



Animal Husbandry In the Home Cattery



Part One: Home Cattery Set Up

These guidelines are designed to assist breeders in understanding and implementing positive animal husbandry practices in an in-home cattery. This document does not cover all aspects of cat breeding in depth. Parts of it may also not apply to early generation Bengal cats. Breeders should use the advice of their mentors, a mentoring list, their veterinarian, books, and refer to other print and online resources for more detailed information. A list of TIBCS-reviewed resources for breeders is available from the TIBCS Recording and Correspondence Secretary.

The guidelines are divided into three sections. This document is the first of the three and covers the basics of how to prepare for and implement a home cattery. The second part of these guidelines is devoted to reproduction issues, and the third part is devoted to lifecycle issues such as kittens, socialization, and selecting and retiring breeding cats. The other two sections are available on the TIBCS website or from the TIBCS Recording and Correspondence Secretary.

Your Responsibilities

- Learn about feline health
- Ensure that your cats receive appropriate health care
- Ensure that your cats have a safe, clean, spacious environment
- Ensure that your cats have adequate social interaction with humans and other cats
- Keep appropriate records, including but not limited to:
 - Medical records (vaccinations, vet visits, test results, and other health information)
 - Schedules for periodic health care (vaccinations, tests, vet visits, etc.)
 - Matings (who and when)
 - Kitten growth and weight records and observations
 - Pedigrees and registrations
 - Contracts (purchases, sales, stud service, lease and co-ownership, etc.)



Keep accurate records.

Feeding and Drinking

When choosing cat food, whether raw, processed, dry, or a combination, consider the nutritional needs of both breeding adults and growing kittens.



Fresh water must always be available. Have your water tested.

When placing food and water, take into consideration the size and locations in your home used for your breeding cats. What works for one group of cats may not work for another, so “listen” to what the cats are saying (by their growth, vigor, and what they leave in the litter box).

Clean, fresh, oxygenated water **must** be available at all times. It must be changed at least once daily.

Regardless of the source, **HAVE YOUR WATER TESTED**. If you use tap water, stay informed of changes your water treatment plant may be making. Impurities in water can have a significant effect on both adult cats and kittens. For example, too much chlorine can cause birth defects. When in doubt, consider installing a reverse osmosis system on your faucet.

In-Home Safety

- Maintain smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.
- Keep electric outlets positioned where a spraying cat's urine cannot reach them (both males and females can spray).
- Protect wires from being chewed.
- Acquire first aid supplies for cats and humans and a feline first-aid book.
- Examine toys for possible hazards based on the age and size of the cats.
- Secure hazards such as dangling cords, air vents, and loose shutters and doors.
- Post emergency phone numbers (e.g., poison hotline, after-hours or emergency vet clinic) in a central spot.
- Place stickers on doors and windows to alert emergency response personnel that animals are present.
- Plan and prepare for emergency evacuation.

Disease, Parasite Management, and Health

- With your veterinarian, develop and follow a health care schedule appropriate for your cats and your location. Topics you must address include:
 - Vaccinations
 - Deworming
 - Heartworm prevention
 - Fleas, ear mites, and other endoparasites
 - Testing (fecal examinations, Felv, FIV, PKD, HCM, etc.)
 - Examinations for heart murmurs, luxating patella, hip dysplasia, cataracts, and ribcage and spinal faults.
 - Cleanliness
- Use a germicidal disinfectant to clean cattery floors, walls, containers, bedding, and scoops. Follow package directions to prevent harm to your cats and yourself.
- Do not add new food on top of old food.
- Store foods in airtight containers or refrigerators.
- Change bedding regularly.
- Maintain good food/water and litter box hygiene (see “Hygiene” section for specifics).
- Avoid overcrowding.

CAUTION: Some parasite and other medications can be dangerous to pregnant queens and small kittens. Always consult your vet before administering these.



Develop a health care schedule in conjunction with your veterinarian.

Hygiene

Grooming

- Bathe cats before they go to a show and when they return (while in quarantine). Use a shampoo specifically designated for cats; some shampoos that are labeled for both dogs and cats may not be safe for cats regardless of their labeling.
- Clip claws every 10 to 14 days.

Litter Boxes

Poor litter box use is the number one reason that cats are abandoned by their owners; spraying is one of the major reasons that people retire from breeding.

- Have at least one litter box for every two cats in the area if it is a stable group. If it is a group that changes, consider more litter boxes to minimize the probability of disease transmission.
- If you have a multiple-story house, place a litter box on each level of the house.
- Place litter boxes away from food and water.
- Scoop the solid matter out of every litter box at least once a day, and empty completely and clean each box several times a week.
- Use a separate scoop for each litter box and sterilize scoops between use.
- Each cat may prefer a particular type of litter, type of litter box, litter box location, or depth of litter in a box. You may need to experiment to discover what your cat prefers. Other preferences may include scent and texture of the litter.
- Some cats may prefer to use one box for urination and a separate box for defecation.
- The litter box must be the correct size. Kittens and elderly cats need a box with low sides or a low-bottomed entrance to make it easy for them to access the box. Adults need a box that is long and wide enough for them to comfortably stand and squat in without parts of their body projecting over the side.

If a cat stops using his box appropriately, first have a veterinarian examine him for a physical or medical cause. Then look for environmental causes.

CAUTION: Do not use "clumping" type litter for young kittens. It can cause intestinal blockage if they ingest it.

Eating and Drinking

- Bowls should be cleaned at least once a week with disinfectant.
- Use metal or glass bowls to prevent the retention of germs and to prevent chin acne.
- Do not let wet or raw food sit for more than 2 hours in hot weather.
- Discard food that is infested with insects.



Bathe your cat before and after returning from a show.

Materials

Walls and flooring in areas where the cats live should be of non-porous materials; curtains, carpets, and upholstery should be washable and stain- and odor-resistant. Clean spot areas with a spray disinfectant. Wipe down walls and flooring on a regular schedule with a germicidal disinfectant. Wash curtains and bedding regularly with bleach or a veterinary laundry detergent. Shampoo rugs and carpet regularly. Dry fabric thoroughly; some organisms, such as giardia, thrive in cold/wet environments.

Odor Control

Maintain proper air change rates, which vary according to climate and location. Good air circulation reduces smell. Open windows when feasible. Use a spray that removes airborne germs and does not simply mask odors. Keep litter boxes CLEAN.

Caging

Caging is necessary:

- When cats have been to the vet for a surgical procedure so they don't cause any harm to themselves.
- To train cats for showing.
- To train cats to be calm in case they have to be kept overnight at a vet or boarded at a kennel facility.
- To introduce two strange cats to each other without permitting fights.
- To reeducate a cat to use the litter box.

It may be necessary to cage an adult male or female in heat to limit their access to each other and to control spraying and damage to the home. Caging may also be required to prevent mothers from moving their litters to undesirable locations or to ensure that litters are born in an accessible location.

For short-term use, a cage should be large enough for a small bed, food/water dishes and a small litter box. The minimum size cage for a single cat is 4 feet long x 6 feet wide x 4 feet high (1.2 x 1.8 x 1.2 m) as per the TIBCS COE. For longer-term caging, even in a room to control spraying or unplanned breedings, provide space for exercise and conditioning as well as basic health requirements.

Quarantine

Quarantine cats that are:

- Entering or re-entering the cattery (including returning from a show).
- Sick with a contagious illness.

A quarantine area must have a separate litter box and food/water supply. A cage is not adequate quarantine since it will not prevent the transmission of airborne germs and spores or physical contact with other free-roaming cats in the same area.

The quarantine period should be a minimum of 14 days. NOTE: Some upper respiratory infections can take longer than 14 days to manifest.

Crowding, Space and Exercise

Poor health and behavior problems increase when cats feel crowded. Each cat has its own idea of what constitutes crowding.

Signs of stress from crowding:

- Aggression toward other cats
- Hiding and cowering (can also be caused by shyness)
- Yelling, fighting, and tension between cats and between the people living with them
- Inappropriate elimination

A cat that is the victim of bullying by other cats may not eat or drink adequately and may defecate and urinate in its hiding place. Stress can severely damage the physical health of a cat, especially a pregnant queen. A cat that cannot tolerate several cats in its area may not have the appropriate temperament for being a breeder or for a home cattery environment.

Under no circumstances should cats be kept in an environment that provides less space per cat than the required size of a one-cat cage mandated by the TIBCS COE.

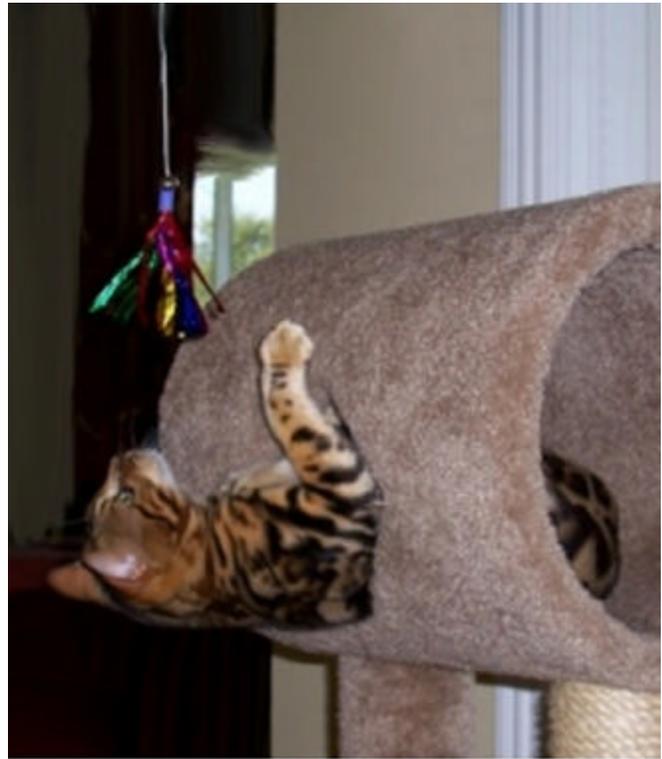
NOTE: those requirements are MINIMUM; larger accommodations should be provided.

Cats need both feline and human companionship and social interaction. It is usually best to have at least two cats together in an area so they will not lack for feline interaction. In addition, humans need to spend some quality time each day with each cat.

Exercise is vital to good health and good behavior in a Bengal. Every cat should have access to a tall sturdy cat tree or climbing post. These should be tall enough for actual climbing. Cats may exercise by playing with each other or on an exercise wheel, but time should be set aside each day for individual play with humans.

Toys and exercise equipment also provide mental stimulation. A bored Bengal will seek something interesting to do that might endanger it or irritate its humans. Boredom is one of the major causes of "bad behavior." An intellectually stimulating environment does not need to be elaborate to be effective; a cat perch next to a window that has a bird feeder can provide hours of interest.

Bengals are easy to train. Teaching them tricks or preparing them for a cat agility event can fill several purposes at once: human interaction, quality time, exercise, mental stimulation, and allow an assessment of their condition and health.



Cat trees and interactive play with toys can fill a variety of your cat's needs.