

Notes - Visits

The purpose of visiting breeders is simply to ensure compliance of the Breeder Scheme's rules and to offer information on how the Scheme can benefit the breeder.

Upon joining the Scheme every assured breeder agrees to allow an assessor access to visit their premises.

Who are the Scheme Assessors

The Scheme Assessors are highly experienced in many aspects of cat breeding. Most of them are experienced cat breeders themselves, and will have a good understanding of the issues and problems faced by breeders.

The Scheme Assessors are highly trained in the visit process and will have usually seen a variety of different circumstances. The Scheme is open to all responsible breeders, whether they are an owner with a single animal that they plan to breed with or whether they have a larger cattery. While no two visits or circumstances are the same, the standards applied remain so.

Every member of the Scheme will be visited and inspected by GCCF at least once every three years. Scheme Breeders are indicated on the Scheme Breeders list and every new applicant to the scheme will have undergone a successful visit prior to acceptance.

How does the visit work?

Learn more about what you can expect and what paperwork you'll need to prepare.

Before the visit

The Assessor (not the office staff) will contact the breeder directly to arrange a visit date that is mutually convenient to both. An email confirming the agreed visit date will be sent to the breeder by the office and will also outline what will be expected from the visit.

Once an appointment is made, GCCF do expect that appointment to be kept, and we do not accept cancellations. However we do understand that under exceptional circumstances an appointment may need to be postponed, and in these cases we would expect the breeder to contact us as soon as possible to provide alternative dates.

During the visit

Visits normally take between one to two hours, depending on the size of your premises, how many cats you have and what facilities are available.

Upon arrival, the Assessor will show their identification from GCCF. The Assessor will wish to discuss two main areas:

- feline management and facilities
- paperwork and documentation

The first part of the visit consists of a discussion to understand your breeding practices. You'll be asked questions to confirm that the records we hold are correct.

The Assessor will want to know how many cats you have, where they live and sleep and what your daily routine is. They will also ask questions about where you store your cat food, where it is prepared and what you feed them. You'll also be asked about your plans in case of a fire or an emergency and who could look after the cats if something unforeseen happened to you.

Feline management and facilities

Next, the assessor will want to see where and how the cats are kept. We recognise that many of our breeders breed cats within their own home where the cats live as family pets and have no special facilities. Nevertheless the Assessor will want to check where they live, sleep and exercise and to see that they are happy and content.

This means ensuring that:

- cats are housed in clean and comfortable conditions with adequate heat and ventilation, with particular regard to the animals' health, age and breed
- cats are provided with suitable and adequate food, drink and clean bedding
- cats are exercised and visited at suitable intervals to ensure their physical and mental well-being, and are in the care or supervision of a fit and responsible person
- cats are kept in a secure and safe environment and provided with sufficient space proportionate to the number of cats kept
- facilities for the keeping of cats are suitable and maintained in a good state of repair
- cats receive adequate grooming and veterinary treatment
- reasonable emergency procedures are in place and that reasonable precautions are taken to prevent the spread of infectious or contagious diseases

Paperwork

The Assessor will want to see the paperwork and/or the kitten pack that is given to a new owner. We often advise breeders to imagine that the Assessor is a kitten buyer and they will need to take copies of the paperwork that is given with the kitten. This should include a contract of sale as well as information on:

- feeding
- worming and vaccinations
- grooming
- breed features and characteristics
- socialisation

GCCF offer guidance on paperwork for Scheme Breeders.

During this discussion, the Assessor will also want to see how the breeder keeps their breeding records. This will of course vary from breeder to breeder and there are no set requirements for how records are kept. However the Assessor will want to be assured that they are at least clear and identifiable and provide an insight into the breeder's record keeping.

Once the visit is completed, the Assessor may discuss any concerns they have and will be pleased to answer any questions that you have about the visit process. If the

breeder has not met any aspects of the standard then an improvement action will be raised identifying the clause breached, the nature of the breach and the agreed action going forward. The breeder will have 4 weeks from the date of the visit to implement any actions and to provide evidence that they have been addressed. This may be photographic evidence. If actions are not closed out, then the breeder will be removed from the scheme until such times as the action is completed

After the visit

Afterwards, the Assessor will complete a written report and return this to the office. It will be assessed and a copy of the report will be sent to the breeder, along with confirmation of the outcome of the visit. The report is confidential and remains a matter between the breeder and the GCCF.

It is very important that if there are any errors or omissions at this stage, that the breeder contacts the office in writing to ensure that they are corrected.

In some cases there may be some further actions that the breeder needs to take to continue their Scheme membership. These will be detailed on an improvements sheet, which may list immediate improvements that need to be made or simply suggestions based on good practice.

If improvements are required and it is considered that the facilities fall short of the standards expected for a Breeder Scheme member, then a reasonable period of time will usually be given for the breeder to make the improvements (usually 28 days).

Once those improvements have been made, GCCF request that the breeders provide evidence that they have made the necessary improvements required. This may simply be amended paperwork or submitting evidence such as photographs of repairs to cattery buildings, for example. In some cases we may require a further visit to be carried out to verify that the improvements have been adequately met.

The visit process is a cornerstone of the Scheme and provides absolute assurance that breeders of the scheme are adopting all our principles of responsible breeding. The majority of visits are successful and most breeders find them a highly enjoyable and rewarding experience. Even those that find they need to make amendments or additions to their paperwork or feline management find the changes are easy to make and truly worthwhile. If a breeder disagrees with the findings of the Assessor, there is an appeals process which may result in a second opinion.

It should be remembered that the breeder assessment visit should be an enjoyable, beneficial experience. It's an important link between GCCF and our Scheme members.

Note: 'we' and 'us' are in reference to GCCF