

Why Breeders are Meeting People Outside of their Homes

If you scan the internet for websites looking for a kitten or a puppy, you'll find today that more and more breeders are meeting people outside of their homes.

There are several reasons for this change in practice. The most significant factor was the COVID-19 pandemic, which made people wary of having strangers in their homes to prevent the spread of the virus to their families. We now know that COVID-19, as well as Bird Flu, can be transmitted to pets and other animals. This health crisis has fundamentally altered how businesses operate. **Since I began meeting people in a neutral location rather than at my home, I have also noticed a significant improvement in my health, with no colds, sore throats, or eye infections.**

There are multiple reasons for this change, not just one. Another significant factor is the increasing number of people posing as potential customers who are actually looking to scam breeders. I have a dedicated section on scams in my documents. **These individuals, whom I refer to as "cyber hitmen," have committed serious crimes against breeders, including murder, kidnapping, burglary, and animal theft.** One particularly tragic case involved a Kansas woman dog breeder who was killed in her home during daylight hours while showing puppies, while her husband was away harvesting their fields. Reading this document will shed light on why breeders are cautious and avoid putting themselves in potentially harmful situations. Meeting in a public place, with others around and during daylight hours, helps ensure everyone's safety.

Say you are an older woman living alone, with no close neighbors, would you let your mother or grandmother living in such circumstances open the door and let someone in? How comfortable would you be with strangers coming in and out of their home all the time? I'm sure the answer would be "not very." While I have feared for my safety in the past with some people in my home, I no longer put myself in that situation. Besides the presence of scammers, there is now the added concern of gun violence to worry about.

Let me share some of my past experiences, as well as a few from a breeder friend. In the past, I used to have customers come to my home, which came with its fair share of problems. One major issue was punctuality. Customers would often arrive hours late for their appointments, assuming I had nothing better to do than wait for them. Sometimes, they would even stop for lunch without notifying me, which was incredibly inconsiderate and would disrupt my plans for the rest of the day. However, when we meet at a neutral location, they are surprisingly punctual, and they now even text if they are running a few minutes late, which is a welcome change.

Another challenge was the behavior of some visitors. **I've had customers who wanted to use my bed to change diapers, parents who wanted their tired children to lay down for a nap while we discussed kittens, and children who helped themselves to my fridge** or ran around the house without any regard for boundaries. Some even went through my drawers while I was busy talking to their parents. Dealing with these situations was not ideal, especially when parents didn't intervene to control their children's behavior. Meeting outside my home has taken care of these issues.

Cleaning up after visitors was a regular occurrence. Whether it was wiping their feet, disposing of McDonald's garbage, or picking up forgotten water and soda bottles, I often found myself tidying up after their visits. This was especially true when kids would play outside and leave a mess on the lawn. Items occasionally went missing, though I couldn't always determine the cause. While they may have been small things, they were still missing. An acquaintance of mine, another breeder, had a kitten stolen during a busy day with multiple families visiting. It's easy for someone to hide a kitten under a large parka and excuse themselves to go out to the car.

Another challenge was visitors not following directions on how to handle or hold a kitten. Despite my instructions to not stand up with the kitten to prevent accidents, such as sudden dropping of the kitten when squirming around, some would immediately stand up while holding the kitten, leading to potential injuries. This disregard for instructions and the safety of my kittens reinforced my decision to no longer have visitors in my home.

Some visitors overstay their welcome and expect to be served refreshments. I'm not a waitress, and I'm not here to entertain with hors d'oeuvres or serve as a pit-stop for drinks. I also find it amusing when **some husbands asked me to put on the ball game on TV** for them to watch, as if my home were a sports bar or men's den.

Accidents happen, and I've had visitors break things. For instance, I had one large, overweight man playing on the floor with two kittens. **When he tried to stand up, he used an antique side table next to the sofa for support and ended up snapping it in half.** This table was a sentimental item given to me by my late aunt, and all I received was a simple "sorry."

I've encountered the "casing" scenario a few times with potential customers. They come in acting like potential buyers, but their eyes wander everywhere except towards the kittens. Some have asked me obscure questions that don't relate to cats or kittens, such as whether I have a boyfriend, if I live alone or with someone, or if I own firearms. They also inquire about the activity levels of my neighbors, asking if it's a weekend house or if they're around all the time. Despite their initial interest, they leave without showing any intention of purchasing a kitten.

I've had experiences with customers bringing their young school kids, and it's not always pleasant. Some would tell me, **"He's out of school right now because he's got strep throat,"** or "he had a fever this morning - think he's coming down with a cold." Others would say, **"he's got a stomach virus, can he use your bathroom, please?"** or "We all had the flu this week and are just getting over it." My favorite is when they let their children run all over, touch everything, need a tissue, use it, and then leave it on the table for me to pick up. **It's frustrating because if they are too sick to be in school, they shouldn't be brought to my house.** After they leave, they have left their germs behind for me to acquire. Since I started meeting people outside my home, I no longer have to deal with the risk of acquiring the pathogens they left behind.

I've had customers come into my home to look at kittens and then casually mention that they had visited a shelter, PetSmart, or a farm where they interacted with other animals. This news is concerning because they could potentially be bringing diseases into my home that could harm my cats. This revelation often comes out after they have already handled my kittens or cats, which is even more worrisome.

Another issue I've faced is uninvited company. I have a busy schedule taking care of my house, cats, and yard, and unexpected visits can be disruptive. Some people have shown up unannounced, even a year or so later, while I'm working on my tractor or mowing the lawn. They justify their visit by saying they were in the area and had some time to kill, so they thought they'd stop by to see the kittens. However, **I'm not a store open to the public,** and I have plenty of chores and personal plans to attend to. I've even arrived home to find past customers peering into my window, which is unsettling. This is why I prefer appointments to be made in advance.

Inviting the whole family over to choose a kitten can be overwhelming, especially when there are multiple generations and additional guests like a nanny. It's surprising when there are two parents, two grandparents, and a nanny, yet the children are jumping on the sofa with their shoes on. I've even had situations where two carloads of the same family show up to choose just one kitten, which can be quite chaotic.

One of the most frustrating issues I've faced is the bathroom situation. Despite cleaning my house thoroughly before guests arrive, I often find myself having to clean the bathroom again after they leave. It's surprising how many times I've had nice, clean, well-dressed, educated men and women in my home who have **missed the toilet, leaving pee (or worse) on the seat or floor. Would you want to clean this up?**

Now I hope that you can understand why many breeders have chosen to meet people outside their homes. I don't intend for any of this to come across as harsh; it's simply the reality of the situation. From the risks of germs and virus' to me and my cats, to potential dangers like being harmed or having our homes compromised, there's a range of uncertainties when inviting strangers into our personal spaces. We never know what could be on the other side of the door or what situations we might encounter. That goes both ways.

I don't know who I'm letting into my home, and YOU don't know what you're walking into either.

These are just my experiences, but I'm sure there are plenty of similar stories from other breeders out there. Many breeders have now adopted a policy of meeting people in visible, well-lit places during daylight hours, which helps mitigate most of these risks. Most importantly, it ensures the safety of everyone involved - you, me, and, of course, my beloved cats and kittens.