

A Responsible Breeder's Code of Ethics



By Nichole Royer

As rat and mouse fanciers and breeders, we do more than just produce animals. With us lies the responsibility of producing an animal which is not only beautifully colored and pleasing to look at, but more importantly one that is healthy and makes a wonderful pet. Each and every one of us represents the fancy in our actions and activities. While there is a general consensus between most fanciers about what is the correct way to act and behave, to my knowledge no one has ever put it in print.

Recently while rereading the spring 1995 edition of the Malamute quarterly, I came across an article written by Ruth Kellogg which included the British Columbia Purebred Dog Breeders Association's Code Of Ethics. This code of ethics fit very closely with my own feelings on the breeding of fancy rats, and inspired me to use it as a basis for creating my version of a responsible rat breeder's code of ethics.

I recognize that as a breeder I have a responsibility to protect and preserve fancy rats and mice, as well as the rat and mouse fancy, and to insure the welfare of the animals that I sell, produce, breed, and own. I therefore subscribe to the following code of ethics.

General Ethics:

a) To provide for each animal in my care an environment which meets their physical, emotional, and psychological needs. This includes adequate living conditions, correct nutrition, proper bedding, and needed health care.

b) To promote and encourage responsible pet ownership.

c) To begin and further a study which increases my knowledge of the science of breeding Fancy Rats and Mice.

d) To maintain an interest in all animals which I sell and arrange for the return/

placement of an animal of my breeding which is in need or no longer wanted.

Breeding Ethics:

a) To be familiar with and knowledgeable of the standard for those varieties which I choose to breed, including proper coat, color, conformation, and temperament, and to use that standard as a goal in striving to improve the variety with every breeding.

b) To breed only animals which are sexually mature, in good health, and are free from hereditary defects, parasitic infestation, poor temperaments, and communicable disease.

c) To be knowledgeable about the effects and consequences of *mycoplasma* as a disease, and until such a time as we acquire a method for controlling or eliminating this disease, breeding with the goal of producing an animal which is *mycoplasma* resistant.

d) To be knowledgeable about the causes of tumor growth in rats and mice and to breed with the aim of producing an animal which is not genetically predisposed to this condition.

e) To discontinue the breeding of animals who consistently produce offspring who have a defect or disorder which is detrimental to the animals' well-being, or temperaments which make them unsuitable as companion animals.

f) To provide a pregnant doe and the resulting kittens with the housing, nutrition, and care necessary to meet their physical, emotional, and psychological needs.

g) To assure that every animal produced has the necessary temperament to make it a suitable companion animal.

Selling Ethics:

a) To not sell or otherwise place rat kittens under 6 weeks of age; mouse kittens under 5 weeks of age.

b) To consciously seek the best possible homes for animals which I place or sell.

c) To sell only healthy animals who are sound in temperament and free from parasites.

d) To stand behind the condition and quality of all animals as represented at the time of sale.

e) To be sure the buyer is fully informed when selling an animal which has a known defect, health, or other physical condition or serious deviation from the standard.

f) To never knowingly sell a pregnant doe without fully disclosing the fact to the buyer.

g) To take responsibility for any offspring produced by a doe which was unknowingly pregnant when sold.

h) To take back or find a home for any animal whose placement is not successful.

i) To provide to a purchaser full instructions on feeding, housing, and general care.

j) To provide the new owner with on-going support and assistance with problems that may arise.

k) When selling an animal to a novice breeder or fancier as breeding or show-quality stock, to provide support, advice, education, and guidance to assist them in achieving their goals.

The views expressed herein are of the author and do not reflect any policy of the American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association.

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For more information, contact the American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association

**AFRMA
9230 64th Street
Riverside, CA 92509-5924**

www.afrma.org

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