

THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE CAT FANCY
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THE GCCF SAYS HEALTH COMES FIRST

The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy has always taken very seriously its responsibility to support only the breeding of healthy cats. Various developments occurred during the early 1990s which gave rise to considerable concern and resulted in various decisions being taken by the GCCF. Much earlier than this the Cat Fancy had already produced a list of defects in cats which were considered damaging to a cat's health and welfare; this defects list is a part of the GCCF Standard of Points for judges, and cats showing any of the defects listed should not be awarded Certificates. More recently, various breeds of cat have been developed which are considered by the GCCF to be unacceptable.

In 1991, shortly after a series of television programmes had shown various breeds including the Munchkin, the GCCF stated that it would strongly discourage anyone from importing such a cat and that there was no intention of recognising this or any other new breed which was based on abnormal structure or development. In March 1995, the GCCF Veterinary Subcommittee and the Executive Committee supported a statement made by the British Small Animals Veterinary Association which stated that the BSAVA were concerned that the breeding of animals for extreme anatomical features could have serious health and welfare implications. The Executive Committee agreed that it would join with the BSAVA in strongly urging that the fashion for the extreme should not be allowed to give rise to health problems in cats.

The GCCF is pleased that the increasing availability of genetic tests for hereditary diseases makes it possible for breeders to eliminate such diseases from their breeding lines. Where tests are available, the GCCF encourages the incorporation of their use into the registration policies for affected breeds.

Ragdoll Cats: Many comments had been made about Ragdoll cats and so the decision to recognise them was not taken until very careful investigations had taken place. Reports were obtained from a leading veterinary college to confirm that the central nervous system of these cats is perfectly normal, that they are not in any way different from other cats and that they are no more or less likely to be floppy when relaxed than any other cat. It is also questionable whether they have the very high pain threshold that has been suggested. The Ragdoll was first introduced in the United States where the breed was speedily patented. The only way in which such a patent could be obtained was by the claim that the cat was unlike other cats; this claim has since been discredited both in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Bengal Cats: This is a breed which was introduced into the United Kingdom in 1990. The breed originates from a cross between an Asian Leopard Cat and an ordinary domestic cat and in the early generations the temperament may be reserved. The breed was given Preliminary recognition by the GCCF in June 1997 and, with each progression towards Championship status, restrictions have been placed on the production and registration of early generation cats.

After careful consideration, it was decided to make a policy statement that, with the exception of the outcross to the Asian Leopard Cat which had produced the Bengal, the GCCF would not recognise any other outcross to a non-domestic cat.

Sphynx: The GCCF does recognise Sphynx cats but registration policies ensure that the gene cannot be introduced into other breeds. As these cats are virtually hairless they require particular care. Firstly, they have to have the sebaceous oils washed from their skin regularly because there is no hair to dissipate the oils and allow them to be removed naturally. Secondly, fur on cats helps to protect them from injury and cats without fur may suffer severely from scratches and playful bites which would not affect cats which have a coat. Thirdly, they need to be protected from cold and from strong sunlight because of the risk of sunburn and skin cancer.

There is no intention to register any other hair deficient breeds.

The following breeds of cat are not recognised by the GCCF:

Scottish Fold: There is no intention to recognise this breed because the gene which produces the folded ears also causes skeletal abnormalities, producing stiffness of the limbs and tail which increases with age. This is especially true when two fold-eared cats are bred together but it has been shown that cats with only one gene for folded ears also suffer from abnormal stiffness. Under these circumstances it has never been recognised and we strongly advise members of the public not to try to acquire cats of this breed.

Other Curled Ear Varieties: No recognition has been given to any other curled ear variety as it is possible that such varieties suffer from similar defects to the Scottish Fold.

Cats with foreshortened limbs There is no intention to recognise Munchkins or any similar breed.