

REPORT ON THE GCCF COUNCIL MEETING OF 21 FEBRUARY 2013

Once again it was a very positive occasion. There was plenty of new information for delegates to consider over the course of the afternoon, and discussion on agenda items had obviously been taking place at club level in advance, evidenced by some of the questions asked. It was good to see this interaction. As it happened there was a visitor from GCCFI present and she commented at the tea interval on the vitality of the event.

There was a prompt start and the Chairman welcomed over hundred delegates who had made the journey. After noting apologies for absence from the President, Mrs Dugdale, and the Vice Presidents, who had sent good wishes for a successful meeting, four members of the fancy were remembered by friends and colleagues: Jean Ashton, Pam Beaumont, Denise Lindsay and Kevin Sprot. Tributes can be read on the GCCF website. (<http://www.gccfcats.org/tributes.html>)

There had to be a slight correction to the minutes, a typographical error spotted by the eagle-eyed John Hansson, who queried why the Balinese BAC had a judge no one had heard of, a certain Mrs **M**Marriott-Power. Apologies to the GCCF Chairman!

PRESENTATION OF THE EMS CODES

The afternoon's business began with a presentational session on the EMS codes. If these are adopted by GCCF they will replace the current breed numbering with the combination of letters and numbers first used by FIFe and now used by all bona fide European organisations, Australia, South America and Indonesia (not an all-inclusive list), so right around the world.

It was good to welcome back to Council Sarah Johnson, who was very active in GCCF some years ago, but moved to FIFe and is now Secretary of its Breeding and Registration Commission, so probably recites the codes in her sleep she's so familiar with them. She did say though that when she started out EMS was rather a frightener for her, but constant use soon brought familiarity, and the realisation that EMS (Easy Mind System) is actually as simple as its title suggests. She saw no reason why those in GCCF would not have a similar experience after the transitional period.

Thirty years ago a Fife registrar and a judge were discussing the second lot of new coding introduced into the GCCF system that they were then using. They realised it was going to get more and more complicated, and agreed there had to be a way of creating flexibility. They were right on all counts. When GCCF numbering began over 100 years ago a Persian was 1 and a Siamese 24 and it was envisaged all would fit between. Now we're up to 86, with additional alphanumeric added to combine with what exists already, and not coping with the resulting complexity and rigidity.

The core of the simplicity of EMS is that the lettering denotes a breed and any coding that follows it is the same for every single breed where that feature exists. If you're a Persian breeder you'll know what colour and pattern an Asian is instantly from whatever follows ASS, and the same applies the other way round, of course. No coding is used at all for a breed that has only one colour or pattern: KOR-Korat or SIN-Singapura, for example. For registrars, show managers and breeders reading pedigrees there would no longer be lots of individual differences to learn.

Sarah demonstrated through her examples the flexibility and logicity of EMS very convincingly to delegates, and then, as excellent speakers do, made a final clinching point. She held up a single sheet of paper that had all of the EMS coding on one side of it and the GCCF's 39 page current booklet of the same thing and invited delegates to choose! Is there really any choice? One will carry us through this century and hopefully beyond, the other (born in the days before car travel was normality and when the word genetics had not come into being) has outlived its usefulness. (<http://www.gccfcats.org/council0213.html>)

The questions delegates posed mostly dealt with the coding for specific breeds. There was assurance given that historic names would not be lost, it was only a matter of a different code applied to breeds, colours and patterns. Just because Fife recognised a breed GCCF didn't, and vice versa, or used a name for what was genetically a different cat (Bombay, for example) would not create problem. Organisations would always recognise, describe and have registration policies that varied one from another, but because EMS essentially described the phenotype of a cat, those differences could be incorporated. However, as EMS was the FIFe system Sarah responded to one delegate query saying it would be courteous if GCCF referred to it when new inclusions were necessary.

The GCCF Chairman gave a reassurance of this, emphasising that it wasn't a matter of asking permission, but keeping the code the same across international registry boundaries was a matter of common sense.

Variants were asked about, and Sarah's response was that the v coding was now little used in FIFe as showing was done mainly by phenotype in her organisation. She believed it would remain the business of BACs when determining their registration policies how they wished to record and describe cats from permitted breeding, and their eligibility for showing, just as it is now.

There was a question on the distinction between household pets and pedigree pets, and explained it only needed the addition of separate distinctive letter coding. Letter code applied to the white longhaired cat from a rescue centre would not be identical to the one originally registered as a Persian White.

After a straw poll indicated the overwhelming majority was in favour of a change, the final questions were for the GCCF officers. Would there be any charge to breeders and when would it start? Assurance was given there would be no cost. Registration would not have to be altered - imagine the work in that! Once the program was ready on the computer the introduction of new cats entered onto the system would be in EMS and the existing would retain their existing breed number. Show entries would be by what the cat had recorded on its registration certificate with the old numbering gradually fading out of the picture. The matter would come as a proposal to June Council, with it possibly being operational by the autumn, but that would depend on computer programming and office staff training so a definite date couldn't yet be given.

The Chairman thanked Sarah, Anne Gregory and Sally Rainbow-Ockwell for all the work and commitment they had given to the preparation of presentation. There may be a few further changes before GCCF uses EMS, particularly if necessary to respond to BAC/Club queries, but they won't be major. Sarah gave the broad outline in Council, and from it delegates gained understanding of both EMS and the need for change.

THE 2012 ACCOUNTS

The GCCF's accountant, Mr Wood, who talked delegates through the financial statement in Council very kindly provided his notes which can be studied along with the accounts from the website (<http://www.gccfcats.org/council0213.html>). However, to many it's the bottom line that is important. Mr Wood's final sentence was, "In summary the cat fancy generated a profit of £22,184 after tax, and this resulted in an increase in the net asset position of The Council to £391,320".

£202,300 of the assets is tied into the property, which was revalued with incorporation so is in line with current market value, and the clubs who lent money for the IT project are shown as creditors for just over £56,615 with only some of this money having been spent due to the amount of time and expertise freely given as described in IT section. About £8,500 is in stocks of medals and certificates. So the building remains the chief asset, but is not all GCCF has. There is now a degree of liquidity available for business development.

When considering the detail of the profit and loss account, Mr Wood explained that this year was 12 months, but only 10 months of 2011 were counted from incorporation so the prorated figure (taking 2011 to 12 months based on the information from 10 months) was important. It made the 2012 turnover slightly below what could have been anticipated, but direct expenses for the period were also less than expected from the prorated 2011 figure. That put the gross profit figure for 2012 to £160,139 compared to £145,944 for 2011 (prorated) and would seem a good outcome for a small business in these difficult economic times.

One delegate question concerned the office recharge for the Supreme. The SM explained (when she gave her statement) it was lower because less work was being done in the office. Next year she anticipated that there would be no recharge as she was going to be responsible for the show entirely. Another queried if the amount shown in fines levied by IC/DC was actual or estimated. The Office Manager confirmed that it was definite income and also all fines imposed in 2012 had been paid.

THE 2013 FORECAST

The forecast budget given by the Office Manager was based on income in line with 2012. It was anticipated that imports would fall as there had been a surge in 2012, but hoped that online transfers would stimulate a growth in figures for this area. Delegates were urged to take it to their clubs and breeders to promote transfers, as they were a generator of profit for GCCF that could be spent on benefits for breeders and exhibitors (streamlining systems and keeping other prices fixed) without charge to breeders. Just a 20%

increase could make a lot of difference, so something for us all to work on.

Mark had put a figure of £250,000 on the value of time given by the Officers, Directors and all those who worked voluntarily on projects. There was a dedicated IT team, the Breeder Scheme Team, the operation of the Judges' Guild, those who were working for the success of the London Pet Show and World Cat Congress, amongst many others. GCCF would not be functioning profitably without them. However, because of the many projects making sure the business continued to grow there had to be extra meetings and administrative cost to organise them and this was reflected in the forecast given.

One question concerned the intention to reduce electricity costs with a new round of fuel costs just announced. Mark acknowledged he hadn't a crystal ball to build in new anticipated increases given just a few days ago. However, as the office's tied in tariff rate finished this year he hoped to negotiate a better deal. I'm sure all wish him well on that!

THE BUSINESS PLAN

The Vice-Chairman then gave a brief précis of the business plan which had been on the website for several weeks to be available to all. He described it as the key document by which GCCF as a company operated, and projects were linked with the financial forecast to present a total package. It was the way control had been exercised in business management. He thanked the volunteers, and noted how the changes in the IT system were essential to increase further efficiency. Overall GCCF was doing well against the current financial background, and this was supported by the fact that there were now no red risk areas in the plan as there had been in previous years. Projects underway, and developments planned, were amber and green only, another positive indicator of successful management.

VETTING-IN IMPROVEMENTS: UPDATE

John Robinson reported that the hygiene measures implemented to control infection were now embedded in show practice, including plastic aprons now becoming a necessity rather an optional extra. The veterinary log had received some minor adjustment, but recording was now routine and it would provide verifiable data that could be the basis for further change. The list of vets and veterinary nurses available for vetting-in was in the process of update and be ready for show managers shortly.

BREEDER SCHEME: UPDATE

Steve Crow announced that ahead of the actual launch on March 1st, 32 breeders had joined the GCCF Breeder Scheme and had received their unique pin number, which would change on an annual basis in line with subscription renewal. There had been an article in Your Cat, which had provided free publicity, and alerted the kitten buying public to the scheme's existence and the opportunity of looking for a breeder in their area. Paid advertisement of the scheme was planned for the autumn as by then it was expected a number of kittens would be advertised on the website. Earlier promotion could prove a disappointment to the public who might expect an immediate 'shop window'. It was encouraging to see those who had already joined proudly displaying their logo on their websites.

IT REFRESH PROJECT

The news of the day was GCCF now has an on-line system open for business. It had been extensively trialed and was now ready for all to register as users to get log-in details and so access the system. The activation would happen as soon as the volunteer technician had completed his day job commitment. Transfers could be done on-line immediately and breeders would have access to all of their own registration records. Most would find it extremely interesting to see just how few had actually been transferred and it was hoped online accessibility would encourage transfer to happen more frequently.

The new system was well supported by help via prompts and videos, and an email address for online help. (It's hoped these methods will be used rather than phone calls to the office as staff there cannot give technical assistance - please pass the message on). However, every bit of assistance given would inform the computer expert where problems existed and was encouraged. It wasn't expected that everything would be immediately perfect though there had been extensive trialing.

One possible glitch could be because before 1996 addresses were not recorded onto the computer so if a breeder had house moves they wouldn't necessarily be tracked. Name changes through marriage and divorce and joint prefixes had been accounted for, but all personal circumstances may not have been

covered. Again it was a matter of users providing additional information if gaps were found so that data could be added and records improved.

Registration would happen as soon as transfers seemed to be operating well and office staff had completed their training. This would be a matter of weeks rather than months away. Sally Rainbow-Ockwell (Project Manager) concluded with a promise of even more to come. Once registrations were coming in on-line it was the end of phase one of the IT upgrade, but thanks to all the voluntary help given freely we would be moving into the next upgrading more rapidly than planned.

The register was running on software that had been state of the art in the 1980s. It required considerable expertise to make routine changes such as new breed introduction. Modernisation was needed urgently and once this was carried out should enable processes to be carried out more quickly, without frustrating holdups. The registration system software designed would be unique to GCCF, but standard small business package purchases would aid customer service, marketing and project control. All were planned, and delegates would be kept informed of progress.

JUDGES

All judge promotions were approved, and the withdrawals from lists acknowledged. Judges should note the change in the Code of Conduct (3b) relating to geographical area, published on the GCCF and Judges' Guild websites.

SHOW MATTERS:

a) The Supreme Show Report

Celia Leighton, Show Manager of the Supreme, had today's toughest job, because this year the show lost money, rather than making a modest profit (pre office recharge), as it had done in the previous two years. The reason was very simple: the entry numbers and stall income were both down. Expenditure was very much in line with what it had been the previous year and the take from the gate wasn't very different, providing a good income boost. The number of exhibitors has actually risen rather than dropped, as might be supposed, so the show maintained its interest, but in harsh economic times they had brought fewer cats between them.

Celia said that she had to look at reducing expenses and, if the show was to retain the display format and ring judging that made it distinctive, the venue couldn't change, so judging costs had to be the prime consideration. Delegates were asked about whether they would be happy with no critiques on the day, so that judge numbers could be reduced cutting hotel and refreshment bills considerably. It seemed to be accepted that this must be considered, and judges present agreed it took less time to make their own notes, rather than more carefully expressed critiques. Other suggestions offered were no catering, but the purchase of vouchers to give judges and workers to use in the food outlets, and casting the net wider for sponsorship.

b) An extra Grand Class for the Foreign Section

The extra Grand for the Rex breeds, LaPerm and Sphynx in the Foreign Section was agreed, and Mrs Dean thanked delegates on behalf of the Joint Rex BAC. It should happen from June, and there will be swift confirmation of judge eligibility for Grands and Imperials as it's understood summer show catalogues will be in preparation. Please see the GCCF website.

c) Exotic Longhairs on the show bench

Council agreed that Exotic Longhair Variants should be shown in the equivalent Persian Breed Classes.

RULE CHANGES

The rule change re BAER testing was withdrawn as the day before Council one of the experts in the field at the Animal Health Trust at Newmarket, whom the Genetics Committee had been consulting, added that some consideration should be given for the small minority all white breeds who would possibly lose too many cats too quickly thus causing too rapid gene pool depletion. It was agreed this had to be discussed, and, following feedback from AGMs already in, GC would use the interim to put together as a support package information and advice for testing, with a list of clinics where it could be carried out.

Microchip proof of identity at the time of sale to support any genetic and veterinary testing certificate provided for the cat or kitten was approved with none against and only one abstention, so obviously understood and well supported. It was explained in AOB that any testing done prior to chipping, with no chip number on the certificate to be verified with a link to the cat's veterinary record, was for breeder information only. If provided as part of the kitten's paperwork at the time of sale it had to relate to that particular individual, in a manner readily understood by the public. For breeders it would provide protection against court challenge.

The rule on non-submission of judge reports (including the substitution of suspended/suspension for disqualified/disqualification) was approved. It should clarify the position for Show Managers.

REGISTRATION POLICY AND STANDARD OF POINTS REVISIONS

Approved as publicised, and recommended by the Board:

- The Burmese Registration Policy
- The Persian Tabby Registration Policy
- The Russian Registration Policy
- The Birman Standard of Points

The registration policy for the Singapura was withdrawn as the BAC hadn't had sufficient time to resubmit after considering amendments from the Board.

BREED PROMOTION

The Siberian BAC was warmly congratulated on the breed's agreed promotion to Championship Status.

WORLD CAT CONGRESS

The GCCF website gave details of how to book with prices and bookings were coming in well (link) Sponsorship response had been very favourable with some top name support. The theme for the Suffolk and Norfolk Show was 007, though it wasn't said if a repeat of the Olympic helicopter arrival had been arranged! The seminar programme was now completed and on the website though Profs Leslie Lyons and Tim Gruffydd-Jones had yet to give titles for their presentations. Those booking from abroad by credit/debit card would probably have to do so via the office. Provision would be made.

CAT WELFARE TRUST

A project with Bristol, Manchester and UC Davis collaborating on a study investigating the genetics of immunity had just been completed. It had been hoped to find if particular breeds were of increased risk of susceptibility to disease (particularly FIP). However, it proved more difficult and complex than first expected (as usual cats are not dogs) and though some findings had resulted they were by no means conclusive. The study report is available on the website. (<http://www.gccfcats.org/catwell.html>) The accounts of CWT would be published shortly and it was stressed it is a charity where every penny donated goes on feline research and none into any administrative costs.

AOB

The Coventry and Leicester delegate offered to help other clubs who wanted to be able to accept card payments.

Tapes on Show Management talks (from days gone by) were available for conversion.

With all business completed the meeting finished shortly after 4pm.