

Michigan Womans Complaints Help Spur Cat Rescue

After the woman bought a kitten, she was so appalled by her condition that she griped to various public agencies.

A Mundy Township, Mich., womans complaints about an extremely ill cat she bought from a commercial cat breeder has helped spark one of the largest cat rescues in Idahos history. Sharon Johnson, a retired math teacher and school administrator, ordered a purebred Ragdoll from Rocky Mountain Cat Resort. Johnson said she paid \$600 plus \$200 in shipping costs for the 12-week-old Ragdoll, which she purchased as a playmate for one of her other cats, Nigel, a black Persian kitten. But when the kitten arrived in November, Johnson said she was appalled by the kittens poor health. She was extremely skinny, her eyes didn't track together and were sunken in, and she was sneezing, coughing and crying, Johnson said. Her cat had a fever, tapeworm, fecal blood, urinary tract infection, ear mites, conjunctivitis and herpes in both eyes, diarrhea and ringworm, she said. And when she contacted the seller, Rocky Mountain Cat Resort owner Janet Rasmussen, about the problems and received no help, Johnson then contacted officials at the Idaho Humane Society and Twin Falls County Sheriff's Department. It turns out Johnson wasn't the first to complain about the resort, though officials had never been able to prove a case. Johnson supplied them with the evidence they needed to prosecute. Jeff Rosenthal, executive director of the Idaho Humane Society, and other officials raided the breeding and kennel facility in Twin Falls, Idaho, late last week, rescuing 323 cats, many of whom were covered in feces, ill and underfed. In all, 117 of the cats had to be euthanized. The rest are in an emergency shelter set up by the Idaho Humane Society and eventually will be offered for adoption, Rosenthal said. On Thursday, April 27, Rasmussen was charged with 57 counts of animal cruelty, according to Twin Falls County Sheriffs Department officials. Johnson still has the cat she bought from Rasmussen, and said she's spent more than \$1,000 on medical care for the cat, who is in much better shape now, but still suffers from outbreaks of herpes and takes medication for ringworm. Posted: May 1, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST