

## It's a Matter of Class with Pedigreed Cats

**Do you think a pedigreed cat is out of your price range? Think again.**

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Kittens under 4 months are not allowed at cat shows, but many exhibitors do not sell their kittens before this age. In addition to kittens, breeders will often bring retired adults to the show, in hopes of placing them in good homes.

Some breeders prefer to do business another way: "I don't bring my kittens to shows," says Diane Sweeney, a Maine Coon breeder at Coronadocats Cattery in Coronado, Calif. Sweeney encourages interested people she meets at shows to come to her home. This can be a plus for a prospective buyer because it guards against an emotional and impulsive decision and allows you to get a look at a kitten's environment, assuring the buyer the cattery has provided a caring, uncrowded and healthy habitat for your future pet.

Even if you don't find the perfect cat at your first show, you'll go home with valuable information and contacts for the future. Take notes and ask breeders for their business cards.

How to Find a Pedigree Kittens are ready to leave their mothers when they reach 8 to 16 weeks of age, depending on the breeder's preference. Check back with the breeders you met at a show or look for a breeder directory in the back of cat magazines such as CAT FANCY, Cats USA or Kittens USA. Classified ads may also appear in local newspapers at this time, or you may spot breeders' cards on local bulletin boards. A call to local veterinary clinics can also provide you with information.

If you'd prefer an adult pedigreed cat, consider buying a retired show or breeder cat. These adult cats, around 3 to 4 years old, cost less than show-quality kittens, and they may even be grand champions. An advantage to choosing an adult cat is its personality is already known. Your show contacts and the Internet are good resources for researching this possibility. Many catteries advertise on the Internet, offering photographs and biographies of their retired friends. Some will even ship a cat to you.

Prices vary for a pet-quality kitten or an older cat and from coast to coast. For example, on the West Coast, Abyssinian pet-quality cats are about \$500, breeder females are \$800 and show-quality cats are \$1,500. Even a pet-quality Sphynx is a high-end cat at \$800 each, whereas a more widely available Maine Coon averages about \$300.