



# The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc.

*"World's Largest Registry of Pedigreed Cats"*

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## 'Tis The Season

The traditional season for giving is upon us. Many charities make their strongest appeals at year end, especially when there is a fragile economy. Animal related charities will certainly be competing with all of the other causes for their piece of the charity pie.

It is hard not to be moved by pictures of endearing, abandoned animals. It is hard not to be indignant that people could treat helpless animals so shabbily. With direct mail appeals, it is correspondingly easy to simply write out a generous check and put it into the convenient reply envelope.

With all this in mind, it is time for CFA to remind our readers to please investigate, not only the surface claims of animal charities, but the sometimes less-apparent legislative agenda. Often organizations that are vocal about animal issues have a specific agenda that may or may not coincide with the public interest and with animal welfare.

Organizations establish their credibility over time by actions rather than words, and usually have a track record to investigate. Whether a person is considering making a donation, or trying to determine whose information and opinion are reliable, it pays to spend a little time in investigation.

- Will your check go to help animals, or will it pay a lobbyist?
- If the check will go to help animals, what percentage of each dollar will go to programs, as opposed to administrative expenses and other fund-raising programs?
- If your check goes toward an activist legislative agenda, is it one you understand, and with which you can agree? Is its political position based on outdated methods and data?
- Are you aware that, despite their names, the national animal activist organizations are not umbrella organizations that distribute funds to local shelters?

Most of these animal charities are donation dependent, and their rhetoric is designed for maximum impact to cause people to write checks. As we move into the holiday season, when many charitable donations are made, we once again urge people to thoroughly check out organizations that are asking for their money. [www.give.org/reports/index.asp](http://www.give.org/reports/index.asp) is the department of the Better Business Bureau that rates charitable organizations. Some other resources for checking out animal-based charities include [www.activistcash.com](http://www.activistcash.com) and [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org). Another comprehensive source of information about animal charities is the annual "Watchdog" edition of *Animal People*. It can be ordered, for a fee, from [www.animalpeoplenews.org/watchdog\\_report.html](http://www.animalpeoplenews.org/watchdog_report.html).

It is sad, but true and bears mention that some unscrupulous individuals even use animal issues dishonestly, in order to garner money which will go only to line their pockets. In other cases, a few so-called "sanctuaries" have been discovered with horrendous conditions, and are actually animal hoarders - a mental illness. Still other organizations fund-raise on "popular" or "sexy" animal issues - like animal abuse and neglect - but then dedicate their budget to entirely different issues.

The simplest solution is to keep your donation dollars local, so that you can personally visit the animal charities at work. The people on the front lines - local shelters and rescue organizations - can well use all the help that they can get, be it by way of money or by products such as old towels, crates, bowls, or best yet, in personal volunteer involvement. Cat clubs and rescue organizations are always in need of people who can foster homeless cats or kittens until a new home can be found, and extra hands to work remote adoption days at pet stores or malls are welcome.

National efforts that dedicate most of their income to programs, and which pay off in demonstrable ways, are also highly worthy of a holiday gift. A little time spent in investigation can identify these.

**The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc.**, the organization that sponsors the site you now visit, is not a charitable organization but sponsors foundations which are. The mission of the world's largest registry of pedigreed cats, involves the preservation and promotion of pedigreed cats and cat shows and the welfare of *all* cats - whether pedigreed or randombred ([www.cfa.org/objectives.html](http://www.cfa.org/objectives.html)). Tax-exempt donations can be made to the Winn Feline Foundation for feline health studies [www.winnfelinehealth.org](http://www.winnfelinehealth.org), or the CFA Disaster Relief Fund [www.cfa.org/disasters.html](http://www.cfa.org/disasters.html).

Anna Sadler, November 2003

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**To correspond with the CFA Legislative Committee, please email [Legislation@CFA.org](mailto:Legislation@CFA.org)**