breaches of the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act can also present evidential challenges. Those who breed and sell without a pet shop licence can too easily claim they are exempt from licensing requirements because they are hobby breeders breeding from the family pet.

Britain bursting with unwanted pets

“The rise in unwanted, neglected and sick animals may be a result of loopholes in animal welfare legislation, according to vets at the Animal Welfare Foundation. At their annual discussion forum the charity will say that the Government is failing to put in place measures to control and regulate indiscriminate breeding or the sale and import of animals. The RSPCA took in 14 per cent more abandoned, neglected or sick cats in 2014 than in the year before.”

www.yourcat.co.uk (08.06.2015)

Local authority cat breeder enquiry: ‘lack of decent legislation’⁵⁰

This ongoing case (anonymised) involves tens of complaints to a local authority concerning a local breeder of pedigree cats. Complaints include sick kittens, kittens that died (six to date), payment of non-returnable deposits with no kitten delivered, and kittens with stunted growth (suspected to be linked to sick breeding queen cat). It cannot be proved that the kittens that died did so from illnesses present at the time of purchase although the multiple deaths of kittens from the same breeder are suspicious. Prices for the kittens range from £550 to over £1,000. There is veterinary evidence that the breeder has had sickly cats and has lost kittens to illness similar to the illness in the kittens sold.

The local RSPCA consider the evidence to be insufficient for action under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (section 4 and section 9). The local authority believes that if cat breeding was licensed (as dog breeding is) then at least inspection and review of breaches of licence conditions could be done. Trading standards are investigating suspected business activity by the breeder. The breeder is registered with a cat pedigree breed organisation whose only recourse would be removal of kittens from the pedigree register. The breeder states they are a “hobby breeder” exempt from the need for a pet shop licence under the Pet Animals Act 1951. The case is ongoing.

Note the details of this example cannot be published publicly or reproduced without permission from the report authors

²¹ www.pers.com with Cats Protection, October 2015

3.6 Online sales of cats and kittens: repeat activity

The Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) is a group of animal welfare charities and professional organisations and also includes representation from Defra. PAAG seeks to promote responsible online advertising of pets and encourages adherence to Defra backed minimum standards.⁵¹ One of the actions undertaken by PAAG is to require participating sites to monitor for evidence of advertisers placing advertisements for pets repeatedly. Multiple advertisements by the same seller of different animals are an indicator of business activity.

The classified site Gumtree was one of the first sites to engage with PAAG and has been especially helpful with provision of data about repeat advertisers. Using filters to detect repeat advertiser details such as phone numbers, Gumtree picked up and shared examples of repeat advertisements for kittens over relatively short time periods (see box below). Repeat activity is not always easy to detect as advertisers can, and do, commonly change their contact

details, phone number and addresses. This means the scale of breeding and sale advertised online may be larger than can easily be detected.

Based on commonly advertised prices for non- pedigree and pedigree cats the last column of the table below illustrates potential income from sales.

Online classified advertising sites operate using a variety of different business models. Preloved has a policy where anyone advertising more than four litters a year needs to do so as a Business member. Once an advertiser has placed adverts for more than four litters in a 12 month period, Preloved do not allow any further kitten adverts in the future without Business membership to try to encourage responsible breeding. This ban from advertising kittens does not apply only to a given 12 month period, it is a permanent decision.

Examples of repeat classified advertisements for kittens from the same advertiser/breeder

(supplied by Gumtree 2014)

| Location of breeder | Animals advertised | No of kittens advertised | Time period of adverts | Non-pedigree potential: £50 per cat | Pedigree potential: £500 per kitten |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Walthamstow | Kittens | 111 | 10 months | £5,550 | £55,500 |
| Birmingham | Kittens | 69 | 2 months | £3,450 | £34,500 |
| Dagenham | Kittens | 131 | 7 months | £6,550 | £65,500 |
| Manchester | Mainly Kittens | 432 | 8 months | £21,600 | £216,000 |
| Wolverhampton | Kittens | 180 | 16 months | £9,000 | £90,000 |

A recent example supplied by Preloved was that of an advertiser who had placed adverts for kittens from five different litters within less than a 12 month period. He was asked by Preloved to upgrade to Business membership. The advertiser was unwilling to do so, claiming to be a 'hobby breeder'. The advertiser was therefore not allowed to place any further cat/kitten adverts on Preloved's pet section.

The repeat advertiser data from Gumtree shows how helpful it is for sites to share data in order to help assess the scale of business activity linked to the breeding and sale of cats (and other pets).

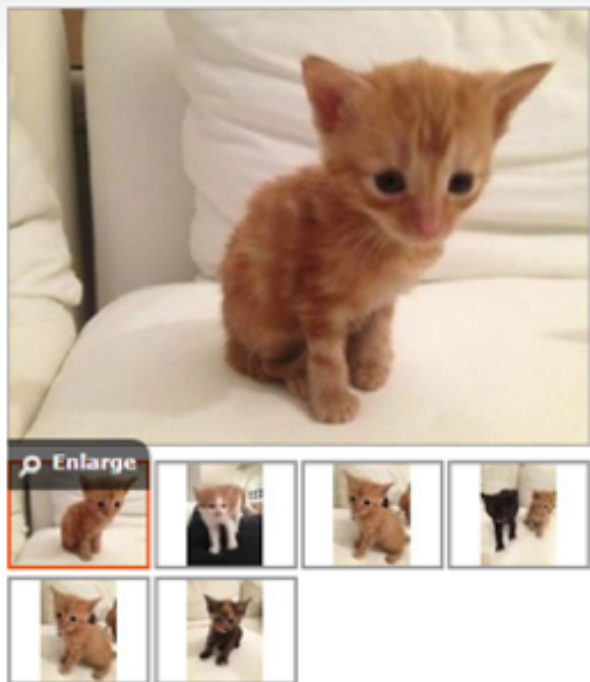
Recommendation 8

BASOC members, in association with the Pet Advertising Advisory Group and Defra, should request current and ongoing data from major online classified sites (data to be picked up by filters and anonymised as necessary) to evidence repeat advertisements from the same advertiser for the sale of cats and kittens (and other pets).

3.7 Breeding from the family pet - 'hobby breeders'

The intention of the exemption from the need for a pet shop licence for those that breed from the family pet cat (PAA 1951) was not to exclude from regulation those who are in fact operating a pet shop business. The pet cat may effectively be being used to supply a pet shop business operating out of the family home. There are no limits within the PAA on not to how many litters or over what timeframe the pet cat can be bred and the offspring sold.

BASOC have examples of online advertisements for the sale of kittens that state one or more parents to be the "family cat". An example is right and there are further examples in Appendix 2.



“This is my cat’s fourth litter”

Online advertiser

39 pers. communication GCCF Chair November 2015

40 pers. Communication - BSAVA (British Small Animal Veterinary Association) suggest it may be appropriate to expand this research to gather evidence on all kitten acquisitions to enable comparison between groups. Many people may get a kitten from a friend, neighbour or local farm and not consider this to be a breeder

41 The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2013 www.pdsa.org.uk/pawreport

42 The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2015 www.pdsa.org.uk/pawreport

43 Further information about this research including the research brief is available from Blue Cross – Public Affairs

44 Vets and charities advise a kitten must be at least 8 weeks old before it is separated from the queen, pedigree organisations advise 13 weeks when the pedigree kittens are fully vaccinated

45 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-the-hidden-economy-extension-of-data-gathering-powers>

46 The Grazia article is no longer online but a copy can be obtained from Cats Protection: advocacy@cats.org.uk

47 pers. communication Mark Abraham- Vet and presenter, Brighton

48 pers. communication International Cat Care November 2015

49 Text reproduced from <http://carocat.eu/france-a-new-law-to-limit-private-breeding-of-dogs-and-cats-and-internet-trade-of-these-animals/>

50 pers. communication Local Authority with Cats Protection, October 2015

51 More information about the work of PAAG to promote responsible online advertising of pets can be found on their website www.paag.org.uk

4. Solutions

In considering solutions the question BASOC posed was, given cat breeding is unregulated in the UK, are current legislative and non-legislative frameworks adequately safeguarding cat welfare where cats are bred and sold?

If the answer is no, or even possibly no, then what solutions are available, whether regulatory, self-regulatory or non-legislative, to improve the current situation for cats?

The solutions discussed below are not prioritised and are not mutually exclusive.

Consumer information and education

Ideally anyone seeking a cat or kitten would first consider adopting from an animal welfare charity offering animals that have been vet checked, neutered, vaccinated and microchipped and which is also a member of the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes.⁵²

However, given there will always be those that purchase cats, particularly kittens, from the informal market it is vital that consumers are fully informed. A key challenge is to ensure that purchasers recognise that they are buying a sentient creature, not a commodity.

“People ask more questions when they buy a fridge freezer than they do when they purchase a kitten or cat via an online advertisement”

Crawley Branch, Cats Protection

The incentive for the consumer is to avoid the heartache and expense that can result from purchasing a sick cat or kitten believing it to be healthy.

The Pet Advertising Advisory Group has already developed guidance for those purchasing a cat or kitten online: <http://paag.org.uk/buying-a-pet/cats/>.

BASOC suggests there is a need for a comprehensive yet succinct ‘kitten checklist’ to guide consumers who have decided to buy a cat or kitten. An indication of success would be if, eventually, buying a cat or kitten without completion of the kitten checklist would be as unthinkable as buying a used car without an MOT certificate.

Recommendation 9

BASOC members produce a ‘kitten checklist’ in collaboration with Defra to guide those who purchase a kitten or cat. This checklist would be endorsed and promoted by all animal welfare charities and professional organisations as well as by Government to ensure consistency of message to the purchasing public.

Code of practice on cat breeding

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and its devolved equivalents, a Code of Practice was developed for cats.⁵³ The Cat Code provides practical guidance to help owners of cats comply with the provisions of Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act. There is reference in the code to the importance of neutering as a means of preventing unwanted litters but there is no specific guidance on cat breeding for breeders. A new code specific to cat breeding would set out a common set of standards applicable to the breeding of all cats. It would present an opportunity to incorporate good practice and advice already promoted by GCCF and others, for example on avoiding inherited disorders. A code might also be used in conjunction with a kitten checklist by linking to the content of a code of practice on cat breeding.

An interesting precedent exists in the *Animal Welfare Code of Practice – Breeding dogs and cats* produced by the New South Wales (NSW) Government.⁵⁴ The NSW code provides guidance for everyone involved in the activity of breeding dogs and cats and aims to “protect the welfare of the animals in their care”.

The code specifically defines breeding as “the business of breeding of litters of animals for sale”. The NSW code also suggests a litter limit for individual queens of not more than three litters in any two year period (apart from on vet’s advice).

Recommendation 10

BASOC members develop a code of practice on cat breeding in collaboration with Defra. This code would be produced to accompany the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and sit alongside the existing Cat Code which covers the duty of care to ensure the five welfare needs of cats are met.

Breeder accreditation and training

Training, qualifications and accreditations for those that breed and sell cats is another useful tool to help secure high welfare standards in those that breed and sell. In the UK there is currently no legal obligation for a cat breeder to undergo any training in order to breed and sell. Training is available on application for those that want it, for example ICC run an Advanced Certificate in Cat Health and Welfare (Breeding).⁵⁵

“Our breeder qualification will provide detailed information on feline reproduction and kitten care and behaviour. The qualifications will give those who wish to work to the highest level a way to differentiate themselves from others and show their commitment to cat care.” ICC website 2015

In France breeding and sale of pedigree cats is regulated and linked to mandatory training for breeders. LOOF⁵⁶, an organisation set up under Government order, is responsible for issuing all pedigree certificates for pure bred cats in France. LOOF is self-funded through its membership fees. LOOF run a course on cat breeding and husbandry which, if passed makes pedigree cat breeders eligible for the pedigree breeder qualification CCAD⁵⁷. Obtaining the CCAD qualification is mandatory in France if a pedigree breeder sells more than one litter in a given year.

Recommendation 11

BASOC members to work in collaboration with Defra, animal welfare bodies and organisations offering training such, as Lantra⁵⁸, to develop mandatory training and accreditation for those that breed and sell cats as a business (“business” to be defined by Defra within new Regulations under the Animal Welfare Act 2006).

Regulation and registration

Regulation

Regulation of the breeding and trade in cats (and dogs) exists elsewhere in Europe. A recent review of commercial practices gives details of cat breeding and trade regimes across all member states.

Examples include:

- **Belgium** - Cat breeders need to be licenced if they breed more than two litters per year. Inspection is needed before a licence to breed is granted.
- **Croatia** - Commercial cat breeders need to be licenced if three or more breeding females. Inspection is needed before operating.
- **Germany** - Commercial breeders must be authorised. Breeders are generally considered as commercial when

they have five or more female cats or produce five or more litters per year. Breeders must be inspected before authorisation is granted

A summary of cat breeding legislation and other measures across EU member states is at Appendix 3.

20 of 28 EU Member States have some form of authorisation, permit, registration, notification or license system in place governing cat breeding.

BASOC, from its preliminary research, has found evidence of cat welfare being compromised where there is a commercial interest in breeding and sale. The scale of such breeding, its contribution to cat populations and the scale of welfare issues linked to commercial breeding are hard to ascertain. Arguably assessment of these problems is made harder by the fact that cat breeding is unregulated. Breeding and sale is occurring often invisibly without the need for a licence to breed. Loopholes in the Pet Animals Act, as discussed earlier, are also enabling cat owners to breed and sell offspring from the family pet without a pet shop licence. This results in inadequate protection for cats and their welfare where cats are bred and sold.

The key advantage of any regulation is that it creates a legal framework with associated safeguards and inspection regimes. It allows prevention of harm rather than a focus on prosecution. The key disadvantage of regulation is always that it creates a burden on those that enforce it and risks not being effectively enforced. Another potential disadvantage is that regulation may drive cat breeding and sale further underground. Members of PAAG are already concerned at the growth in closed groups on Facebook that offer pets for sale.

One thing regulation can do is send a clear political message and set a public and moral standard of what society views as acceptable. Whilst the prohibition of drink driving is not always enforced, few would argue it should not be governed by law and subject to legal limits. Given the concerns raised

in this report consideration should be given to introducing a regulatory framework which defines when breeding of cats for sale has passed from a 'hobby' to a business activity. The most obvious legal route for any new regulations relating to cat breeding (and pet vending) would be through regulations under the AWA (2006). A new code of practice on cat welfare and breeding would also sit under the AWA (2006). Currently there are no Government legislative proposals for any such regulation. A Private Members Bill, introduced by Lord Black in the House of Lords, proposes primary legislation (only Government can propose secondary legislation). The Bill is a response to the inadequacies of the current legal frameworks on cat breeding and sale.⁵⁹

Recommendation 12

As part of a review of the case for regulation of cat breeding in the UK (see Recommendation 2) BASOC members will conduct further research into the effectiveness of current regulation in EU member states of cat breeding (in terms of cat welfare and the impacts of regulation on the commercial market for cats and kittens).

Registration European Commission proposals

The European Commission announced proposals in April 2015 for registration across the EU from 2020 of those that breed and sell pets. This proposal was contained in new wording in the proposed Animal Health Law and has been backed by Member States and the European Commission.⁶⁰

Registration of those that breed and sell pets would be a welcome development as it should provide some transparency where cats are bred and sold. The proposed trigger for registration is a sale, which is entirely consistent with BASOC's objective of ensuring greater transparency and protection for cat welfare where cats are bred and sold. Breeder registration could be an important first step towards regulation.

Breed association registration

Some breed associations do offer registration for non-pedigree as well as pedigree cats. GCCF have been offering a registration service to owners of non-pedigrees of any age for the past 18 months. Registration with GCCF brings with it the advantage of advice and guidance from the breed association on cat care, health and welfare, also on showing non-pedigrees at GCCF licensed shows if that is of interest to the owner. GCCF would not register a litter of non-pedigree kittens if the owner of the queen cat wanted to register them with GCCF. The registration service offered is for the final owner of the non-pedigree pet cat. The non-pedigree cat register does not of course require any evidence of the cat or kitten's lineage, but records details of the physical appearance, sex, age and ownership of the pet cat.

⁵² <http://www.adch.org.uk/>

⁵³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-welfare-of-cats>. A revised version has recently been drafted by Defra in consultation with CFSG and is due for publication

⁵⁴ <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/animal-welfare/codes/breeding-dogs-and-cats>

⁵⁵ <http://catcare.org/learn-cat-professionals/advanced-certificate-cat-health-and-welfare#breeding>

⁵⁶ Livres Officiels des Origines felines

⁵⁷ Certificat de Capacité pour les personnes exerçant des activités liées aux Animaux de compagnie d'espèces Domestiques)

⁵⁸ <http://www.lantra.co.uk/>

⁵⁹ <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/welfareofcatsbreedingandsale.html>

⁶⁰ Eurogroup for Animals press release about the proposed amendment: <http://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/eurogroup-drag-pet-breeding-and-sale-out-of-the-shadows-as-uscpc-shines-a-light-on-puppy-farms/>

5. Conclusions & the way forward

The breeding and sale of cats in the UK, particularly non-pedigree cats, is an under-researched area. This is a preliminary report and only scratches the surface but shows that there is evidence of poor welfare where kittens are bred and sold, as well as other related issues linked to misrepresentation of the cat or kittens offered for sale. Throughout the report the need for further research is identified. There is consensus in the sector that current legal frameworks are inadequate. Cat breeding is not regulated, self-regulation exists primarily in the pedigree sector and current legislation on pet sales is out of date and in need of review. The focus must be on prevention over prosecution so that welfare issues and an over-supply of cats and kittens are avoided where possible. Resources will always be limited to investigate and secure animal welfare prosecutions.

No one solution will deliver on its own, whether regulatory, self-regulatory or based on information and advice. For

cat breeding, achieving common and consistent high welfare standards amongst breeders must be a priority as is ensuring greater transparency. Mandatory breeder training, registration of commercial breeders and regulation can all play a part. For the consumer the emphasis must be on information and education about the questions to ask and pitfalls that can arise when purchasing a cat or kitten. Ideally a new social norm where buyers tick off a kitten and cat checklist before agreeing any purchase will develop.

The combination of measures needed whether for the legislator, consumer or breeder are summarised diagrammatically (opposite).

The members of BASOC are pleased to present this report. We now look forward to progressing the recommendations in collaboration with CFSG, Defra and the Animal Health and Welfare Board England.

The wheel of welfare: Components to ensure good welfare for the breeding and sale of cats



6.1 Appendix 1

Terminology used in relation to cats and cat breeding-report interpretations

Below is clarification of some key terms. The terms were used within this report with the meaning set out below.

Note: these are not definitions but clarifications agreed jointly by the members of the organisations represented on the BASOC working group.

Queen: An intact or entire female cat, i.e. one that is not neutered

Purebred: a cat whose ancestors are all of the same breed.

Mixed breed: a cat of unknown or mixed parentage. This includes the terms moggie, domestic short hair and domestic long hair.

Crossbreed: a cat whose parents are of two different breeds, also known as a hybrid in breeding circles but this is not the true biological definition which is the offspring of two different species or sub-species.

Pedigreed cat (usually known as a pedigree): a cat whose ancestry is recorded in a document known as the pedigree. Strictly speaking it does not have to be purebred though it usually is.

Registered: a cat whose ancestry is documented and recorded with a cat registering association

Accidental breeder/one litter breeder: Someone who accidentally or intentionally has a litter of kittens from their female cat. Cats are usually neutered after one litter (PDSA statistics¹)

Note: Kittens may be given away to new owners or sold or given to welfare organisations. A sale or advertisement for sale of cats that are bred would be the defining factor denoting whether breeding was commercial. Even if it was commercial any regulation would consider issues of litter limits and frequency of litters sold to determine when commercial activity became an activity requiring a licence.

Reducing the number of kittens produced in this way would be mostly achieved through education/public awareness to prevent litters. Legal regulation would set thresholds which may well exclude those having one or low numbers of litters and selling the offspring from any regulatory framework.

Breeding cats for sale: Breeders of pedigree cats, cross breeds, or non-pedigree cats (or hybrid cats) on a regular basis which they offer for sale.

The term “hobby breeder” usually denotes breeding from the family pet. The term can be used by pedigree breeders to denote a lack of income generation, particularly where cats are bred and the offspring kept for showing.

Note: Any of these breeders may do it well and produce healthy kittens from good situations, and any of them may produce unhealthy kittens from unsuitable environments.

For pedigree cats, welfare issues may include inherited defects because of small gene pools.

Legislation would require definition of ‘regular’ activity in terms of litter numbers and frequency. It would define when commercial activity became an activity requiring a licence. Issues of income generation and declaration of taxable income should also be considered where commercial breeding occurs.



6.2 Appendix 2

Picture appendix: illustrating aspects of the breeding and sale of cats

Section 1: Problems of overpopulation

1a: Examples of online advertisements and the prices sought for non-pedigree kittens (commonly referred to as moggies)

These examples illustrate that relatively large amounts of money are sought in advertisements for ordinary cats that are not in any way specialist or rare (e.g. pedigree) and which are commonly available.

Fig 1.1 Gorgeous kitten for sale £300



Fig 1.2 Lovely black and white short haired boy kitten £180



Fig 1.3 Very nice black and white kittens £280



Fig 1.5 Tabby Kittens £450



Fig 1.4 Adorable white kitten for sale £300



Fig 1.6 Striking Feisty Black and Ginger Kitten £400



1b: Examples of online advertisements and the prices sought for part pedigree kittens (often referred to as pedigree cross)

Fig 1.7 Stunning Litter of Russian X (only one left) £275



Fig 1.9 Red Ragdoll cross Kitten £300



Fig 1.8 Stunning Ragdoll cross Chocolate Persians Kittens £495

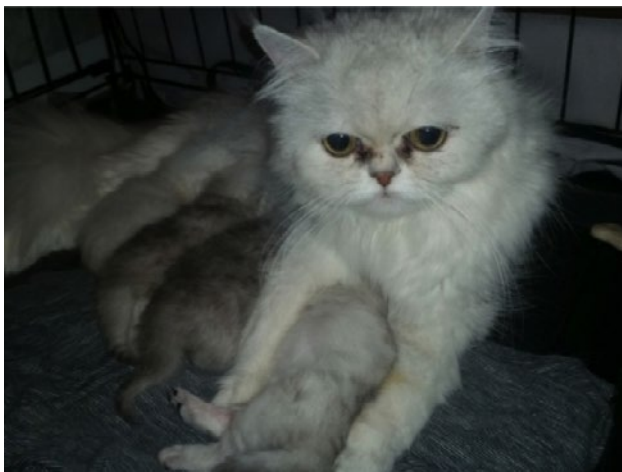


Fig 1.10 Ragdoll Balinese Kitten £350



1c: Prices for Pedigrees that are registered with a recognised breed association

1.11 Stunning CGGF Active chinchilla Persian £1,000

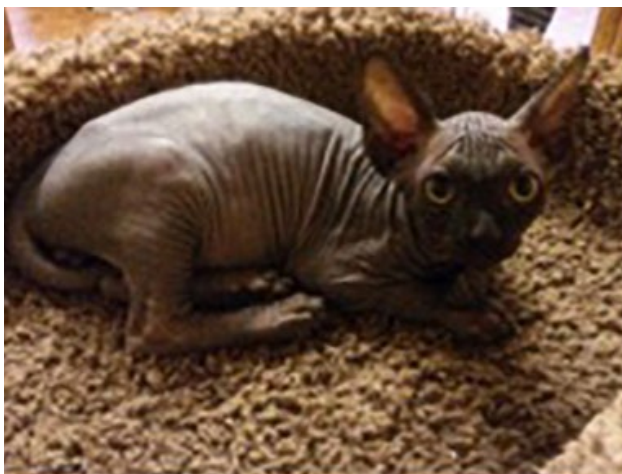


North East, Durham

Advert description: Kittens will be registered Active with the GCCF instead of prospective new owners with no breeding restrictions placed on them.

1.12 Beautiful Pedigree Baby Boy For Sale £1,100

Sphinx



West Bromwich, West Midlands

Advert description: We have a beautiful black boy for sale. GCCF reg on active. Already vaccinated, microchipped, vet checked and little trained. Both parents are imported and GCCF reg as a pedigree HCM scanned clear (all papers can be seen). Viewings welcome. A £200 deposit to secure him. No time wasters. Offers welcome.

1.13 Purebred Persian Kittens For Sale £1,000



Bradford, West Yorkshire

Pets Age: 4 weeks, 4 days old*

Advert description: My Persian Queen recently gave birth to four gorgeous kittens (sex unknown)... They will come with a pedigree... Email for more information... Will come with vaccinations... Flea worm treatment... Papers... GCCF registered... Toys etc

**Note:* Thos website does allow kittens to be advertised that are less than eight weeks old but does include a warning to purchasers on their site that kittens should not be separated from the queen cat before eight weeks.

Section 2: Problems of overpopulation – repeat breeding

Fig 2.1



Date of birth: 17/02/14

Advert description: SORRY THESE ARE NOW ALL SOLD BUT I DO HAVE ANOTHER LITTER OF BLACK/WHITE KITTENS WHICH ARE A LITTLE YOUNGER AVAILABLE PLEASE CONTACT ME IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE THEM.

Our gorgeous tabby mum has had a litter of 7 kittens. They are all stunning and are all extremely special kittens. There are 2 ginger females, 3 ginger boys, 1 female tabby and 1 boy black and white. This is [my cats fourth litter](#) and she is a brilliant mum and has really looked after them. They are now eating dried food, drinking weaning milk and learning to use the litter tray.

Fig 2.2



Advert description: I have for sale 1 male black and white 9 week old kitten. He is full of character and is used to being with other cats/kittens. He is fully weaned on dry food, fully litter trained, flea treated and wormed. Both parents for the kitten can be seen at any time as they are both house cats and therefore have never placed a paw outside. [I have been breeding cats for the last 7 years](#) and have never had any reported health problems with any of the kittens that I have sold previously. Any questions please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you for looking at this very cute kitten.

Fig 2.3 Multiple litters being offered for sale at the same time

Pets Age: 4 weeks, 6 days old.*

Advert description: I have 4 beautiful kittens for sale... they all have their mums loving personality, and are extremely affectionate.

They were born on 10th July... and ready to go 28th August.

They are 4 weeks old this thursday so are not ready to go yet, but a deposit will secure your chosen kitten and you are more than welcome to come and visit until they are ready to go.

All 4 are all female...

I have 1 pure white and shes quite fluffy

Another pure white and she has a few black marks on her head

I have a very fluffy black and white girl white lovely black smudges on her face

And another black and white girl who is less fluffy then her sisters.

Mum is pure white and you will be able to see her also, she is very much loved family pet. These kittens will be litter trained, flea treated, wormed, and eating dry food when they leave for their new home. They are growing up in a family enviroment, as I have 2 young daughters who handle them daily and also have 2 other cats and 2 dogs.

Please text/call if you would like to see them.

I HAVE ALSO ANOTHER LITTER FOR SALE THAT WILL BE READY TO GO ON THE 4TH SEPTEMBER...

I HAVE 1 BOY AND 3 GIRLS AVAILABLE FROM THIS LITTER.

2 TORTOISIESHELL GIRLS

1 GINGER BOY... ****SOLD****

1 FLUFFY BLACK AND WHITE GIRL

1 CHOCOLATE BOY

ALL CAN BE SEEN, AND DEPOSITS PUT DOWN WILL SUCURE YOUR CHOSEN KITTEN UNTIL THEY ARE READY TO LEAVE

£180 EACH

*NOTE: This website does allow kittens to be advertised that are less then eight weeks old but does include a warning to purchasers on their site that kittens should not be separated from the queen cat before eight weeks.

Section 3: Problems for cat welfare – evidence

3.1 Kittens sold in poor welfare conditions – Leeds Cat Rescue

4 March 2015

We were contacted by a lady who had bought two kittens from a person on a Facebook pet selling site for £10 each. She was so shocked by the state that these kittens were in that she realised that she needed help. These two sisters were sold as miniature kittens but really they are malnourished, flea infested, have a massive worm burden, filthy and in the worse condition we have seen kittens come in from a private home in a long time. One may have to have her tail amputated as it is 'crispy' through urine burns and on bathing them (we couldn't use flea spray as their skin is too sore) the feet on their paw pads just came off and are now raw. One kitten has burns all over its head and the purchaser was told that it had had an accident and jumped in a fire or oven. Due to the worm burden one kitten had a prolapse of her bowel. These kittens are three months old and weigh under 700g which is the healthy weight of a seven week old kitten.



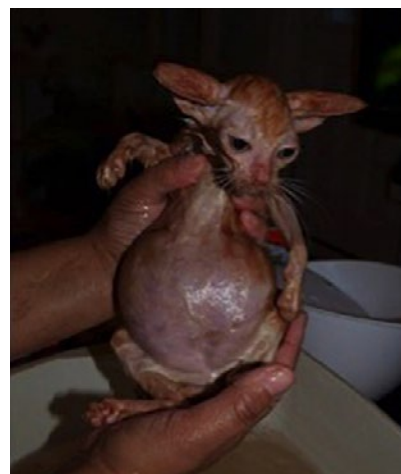
Kittens as purchased: malnourished and flea infested



Raw paw pads



Kitten's head after bathing – flea spray could not be used as the skin was too sore



Belly swollen due to worm infestation

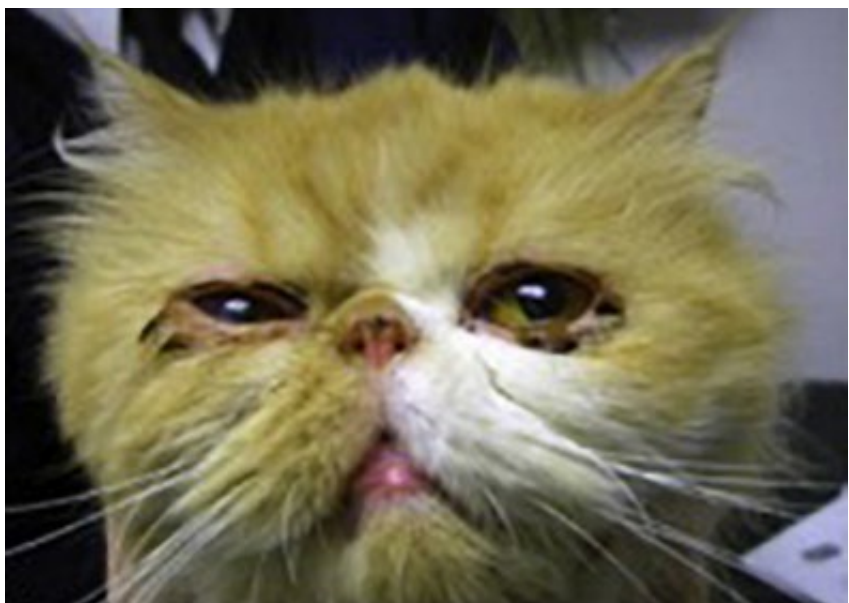
3.2 RSPCA complaint

Suspensions were raised about a number of exotic cats, after the RSPCA received a complaint by someone who purchased three in a cat basket at a railway station. When the complainant got the animals home she found them to be in poor condition. Her vet found them all to be suffering from flea infestations, they were underweight and had been exposed to cat flu.

A warrant was obtained and local police forced entry into the property of a woman from Gloucestershire who refused to open her door. Five further cats were found. A vet began to examine the cats, three females and two males and found them to be suffering or their needs were not being met.

Conditions the cats were suffering from included being severely underweight, ear mites, skin disease, eye infections, conjunctivitis, mouth infections and hair loss due to flea infestations. Veterinary evidence confirmed these cats too were suffering and had done so for at least a month.

The cats were promptly seized by the police and handed over to the care of the RSPCA Inspector Mann. Despite her sales of exotic breeds of cats via the press across southern England, the woman said she had not used a vet for some time due to money problems and had refused assistance from the RSPCA.



Eye infection
– conjunctivitis

3.3 Fraserburgh Cats Protection Branch

April 2015

Fraserburgh Cats Protection branch received a cardboard box with some filthy blankets and six very sick looking kittens in it. The lady who brought the kittens said that she had gone to a puppy farm to rescue a puppy and the person there gave her the box of kittens. The lady asked where their mother was and was told she's dead. The kittens were starving and all of them had eye problems.

The Cats Protection branch took the kittens to a vet. In the vet's opinion the mother cat had had Chlamydia or cat flu when the kittens were born which had caused the eye problems. The kittens received veterinary treatment for their eyes and three of the kittens recovered their full eyesight. Two of the kittens lost sight in one eye but the last kitten, although having a little vision, was virtually blind. The blind kitten, Stevie, loved to play with noisy toys and seemed extremely bright but relied very much on his sister, Tiny. Stevie used to take Tiny's tail in his mouth and she would lead him to where his bed was.

All the kittens were rehomed, Stevie with Tiny but sadly Tiny passed away early in October 2015.

Had the kittens been treated sooner than they were they may all have had their sight returned.

This particular breeder has been known to Fraserburgh Cats Protection for over 20 years. She not only breeds cats but dogs and horses as well. The SSPCA have been called to her in the past and action was taken at that time.



Section 4: Problem Misrepresentation/Trade Descriptions – evidence

4a: Trading Standards

– Kittens not as described

Example 4.1

Advert is for six cute Bengal Kittens but the photograph is of black and white kittens. A Bengal is a recognised pedigree breed of cat. There is no mention of registration with a pedigree breed organisation of the kittens.

6 Adorable Cute Bengal Kittens For Sale £200

London, East London



4b: No proof of pedigree

Example 4.2

British Shorthair kittens £500. This is a pedigree breed.

There is no mention of registration with a pedigree breed organisation.



Advert description: 3 ginger and 1 black kitten

not sure of sexes yet

taking deposits and ready to view with mother

ready to leave at 10 weeks

currently 3 weeks. will be vet checked, microchipped and injections done

Example 4.3

Advert for Norwegian Forest kittens for £425 each. This is a pedigree breed. There is no mention of registration with a pedigree breed organisation.



Norwegian Forest Kittens £425

Alloa, Clackmannanshire

Date of birth: 2 Oct 2014

Ready for rehome: 27 Nov 2014

Advert description: I have 3 Beautiful Norwegian Forest kittens for sale. 2 Boys – blue and white and red tabby and white, and a stunning tortie and white female. They are 5 month old bundles of fun and mischief and are ready to train some new slaves. All of my cats raised with the family, including a dog, and are totally bombproof.

Example 4.4

Advert for a Persian kitten. This is a pedigree breed. There is no mention of registration with a pedigree breed organisation.



fluffy Persian kitten £150

Crickhowell, Powys

Date of birth: 10 Sep 2015

Ready for rehome: 5 Nov 2015

Advert description: Last of litter, beautiful fluffy little boy, 9 weeks old, amazing loving nature, wormed, fleed, litter trained, he is going to be a big cat. Ready to go to 5 star home x

6.3 Appendix 3

Summary table of cat breeding legislation across the EU

Source: The Welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices: a review of the legislation across EU countries

EU Dog and Cat Alliance (March 2015)

| Country | Legislation type | Breeding legislation |
|--------------------------|------------------|--|
| Austria | Authorisation | Business activity needs to be authorised. Inspected once a year. |
| Belgium | Licensed | Cat breeders need to be licenced if they breed more than two litters per year. Inspected before granted a licence. |
| Bulgaria | Registered | Breeding establishments must be registered. Inspected before operating. |
| Croatia | Licensed | Commercial cat breeders need to be licenced if three or more breeding females. Inspected before operating. |
| Cyprus | N/A | No requirements. |
| Czech Republic | Notification | Cat breeders need to notify their activity. |
| Denmark | N/A | No requirements. |
| England and Wales | N/A | No requirements. |
| Estonia | N/A | No requirements. |
| Finland | Notification | Professional or large scale cat breeders need to notify their activities. Defined as at least 6 breeding females which have given birth at least once. |
| France | Registration | Cat breeders must be registered and properly trained. ¹ Maximum of three litters over two years. ² |
| Germany | Authorisation | Commercial breeders must be authorised. Breeders are generally considered as commercial when they have five or more female cats or produce five or more litters per year. Must be inspected before authorisation is granted. |
| Greece | Licensed | Cat breeders must be licenced. |
| Hungary | N/A | No requirements. |
| Ireland | N/A | No requirements. |
| Italy | Authorisation | Breeders must be authorised at regional level. |

| Country | Legislation type | Breeding legislation |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Latvia | Registration | Breeding organisations and their members must be registered. Female cats cannot give birth to more than one litter per year. |
| Lithuania | Permit | Cat breeders must have a permit. |
| Luxembourg | Authorisation | Breeding establishments with more than 10 animals need to be authorised. |
| Malta | N/A | Very general provisions on the breeding of animals which applies to cats. |
| Northern Ireland | N/A | No requirements. |
| Netherlands | Registration | Commercial breeders must be registered. Maximum of two litters within a period of 12 consecutive months or a maximum of three litters within a period of 24 consecutive months. Inspections targeted at those who have more than 20 animals in 12 months. |
| Poland | Registration | Only breeders registered with national organisations that have the statutory mission to breed pure-bred cats are allowed to commercially breed them. Otherwise, breeders do not need to be registered or licensed. |
| Portugal | Registration and licencing | Breeding establishments must be registered and licenced. Inspections each year. |
| Romania | N/A | No specific requirements for cat breeders. |
| Scotland | N/A | No specific requirements for cat breeders. |
| Slovakia | Notification | Cat breeders need to notify the veterinary authorities of their activity. |
| Slovenia | Authorisation | Cat breeders need to be authorised with more than 10 animals. Inspected at least once a year. |
| Spain | Authorisation | Cat breeders must be authorised. Inspected before they can be registered. |
| Sweden | Permit | Professional cat breeders need a permit. Defined as when breeders keep 10 or more cats older than 12 months, they breed three or more litters per year, or sell cats from three or more litters per year from their own breeding. Inspected before they start operating or shortly afterwards. |

Full details are available from the source document.

www.dogandcatwelfare.eu/media/filer_public/f2/22/f222a092-3ddd-45d0-ad48-b6fec38ca98/eudogandcat_web_1.pdf

1 The Livres Officiels des Origines felines governs registration and training of pedigree cat breeders in France. www.loof.asso.fr/actus/cesite-en.php

2 Since March 2015 we are aware of a new law to limit private breeding of dogs and cats and internet trade : <http://carocat.eu/france-a-new-law-to-limit-private-breeding-of-dogs-and-cats-and-internet-trade-of-these-animals/>

The Canine & Feline Sector Group is a membership body which unifies the sector and is therefore able to improve efficiency through sharing information and resources with its members. The Group responds collectively to Government consultations and provides expert advice to policy makers on all issues relating to dogs and cats whilst ensuring the members are kept updated on developments and any changes affecting their work. By developing a united group from across different disciplines in animal welfare, key areas are targeted by the members developing a strong focus and recognisable expertise within one body. Whilst CFSG is a membership group, it is open to engagement with other organisations and individuals.

CFSG is best placed to give advice on the welfare and health of dogs and cats but it also seeks to ensure there is a full understanding of the role of dogs and cats in society and the benefits they bring.

www.cfsg.org.uk

This report has been prepared by a working group of the CFSG formed specifically to research and report on the breeding and sale of cats in the UK. The following organisations were represented on the working group:



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