

THE YEARS AHEAD

By Robert H. Winn

There has never been an attempt to obtain an accurate census of the cat population inhabiting the United States and Canada. Perhaps such an attempt would be obviously futile. Various estimates have been made, and the consensus of these estimates assumes that the cats in being at any time run into the millions. Perhaps these guesses are entitled to considerable credence. The cat food people have placed a great many advertising dollars in support of these figures.

The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc., is interested in the wide acceptance of all types and breeds of cats. Being a registering body, its primary field covers those cats whose parents, and other forebears are known, and for which pedigrees are carefully maintained.

During the year ended January 31, 1967, CFA registered the pedigrees of 19,300 cats. When measured against the estimated cat population, it is apparent that the show cats or pedigreed cats represents but a minute portion of the total cats. On the other hand, the fact that the registrations of cats by CFA has increased in fiscal 1967 by some 37% over fiscal 1966, merits more than passing comment. It must be admitted that fiscal 1967 was the year in which the most astounding increase in registrations by CFA occurred. However, the first four months of fiscal 1968 have shown an increase in registrations over fiscal 1967 of 27%.

Another interesting comparison develops when the show activities for more than one year are examined. For the show season ending April 30, 1966, CFA sponsored and licensed shows on 50 weekends, in 50 different cities. There were a total of 11,352 cats entered in these shows. During the show season ending April 30, 1967, CFA sponsored and licensed shows on 60 weekends, in 60 different cities. There were a total of more than 14,000 cats entered in these shows. The increase of over 2,600 cats reflects the increase in the total number of shows, but the average entry increased from 227 last year, to 233 this year..

While cat shows give the largest thrills to the exhibitors who revel in the competition, and the gradual climb of their pets to championship and grand championship, the people who pay to see the shows must not be forgotten. Cat shows can be successfully held only when the public is willing to spend time and money to look at exhibits, and watch the judging. No successful cat show can be a private matter. During the show season recently completed, the number of people who came to see the CFA cats and the CFA judging was remarkable. 8,000 came to the show in Portland, Oregon; 7,000 attended the Empire show in New York City. 3,500 paid to see the



show in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and 3,000 came through the turnstiles in San Francisco, Chicago and Flushing, Long Island. Hamilton, Ontario in Canada, Berkeley California, Indianapolis Indiana, Boston Massachusetts and Scranton Pennsylvania each had 2,000 or more.

Each of the CFA shows had a class for unpedigreed and unclassed but much loved "household pets". There is no doubt but that many of the owners of these cats are more tearfully jubilant over the trophies and ribbons won by them than the owners of the so-called fancy cats. Every one seems to recognize that many of the people who come to see the cats are more interested, at the outset at least, in one special or all the "household pets".

In addition to the shows, another interesting point of comparison is the number of new catteries registered by CFA. During fiscal 1967, this organization registered 529 such catteries. This averages at more than ten each week. During the seventeen weeks between the first of February and the first of June 1967, CFA registered 194 new catteries, or more than eleven each week. The catteries maintain breeding programs, and it is from these catteries that registrations flow in to the CFA office. A consistent increase in the number of catteries indicates a consistent interest in the number of registrations.

Dogs and dog shows, dog fanciers and breeders of pedigreed dogs have long been a feature of the civilization of western man. Although it is generally conceded that the cat population exceeds the total number of dogs, the American Kennel Club reported that last year it had registered the pedigrees of more than 800,000 dogs. The accepted breeds of dogs exceeds 120, and many dog shows measure entries in the thousands. The popularity of dogs, particularly working dogs had its base in the largely agricultural way of life which for years claimed most of us. The increased interest in the cat as a pet has accompanied the change which many of us have seen which has turned farm dwellers to urban and suburban life. Apartment living particularly has seemed to be more conducive to cats as pets.

The future of CFA, and particularly the future growth of CFA, can be determined by a sound analysis of the meaning of what has happened, and is happening. In the past its growth has been consistent, but smaller percentage-wise than is now the case. Whether this increased percentage of growth can be maintained is important in determining the immediate steps which CFA should take. None of the factors which have been discussed can be taken at the present time as indicating any down turn. To borrow a space age term, all systems appear to be "go".

Some people, in discussing CFA and the future of the cat fancy have mentioned the term "saturation point". A saturation point does exist for each service and commodity. Refrigerators, TV sets, automobiles, housing units, legal services, medical services, student space in colleges and universities all have saturation points. Marketing experts are supposed to be able to determine in applicable cases when this point will be reached. The saturation point for the services provided by CFA will be attained when there is no increase in the number of people who are breeding, raising, showing and selling pedi-

greed cats. Another indication that the saturation point has been reached will be when the number of shows, the number of entries in shows, and number of people attending shows remains static, or drops.

From this point, it seems most premature to discuss a saturation point for CFA. The saturation point for the popularity of cats as pets must be, stated numerically, somewhere much closer to the total number of cats than our present registrations would indicate. If the total cat population is in the millions, the potential for the pedigreed cat must be counted as in the millions also. The past indicates, that the owner of the unpedigreed cat, who enters or attends a cat show, is the next owner of a pedigreed pet. Once the owner of a pedigreed pet, an interest in a litter of kittens becomes the next obvious step, and inexorably, a new cattery is born.

The future of the cat fancy has been a subject of discussion among knowledgeable people. These groups include manufacturers of cat food, publishers of pet papers and magazines, manufacturers of articles and devices for sale to pet lovers in general and cat fanciers. The agreed position of the great majority of these is that the future of pedigreed cats and cat shows will far transcend the past.

The work which CFA has done has played a part in the general uplift of the popularity of pedigreed cats. The standards for registration, the standards for the ideal cat, the impetus which CFA has given to both the quantity and the quality of the cats entered in its shows have all entered into this growth. The pedigreed cat today is a more beautiful animal than its ancestor of thirty-five years ago. Its beauty makes it more appealing to the potential purchaser. The increase in the number of breeds which can be shown has by making a larger choice available, brought new members to the cat fancy. While many men in history have been cat fanciers, the increase in the number of men who attend and groom and show their cats has made cat shows much less the distaff activity which in years past they seemed to be. The large airy halls which an increased gate permits, and the generally quiet but business like demeanor of the exhibitors and spectators have increased the acceptance of these pets and the competitive activities of their owners.

Looking to the years ahead, this desk has no hesitancy in predicting that fiscal 1968 will see CFA registering the pedigree of more than 25,000 cats. Carried forward, and with again no hesitancy, the prediction of at least 50,000 registrations in fiscal 1972; and at least 100,000 registrations in fiscal 1977 is made.

The CFA office staff, and the CFA Board are making plans to handle the increased volume of work with accuracy and expedition. Detailed recommendations will be considered by the CFA Board looking toward the programming of its work through a computer. The records of each registered cat, the records of the breeder and various owners of the cat, will all be stored in the memory of the machine, and available in a matter of seconds. To date, the system of checking registrations, and following each cat through its career, tied to its owner or successive owners has been handled smoothly and well.

The time is here, however, when the current card system cannot be depended upon for satisfactory service.

The future of the cat fancy is indeed bright. Steps are now being taken to the end that this future is not tarnished by any omission by CFA. The large and forward looking organization with which you register and through which you show your pets will keep pace. The services which CFA provides to assist you in pursuing your aims in the hobby, the avocation, the business which is the cat fancy, will be available over the years, facilitated by the most modern equipment which science can provide.