



## CONSIDERING BEING A BREEDER? --GUIDELINE by Caroline Scott of Procurl Harem American Curls 8-2013

If you want to breed you have to do it properly or not at all.

You have to be educated, financially stable, responsible and totally committed to your chosen breed. You need to be prepared to nurture and look after as well as contribute to and invest in your Breed by a good personable, informative, updated- often website, showing, and happily educating visitors at cat shows.

Also, breeding may include importing new bloodlines from overseas - Good so far? Let's continue...

Breeding pet quality animals and registering and selling their offspring as "CURLS" (with Breeding Rights!) is NOT in the interest of the Breed!

To breed you need lots of cat-proof space (you cannot allow entire cats to roam the neighborhood) and the means to keep that space clean and hygienic. Breeder cats don't only spray, but viral, bacteria and microscopic parasites (mites & ringworm) are highly contagious and can spread throughout a cattery/home at an alarming rate! Remember that cats are not pack animals by nature and keeping a few breeding cats together causes stress, this in turn plays havoc with their immunity, resulting in them being susceptible to whatever is going around. You must therefore be able to isolate new or sick cats in cages, keep moms and kittens separate from the other cats in their own enclosures, and males separate from the females (to give the girls a break) and each other (to prevent fights) in a cat-friendly, stimulating but very clean environment where they'll have lots of access to human company.

Breeding is hard work! The more you do personally the more aware you'll be of what's going on. It is best if YOU scoop litter trays (to pick up elimination & digestive problems), YOU feed your cats (a lack of appetite is often the first sign of illness) and YOU groom your cats (to pick up injuries, lumps, skin problems and spend time with them individually), the rest can be delegated to hired help. If you don't have the time for this, then you possibly don't have the time to breed American Curl Cats!

Count the cost financially. Realize that gathering your foundation stock will be costly as you need to get the best possible quality cats available (Show/Breeder and up). You will also need to get basic grooming and cleaning equipment, cat-proof your home and build stud quarters. Breeding is an expensive (but very fulfilling) hobby. Your non-toxic cleaners, grooming aids, veterinary care, food and cat litter expenses can amount to a small fortune within a short period of time! This excludes show entry fees, gas and weekend accommodation when campaigning a kitty. If your goal is to make a business (money) out of breeding then stop investigating this option right now! Losing a precious queen and her entire first litter can be devastating and utterly demoralizing (breeding is definitely not for the faint hearted!); The love of beautiful animals and the challenge to breed a Best in Show Winner should be your main motivation!

Count the cost socially. Breeding cats is going to affect your entire family. Now the first question you ask before inviting someone over is "are you allergic to cats?!" If your home is to become the main cattery you need everyone's consent and support! It affects who you entertain and vacation arrangements. Most catteries only last 4 years and the main reason for getting out of cats is the toll it takes on family relationships...

Decide what color within that Breed you are interested in. You cannot for instance combine Colorpoints with Bi-Colors or Silvers - you have to choose only one variety! As soon as you have more than one variety, you are compelled to have lots more cats as you will have to run a separate breeding program for each. Do your color research. Know dilutes, the silver gene, and colorpoint.

Don't contact the first Reputable Breeder you come across and ask for a kitten with Breeding Rights - this will definitely be refused! Also don't enquire about the kitten price before anything else, many Breeders interpret this as the buyer trying to work out how much money he'll be able to make out of cats.

Educate yourself. Learn as much as you can about your chosen Breed and cat health in general and genetics by reading up on the subjects

#### BOOKS:

Robinson's Genetics for Cat

Breeders and Veterinarians, Dr. Niels Pedersen's Feline Husbandry, The Cornell Book of Cats (Out of Print), Cat Owner's Home Veterinary Handbook by Carlson and of course internet websites)

#### THINGS TO DO:

1. Joining appropriate e-lists (search e-groups, for health I highly recommend CFA "Fanciers-Health" and "Gene-poole" for genetics)
2. Visiting cats shows to see the cats in the flesh, to get your eye "trained" to interpret the Breed Standard so as to be able to differentiate between what's "right" and what's "wrong" and between what you like and dislike [though both expressions might be "right"] and to meet Ethical Breeders
3. Visiting various Breeders websites (to get your eye "trained" and study pedigrees). The American Curl has evolved considerably over the past 10 years! Make sure your future foundation cats meet the current Breed Standard by preferably buying from Breeders that show and are working with recently imported lines.
4. Building a friendly relationship with 2 or 3 Breeders to ask questions of and for them to get to know you too! When you think you're ready for a more hands-on experience speak to one of the Breeders that you've built a

relationship with and see if they'll entrust a show quality altered cat to you that you can show in the Premiership class (they should also be willing to mentor you as a new future Breeder). This will give you the opportunity to see whether the breed really suits your personality and lifestyle, whether you can cope with the grooming demands and whether showing is a hobby you wish to pursue. You cannot breed if you don't show a few times a year! Showing prevents cattery-blindness (not seeing your own cats' faults) and will guide your breeding goals. Breeds evolve and showing will keep you up to date. Your altered show quality cat could always be used to show potential kitten buyers what their kitten will look like one day as they usually are beautiful breed specimens and don't lose condition as breeding animals do.

5. Put your breeding goals on paper. Decide on the lines you want to work with and draw up a breeding plan so that you don't buy your foundation cats haphazardly. Make a decision to never have more than 4 - 8 cats at a time and keep to it! Start as small as you can with the best quality cats you can afford as you must remember that you need to keep kittens. Never randomly just collect cats!

Remember you are NOT competing with the local Back Yard Breeder!

You're goals and their goals should be very different! You shouldn't breed for the pet market (a BYB does), you should breed with a certain goal in mind each time you do a mating (to improve a physical character trait as per the Breed Standard or health or temperament or to emphasize the excellent qualities of a common ancestor). In other words to improve on the stock you already have. To move forward in your breeding program you'll have to keep kittens that meet your goals, if there are a few extra kittens yes, place them in loving pet homes. Your aim should be not to make money out of those few, but instead to find them loving forever homes. However, remember you remain responsible for all the kitties you ever breed, so know that you might have to keep some indefinitely until suitable homes are found. Don't be anxious and compromise your standards, the well-being of your kittens and Breed should guide every decision you make. Stand behind your kitties, be honest about any health or behavioral problems (give a discount where necessary) and be willing to replace if it is warranted. Happy new pet owners will refer new potential buyers to you if you produce beautiful, healthy kittens and prove to be honest and trustworthy. Therefore, honor the wishes of the Breeders that have entrusted you with their kittens and keep the contractual agreements that you have entered into (this could mean not breeding with a certain cat or selling to any Breeders for a generation or to certain regions). Be prepared to practice early spay/neutering if at all possible. This will not only prevent unwanted kittens in shelters, but also protect the lines of those Breeders that have entrusted you with theirs.

If you're teachable, tenacious and passionate about your chosen Breed, you'll survive - welcome to the Cat Fancy!!!

PROCURL HAREM American Curls NYC since 1986

© 2013 may not be copied without permission from Caroline Scott