

HOW TO SPOT A SCAM

Types of Scams to Watch Out For:

Kitten Scams: In this scam, you'll pay the seller for a kitten and sometimes transportation as well. However, once you've paid, you'll never receive the kitten, and the scammer disappears with your money.

Backyard Breeders and Kitten Mills: These breeders may deliver the kitten as promised, but there's a high risk that the kitten and its parents have not undergone proper health testing and genetic screening. Often, these kittens suffer from health issues and may not exhibit the traits or temperament expected from the breed due to lack of socialization.

1. Low Prices

The average price for a Maine Coon kitten from reputable breeders ranges from \$2,500 to \$3,300. Reputable breeders invest a significant amount of time and money into raising healthy, happy, and high-quality kittens. The costs for food, veterinary care, and overall care for breeding cats are substantial, and breeders often lose money. This is why kittens are typically sold within this price range. If you find a kitten being sold for much lower, or much higher, than this price, it's a major red flag that the breeder is likely a scam. Scammers often lure buyers in with unusually low prices, typically in the \$500-\$1,000 range. If the price seems too good to be true, it almost always is.

2. Lack of Health Information, Pedigrees or Parental Information

When asked, a reputable breeder should always provide detailed information about vaccinations, health screenings, and the overall well-being of the kitten. Pedigrees are also crucial, as they show the kitten's lineage, helping you verify whether it comes from healthy, high-quality breeding lines. Ensure the pedigree is from a legitimate breeding registry, such as CFA or TICA. Reputable breeders will also typically have their breeding cats listed on their websites for transparency. Any breeder unwilling to provide health, pedigree, or parental information is a major red flag. They may be hiding something—whether it's that they don't actually have kittens or cats (scam), their cats are not registered (backyard breeder), or they're using stolen papers with misleading or incorrect information. Always ask for these details, and if a breeder refuses to provide them, it's best to walk away.

3. Poor Grammar

If you come across a website with consistently poor grammar, there's a good chance

you've encountered a scam. While one or two minor mistakes might be accidental, numerous errors are a major red flag.

4. Minimal or No Personal Interaction:

Many scammers will try to avoid phone calls or in-person meetings, opting instead to communicate only through email or text messages. If the breeder you are in contact with refuses to meet in person or at least have a phone call, this is a major red flag. Reputable breeders will often invite you to facetime to show you their cattery, allowing you to see how they care for the kittens, their living environment, and meet the kittens. Solely communicating through email or text, and only willing to provide one or two photos or videos can be an indication of a scam. It is easy to steal photos and videos. **ABSOLUTELY do not send any money without either live video chatting with the seller or physically seeing the kitten.** For our cattery, we don't accept payment until the kitten is physically in your hands.

5. There is No Application Process

Reputable breeders have an application or interview process for their kittens. You are the potential owners of our kittens and we want to know more about you! We want to ensure that our kittens are going to the best homes where they will receive the care and attention they deserve. It's also our right as breeders to decline selling a kitten to a potential owner if we feel the home is not a safe or suitable fit for the kitten. Kitten mills or scammers, on the other hand, rarely have an application process because their goal is to sell as many kittens as possible or take as much money as they can from unsuspecting buyers.

7. Kittens Are Always Available

If you're on a breeder's website and it feels like you're shopping, with a shopping cart icon and "Buy Now!" buttons, you are almost certainly looking at a scam. Reputable breeders will never have an online checkout process for their kittens. There should be no option to simply add a kitten to a cart and complete the purchase. The process of acquiring a kitten is a long one. Reputable breeders often have waiting lists and limited availability of kittens, as they prioritize quality over quantity. If the breeder you're looking at has kittens readily available all the time, this is a red flag. Many kitten mills and scammers continuously advertise kittens for sale, promising immediate availability. However, buying from a "profit-only breeder" or a kitten mill often results in receiving a poorly-tempered, unhealthy kitten that may not even resemble a true Maine Coon.

While it might take time to acquire a kitten from a reputable breeder, the wait is worth it. You can be confident that you're bringing home a healthy, happy, and well-socialized companion, with lifetime support from its breeder.

FINDING RESPONSIBLE AND REPUTABLE BREEDERS

1. Affiliation with Reputable Cat Associations and Clubs

All reputable breeders are affiliated with at least one recognized cat association, such as the Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) or The International Cat Association (TICA). Some breeders may be registered with multiple organizations, while others may be registered with just one or two. Many breeders have their information posted on these sites, offering a transparent way to verify their legitimacy. Membership in these well-known associations helps indicate that the breeder is committed to ethical breeding practices and adhering to the standards set by these organizations.

2. The Breeder Attends Shows

Reputable breeders adhere to the breed standard and aim to produce cats that align with these guidelines. One way they demonstrate this is by showing their cats in recognized registry organizations, which helps prove they are breeding to the established standard. It's a good sign if a breeder has won awards or titles with their cats, as this shows they are breeding healthy, well-tempered, and high-quality cats. On the other hand, "profit-only breeders" and kitten mills typically disregard the breed standard and focus on making money from selling kittens. As a result, the cats they produce may not even resemble the breed they're advertised as.

3. Transparent and Open Communication

A reputable breeder will always be willing to answer your questions and provide clear, honest information about their breeding practices, cats, and kittens. They should explain their breeding program, the health history of their cats, and their efforts to improve the breed.

4. The Breeder is Open to Live Video Chats or In-Person Visits

One of the best ways to ensure you're working with a reputable breeder is to visit the cattery, either in person or remotely. While we used to recommend always visiting in person, this practice has become more difficult and risky for many breeders. There have been increasing instances of individuals robbing breeders' homes, stealing animals, and even harming or killing the breeders. As a result, many breeders have had to move away from in-person visits due to safety concerns.

That said, a great alternative is to request a FaceTime or video call with the breeder. This allows you to see the kittens in real time, ensuring that they are real and healthy. During the call, make sure to ask important questions, such as:

- "Where are the kittens being cared for?"

- "What interactions are they receiving from people and other animals?"

It's important to assess the living conditions the kittens are in and to get a feel for the breeder's practices. Video calls are also a good opportunity for both you and the breeder to get to know each other better. If the breeder refuses to show you the living conditions or answer your questions, proceed with caution. While asking for photos and videos is acceptable, be wary as these can easily be stolen or altered. If there are inconsistencies in the images (e.g., it looks like a different kitten in each video), it's time to consider finding another breeder.

5. The Breeding Cats are Health Tested and Genetically Tested

Reputable breeders are committed to the health and well-being of their cats and kittens and so they do thorough health testing and genetic testing on their breeding cats. These tests help identify and prevent the transmission of genetic diseases, ensuring that kittens are born healthy and have the best chance at a long, happy life.

6. Focus on Quality, Not Quantity

Reputable breeders focus on the quality of their kittens rather than the quantity. They typically have a limited number of litters per year to maintain high breeding standards and ensure that each kitten receives the time and care it deserves. They also ensure that the breeding cats are healthy, and they do not breed them too frequently. They aim to improve the breed through thoughtful, responsible breeding practices rather than simply producing large numbers of kittens.

8. Written Contract and Health Guarantee

A reputable breeder will provide a written contract that outlines the terms of the sale. This contract should detail important information about the kitten, including its health guarantee, and any expectations the breeder has for the new owner. These expectations may include agreements such as the kitten not being allowed outdoors, or the promise that the cat will never be declawed.

The health guarantee often promises to replace the kitten if it develops a severe hereditary illness within a specified time frame, usually within the first year of life. Additionally, the health guarantee may contain a clause stipulating that the kitten must be returned to the breeder if the owner can no longer care for it.

9. Support After Adoption

A reputable breeder will continue to offer support and advice even after the kitten has been adopted. They should be available to answer any questions you may have about your new kitten's health, behavior, or care. The breeder's goal is to ensure that both you and your new family member are happy, healthy, and well-adjusted. We also enjoy seeing pictures or videos of your new family members in their new homes!

7. Vaccinations and Proper Veterinary Care

Reputable breeders will make sure their kittens receive appropriate vaccinations and veterinary care before they go to their new homes. They will provide you with veterinary records and information about vaccinations, deworming, and any treatments the kitten has received. Ensuring that the kittens have been seen by a veterinarian is vital to their overall health and ensures they are ready to transition into their new home.