

Buying a Pamacs Selkirk Rex

One of the most difficult things to do with Selkirk Rex is something that is most frequently undertaken by a person who knows little or nothing about the breed. I'm referring, of course, to the act of purchasing one's first Selkirk Rex kitten. There are few articles written about this subject because the breed is so new. However, most people who go about the purchase of a new kitten -- especially those who want to acquire a new family member rather than experienced show people who want a Selkirk Rex for the show ring -- either do not want to take the time to read anything or they simply do not know where to find this kind of assistance. This report was created to assist in the process of finding a Selkirk Rex to love.

First of all I would like to dispel a few myths. One of them is the idea that all breeders are "kitten mills" where breeding stock and very young kittens are kept under horrendously filthy, overly crowded and inhumane conditions. With cats this is rarely the case. Cats don't reproduce well in such conditions. There are some breeders that are in the business of raising kittens for sale, and the litters their breeding stock produce are a crop to be sold for profit. They know how to get the most out of their stock.

However, at Pamacs, our cats are not "stock", they are our pets, first and foremost. Some of the very best of those that meet the standard are exhibited at cat shows and used for breeding. The others are placed in pet homes, already spayed or neutered.

What less knowledgeable breeders do NOT do is research bloodlines and pedigrees in order to produce not only good conformation but also to avoid hereditary diseases that are to be found in all breeds. Very few of the kittens produced by these particular breeding establishments remain there beyond eight or nine weeks of age, and the breeders never see the end results, nor do they have reason to care. Once they get their money for the kitten, their interest in that kitten disappears.

Since we are not breeding strictly for profit, we keep our kittens until they are at least 12 weeks old, and most often they are 16 weeks before we will let them go. This makes sure they are socialized, are current on their vaccinations, spayed or neutered and ready to love a new family. Getting a kitten earlier does not guarantee they will bond better with their new family -- it can, however, lead to problems because of the very young age they were removed from their original environment.

Another myth is that a breeder who places sleek display ads in various publications or advertises extensively on the Internet is necessarily a good or even a responsible breeder. Advertising is a necessity of modern life in order to become known and to show one's product to the general public, and anyone with the money to pay for the space and the fancy artwork can become a major advertiser whether or not the claims in the ads are true.

Myth #3 addresses the show breeder, and part of this fiction may be perpetuated by the breeders themselves. This pertains to kittens bred for the show ring versus kittens that are bred to be pets. Although all healthy and well-socialized kittens can become wonderful and lovable pets, not all offspring of show stock turn out to be show quality. Nor are so-called show kittens any different in personality than pet quality kittens, as animal rights activists and other opponents to breeding insist. Also, the price of non-show quality kittens from a reputable show breeder is usually not higher than the cost of similar kittens from another source. Sometimes the price is actually lower.

At Pamacs, we believe that kittens are, first and foremost, pets. That they win in the show ring is wonderful icing on the cake!

Buying a Kitten

There are advantages to buying a kitten from Pamacs. For one thing, a great deal of time, money and effort -- not to mention love -- is put into producing a top winner for the show ring. To have such a cat turn up at the height of his show career with a serious genetic problem would be devastating to us; so we are going to do the necessary study and testing to get the best possible crack at avoiding such a disaster.

Another advantage is that we are more likely to know a great deal about the breed than those with little or no experience, we love the breed and are willing and able to answer most questions as well as to assist with suggestions to solve any problems that might come up with managing the new kitten once you get it home. Also, kittens that are handled daily with an eye to a show ring usually have few problems adjusting when placed as a pet.

How can you be sure that any breeder (including Pamacs) is conscientious, knowledgeable and trustworthy? First of all, what are his/her references? Is the breeder a member of the Selkirk Rex Breed Club (I am one of the founders of the club)? Of an all-breed club? Of the breed council in their chosen association (CFA, ACFA, TICA) (I have been a member since the breed was in Provisional status in CFA)? None of this is a requirement, but it would be a good start. Sometimes there are good reasons why a person is not a member of an organization. Some don't have the time. Some people are simply not "joiners." However, a red flag should go up if the reason given for not belonging is a deprecating one.

Does the breeder show his/her Selkirks? Has he or she ever shown them? If not, WHY not? If the breeder has no interest in showing, does he or she at least have some familiarity with the breed standard? Is the sire of the litter a grand champion or at least a quality tom that was chosen because he complements the pedigree and conformation of the queen, or did the breeder simply breed his queen to his own or a friend's tom because it was available and free to use? Is the breeder aware of

hereditary problems in the breed, if any? Were both parents tested at least for PKD prior to the breeding and have they been blood-typed? If the breeder is unknowledgeable, evasive or even belligerent about any of these questions, it might be worthwhile going elsewhere.

How can you identify a breeder whose only interest in Selkirk Rex is to sell kittens for profit? Such a breeder usually has little or no knowledge about the breed. This type of breeder will often push as the main selling point that her kittens are "CFA registered" or "pedigreed." When asked how the kittens or even the sire and dam compare to the breed standard, this breeder will offer little or nothing in the way of reply. Ask how many cats the breeder owns and how frequently they are bred. If a queen is bred more frequently than once a year (rarely, twice a year), a red flag should go up. Properly raising a litter of kittens, keeping them clean and socializing them is time and energy consuming. If the breeder appears to have too many litters, unless there is a staff to take care of them, chances are that some of the fine points of kitten raising are being neglected. Making up for this lack later on by the buyer can be time consuming and frustrating.

Depending on their age, have the kittens received the appropriate inoculations? If not, the breeder has been remiss. Have the kittens (or at least the sire and dam) been tested for FeLV? How about PKD?

Ask what kind of guarantee comes with the kitten. Remember that some genetic conditions do not show up for several years, but most breeders will not guarantee the health of the kitten for more than 12 months. The breeder should require you to take the kitten to a veterinarian of your choice for an examination within a short period of time. If you choose a kitten that will definitely require surgery (a monorchid male that will have to be castrated, or a kitten with an inguinal hernia, for example) who will pay for this surgery? If you will be paying, is there an allowance on the price of the kitten?

Does the breeder indicate that a pet quality kitten will be sold with a spay/neuter contract or already spayed/neutered? If he/she is willing to sell an intact pet kitten with full registration and no questions asked, it's fairly certain that the future of the kitten -- and the breed -- is of little or no concern to this person, and you are not dealing with a conscientious breeder.

Will the breeder take the kitten back at any age if you should be unable to keep it? Do not expect the offer of a full refund beyond two weeks to 30 days or so; but a responsible and conscientious breeder should be willing to take back a cat that he or she has bred and sold at any time during the life of that cat.

Needless to say, if you are looking for a show prospect kitten it should be purchased from a breeder with a show "track record." Beware of any breeder who claims that all of his or her kittens are show quality. Absolute show quality cannot be assured

until the Selkirk Rex is several months old. A show kitten chosen at eight or ten weeks that turns out to be sensational was a lucky pick. A breeder who knows his bloodline is in a much better position to evaluate a litter at an early age than a novice or even someone with experience in another breed, but even the experienced can be fooled.

Expect to sign some kind of contract that spells out what is required of you as well as whatever guarantee the breeder is making. It should be spelled out in writing what the breeder will do if the kitten should turn out to be less than show quality as well as who will make this decision. If you purchase a show quality kitten, it is quite possible that the contract will require you to show the cat and may even require that you "grand" the cat in a particular association. Make sure you know what is involved and approximately how much it could cost you. Most breeders will not let go of a great show prospect without some reassurance that the kitten will be properly exhibited. If you do not like the conditions of the contract, don't buy the kitten or buy a kitten that is not show quality.

Pamacs guarantees the health of our kittens and has a contract that we ask you to sign and agree to, so that both of us know what is expected. I am always willing to discuss any details related to my cats and kittens and to answer any questions you may have.

The price of a Selkirk Rex kitten is based on the value we put on our kittens and our pedigrees. Do keep in mind, though, that you are not purchasing a used car, and whatever price is being asked is not likely to be negotiable. On the other end of the scale, although it may feel strange to talk about buying a living creature that will be a part of your family, you are looking to PURCHASE a Selkirk Rex. Do not approach a breeder by saying that you would like to "adopt" one. If you use that terminology, many breeders would misunderstand and simply refer you to Rescue.

Finally

I love my babies – they each have personalities and traits that endear them to me. I want them to have only the best of everything, including a new home. If you feel that you can offer one of my babies a loving home, be sure to contact me. I am always as close as the telephone or email. I will always be the kitten's first Mom and am willing to offer any suggestions, help and/or advice at any time in their lives. Their happiness and welfare is and always will be of the utmost importance to me.

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