

Suffering Cat

Grumpy Cat has dwarfism, which involves a variety of genetic conditions that make her look like a kitten throughout her life.^{1 2} Her human companions take good care of her and have created a large web presence for her. Her popularity has created a demand for cats with dwarfism, and people are now breeding cats with dwarfism to meet this demand. However, it is hard to tell how severe this condition will be for any given litter in advance. Some cats might live relatively happy lives, and others might experience a lot of pain and suffering.

Sydney loves Grumpy Cat. She has shirts, mugs and even bed sheets with representations of Grumpy Cat on them, but what she wants more than anything is to adopt a cat who looks like Grumpy Cat. So, Sydney reads as much as she can about the genetic conditions that these cats face so that she can be prepared to care for one as well as possible. She then asks her local Humane Society to call her if they receive any cats with these conditions, and she signs up for a variety of mailing lists put out by pet rescue organizations in her area, including those that focus on disabled animals, so that she can be alerted when a cat is available near her. However, two years pass and no cats with the particular conditions she desires become available.

One day Sydney finds a web page for a breeder that breeds Munchkin cats, who have a type of dwarfism.³⁴ She immediately wants one of these cats, but she knows that, while Munchkin cats can have good lives, they can also have health problems that cause a great deal of pain and suffering. For example, they can have severe hip and back problems that may impact their mobility and necessitate multiple surgeries. As a result, many cat organizations do not endorse this breed. However, Sydney also knows that she would take excellent care of a Munchkin cat if given the opportunity. Furthermore, she reasons that we should not discriminate against animals on the basis of disability, and that once a Munchkin cat exists, they need a good home whether or not the people who bred them were right to do so.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- (1) Is it morally permissible for people to breed Munchkin cats for the purpose of selling them? Why or why not?
- (2) If people do breed Munchkin cats, is it morally permissible for Sydney to purchase one? Why or why not?
- (3) If Sydney does purchase a Munchkin cat, is it morally permissible for her to post pictures online, if doing so might motivate other people to breed or purchase Munchkin cats? Why or why not?

¹ <https://www.grumpycats.com/about>

² <http://ilbub.com/about>

³ http://www.petmd.com/cat/breeds/c_ct_munchkin

⁴ <https://www.petassure.com/new-newsletters/071510/article1.aspx>

