

FAB Boarding Cattery Manual

Edited by C Bessant (2002). Published by the Feline Advisory Bureau, Taeselbury, High Street, Tisbury, Wiltshire SP3 6LD, UK. 128 pp. Paperback (ISBN 0 9533942 1 2). Price £28.50. (The Manual includes a free copy of the *FAB Standard for Construction and Management of Boarding Catteries*, which is also available on its own for £7.50.)

Boarding a cat can be a stressful time for both cat and owner. Although there is legislation to protect the welfare of the cat, the necessary standards to achieve good welfare are not embodied in it. Poor management and design can have such a dramatic adverse effect on welfare that some standard guidance is essential. While the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Model Licence Conditions and Guidance provide some, the document is not practically based. This manual fills that gap admirably.

The Feline Advisory Bureau has a reputation as a reliable source of scientifically based practical information and a long history of high-quality advice on boarding cattery construction and management. This manual confirms their reputation and brings their advice into the 21st century. The manual is well constructed, presented and illustrated. The pictures are plentiful and used to good effect but not to excess. The text is clearly written in a friendly but informative style which makes for easy reading. The inclusion of an alphabetical index might have made it easier for the reader to find their way around when looking for a specific item, but the list of contents at the front of the book goes some way toward rectifying this minor omission.

It might appear at first that the step-by-step approach taken by the manual, starting at the blank-sheet-of-paper planning stage, would make it useful only to a beginner. While it is useful to first ask "Are you sure you should be starting up a cattery?", this basic approach belies the depth of information contained. There is a wealth of information here which will be equally useful to the established cattery owner and the true novice.

Having led the potential cattery owner through the thought process of the business plan and the convolutions of the planning process, the manual continues by looking in depth at the design and construction. If there is a criticism of this section it is of the choice of materials, which leans heavily towards wood, although the importance of impervious cleanable surfaces is emphasised. More detail of modern materials might have been an improvement and given the manual a more up-to-date flavour.

The manual then moves on to equipping and the principles of managing the cattery. Equipment is well covered in a brief couple of pages followed by another couple on the principles of good management. This emphasises the importance of responsibility and supervision and includes a summary of the significant risk of infectious disease. These chapters give a broad taster of what is to come in the ensuing pages of excellent detail.

Turning these principles into practice rightly occupies the remaining twelve chapters of the manual. The emphasis throughout is on animal welfare and quality care, beginning with the inevitable but oh-so-necessary paperwork and record-keeping which differentiate the well-organised and efficient cattery from its poorer neighbour. The advice is practical and pragmatic, ranging from a discussion of the daily routine to dealing with owners who turn up with an obviously sick cat on their way to the airport.

There is a whole chapter on cleaning, disinfection and waste disposal which highlights the salient but vital points. The advice on which disinfectant to use is sound and clearly explained and the regulations pertaining to waste disposal clearly set out. The following chapters address the business issues, ranging from relevant legislation through to running the

cattery as a business, with some useful tips on advertising and providing a good service to clients that will encourage them to return again and again.

The chapter on Standard Operating Procedures forms a good basis on which to build the cattery's day-to-day running and covers all eventualities from escaped cats to fire drills. The suggested procedures are sensible and well laid out. The following three chapters spell out the relationships between cats, cattery staff, cattery owner and clients and cover everything from protecting the welfare of all four, to grooming the cats, hiring the staff and dealing with awkward clients.

The remaining thirty-five pages deal with health matters, starting with a basic examination of a cat before admission. The section goes on to deal with a variety of issues relating to vaccination and the handling, storage and administration of medicines. The culmination of this section is a bible of feline diseases covering some twenty pages and giving a brief résumé of a wide range of disease conditions which might affect a cat in the care of the cattery. Included is a section on special cats, which even includes cats that have been imported through the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS).

All in all this is the boarding cattery bible. It is essential reading for any aspiring cattery owner or purchaser and a useful reminder for those more experienced. The emphasis throughout is on the welfare of the cat and ensuring a happy trouble-free stay. It is a production of which Claire Bessant and her team at FAB can be justly proud.

Chris Laurence

Chief Veterinary Officer, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Horsham, UK