

## **REPORT ON THE GCCF COUNCIL MEETING OF 23 OCTOBER 2013**

Today's meeting began fairly promptly, finished shortly before the five o'clock deadline and in between there was the spice of variety. Delegates received some detailed reports covering a mix of topics, considered breed and show matters, contributed to debate on some of the more difficult issues concerned with EMS implementation and had some interesting discussions brought to Council from clubs. In short, it was a busy afternoon but a constructive one.

### **BREED AND SHOW MATTERS**

All judge appointments and withdrawals were confirmed. There was one piece of additional information supplied to Council from the office. Mrs J Hickey was inadvertently removed from the LH Self, LH Tabby, Patched and Exotic lists when she moved to France. However, as it wasn't her intention to give up judging, and the BACs concerned were happy that she continued to judge, her name is to be restored to all of the four lists.

The Korat & Thai, Persian Tabby, Oriental Bicolour and Snowshoe BACs had their revised registration policies approved. Breeders of any of the breeds involved can go to the GCCF website and read the new policies, or contact their club to learn more about what the changes will mean. There was only one SOP revision proposed this month (Oriental Bicolour) and that was withdrawn because the BAC wished to make some further amendments.

The Supreme Show Manager announced there would be 786 cats in competition this year which is a drop in numbers from the previous year. The Club Row and cats and others on exhibition will take the total cats present to over 800. Mrs Leighton acknowledged she would have liked there to be more, but given the current economic climate she was pleased so many had continued to support the show.

Perhaps another time there will be some additional Siamese. The Oriental Bicolour BAC application for their variants to be shown in the equivalent Siamese and Balinese classes received Council's approval. It sparked some discussion on the numbering of variants until an effective solution was found to the anomalies of genotype/phenotype coding. A suggestion from the floor by John Robinson, based on his experience as a Show Manager, solved the problem. An information sheet is to be prepared for SMs in the office listing the breed numbers that could apply to a particular phenotype (Siamese, Balinese or Persian, for example) to ensure an exhibit is placed in the appropriate breed class.

It would have been good to welcome a new breed (or perhaps it should be thought of as the return of an old one) to the Foreign Section, but unfortunately those wishing for GCCF recognition of the Chestnut Brown (CFA & TICA Havana) have still to supply some of their supporting paperwork to comply with the rules in this respect.

However, GCCF does have a new Member. The Progressive Singapura Cat Club was granted Full Membership after completing its period as a provisional member. It is a breed club and so membership brings the opportunity to participate in the relevant BAC, and to apply for a show licence if so wished.

A new BAC is also to come into existence. On behalf of the Board, Rosemary Fisher explained the rationale for creating a single Joint Persian Longhair BAC from the five that exist currently. It should bring this section into line with the way the British operates, broadly speaking. No longer will Probationer Judges be disadvantaged in comparison to their British SH counterparts as they will be able to train across the section. Clubs should no longer struggle finding representatives to attend meetings (and disadvantaging their breeders if they can't do so). Also, as a Full Judge pointed out, it will so much easier to teach and assess candidates on the scheme as they will have the opportunity to work with more cats at any one show.

Hopefully it should be a win-win situation, though as always the devil will be in the detail. The BACs and their Board appointed officers (acting for two meetings) will have plenty of work ahead of them putting together a new constitution for the Joint BAC and the requirements of its judge appointment scheme. It was promised care would be taken to make sure no current candidate was disadvantaged.

The Office Manager gave a brief update on the scheme that would provide Household Pets with a simple form of registration. This was in response to demand and had now reached the trial and test stage. Mark hoped to have further news early next year.

## **RULE CHANGES**

The rule changes and additions were agreed. Notices concerning behaviour are to be displayed as stipulated, and the complaints procedure was clarified. It was queried whether show managers making a complaint to the Investigations Committee should have to pay £160 now this was directed procedure. The Chairman promised the Board would consider the issue.

There was an amendment to the title rationalisation to ensure that the UK title always had precedent, but for any cat now with an Olympic title the fact that it's also an Imperial Grand will be taken as given.

## **FINANCIAL REPORT - PRESENTED BY THE OFFICE MANAGER**

Throughout Mark referred to figures and charts delegates had in their paperwork. These are also available on the GCCF website for all to access.

He began with the good news that overall the company was meeting the targets set at the beginning of the year. This was despite some unexpected large expenses. There had been an appeal that had brought legal fees, and the loss of a sponsor had meant that GCCF had had to contribute far more than anticipated to the cost of holding the World Cat Congress.

However, although registration income was down (as predicted) the number of transfers had increased and income from other sources, particularly the partnership with Agria, had risen. Savings had been on salaries and money had been placed on deposit at the right time to secure a good rate of interest. Mark confirmed he was satisfied with the financial position to date, particularly as these were still difficult economic times.

There were queries on the loans to clubs and assurance was given on two counts. The end of year analysis would separate these out from other figures and designate them clearly. Also money was being set aside annually to make repayments.

The best figures amongst those presented on the volume graphs showed that prefix applications continued to grow. These indicated that there would be new breeders in the future making their registrations. It was a hopeful sign too that imports onto the register were higher than in 2010 or 2011. It was reiterated that breeders should try and encourage new owners to transfer as it both generated income and provided a new customer base for future services.

Finally, there was big thank you to all who were using online services. Already 65% of prefix holders had registered into the system. This was after just four months when the KC was thought not to have quite so many after almost a year. It proved that this service was something really wanted and was being used to good effect.

## **THE BUSINESS PLAN - PRESENTED BY THE VICE CHAIRMAN**

Steve reported that progress to the end of June when the Annual Review was published had been broadly on schedule. He acknowledged that after that date some matters had been put on

hold mainly due to the complexity of the major changes generated by the IT project. The revision to the Breeding Policy, for example, had been waiting to be done for a while. However, it was important to take the time to make a smooth transition to EMS.

For the future he planned to draft the 2014 Business Plan in time to present it to the Board for input in late November. It should then be published on the website early 2014 and come to Council in February.

#### **GCCF WEBSITE UPDATE - PRESENTED BY THE VICE CHAIRMAN**

It was announced that GCCF had the services of a professional web designer given freely, which saved money though she could not prioritise GCCF over business clients. However, the front page was prepared and the structure behind it in the planning stage. The aim was to have an accessible site, attractive and informative to the general public. It would be manageable in sections by different groups, including the office, which should share the responsibility for updating and renewing content. In reply to queries Steve gave assurance that Marcia would be able to continue doing her fantastic job of keeping judge and show reports immediate and up to date.

#### **CANINE & FELINE SECTOR GROUP - PRESENTED BY THE VICE CHAIRMAN**

This was a DEFRA organised group to advise the ministry and its animal welfare committee on canine and feline issues. It was a large group (about 20 members) focusing on areas where it hoped to impact on government policy. To date there had been discussions on dangerous dogs, the microchipping of dogs, and whether this would be extended to cats, and animal boarding facilities. Steve commented that he'd found information on rabies the most disturbing as the law allowed for draconian measures in the event of an outbreak. Animal smuggling was our problem because of the severe impact it would have on our hobby if it resulted in a rabies outbreak.

#### **IT REFRESH – PRESENTED BY THE CHAIRMAN & SALLY RAINBOW-OCKWELL (PROJECT MANAGER)**

Helen gave a statement on the implementation of EMS Codes that she wishes to be read widely. Therefore it is included in full:

*I wish to clarify the process agreed for introducing EMS to the GCCF. The EMS codes will be a direct translation from our current codes to the established EMS codes. In a few instances EMS codes have not existed. Also we have ascertained that there are a few erroneous codes within our current system. A translator is available, together with advice sheets for clubs, BACs, breeders and exhibitors. Amendments will be added as they are agreed. The transfer to EMS took place as planned on 1st October 2013. The only change that is visible is that from that date new registrations show both the current GCCF registration number and breed description together with the new EMS code. The GCCF currently codes its cats for registration on genotype with 'v' for variants and this will not change. Any variance from a strict transfer of codes could go against established registration policies so would need the relevant BACs approval.*

*Some discussion has taken place with FIFE so that any new codes required are to the mutual benefit of both organisations to establish an international number system where possible. Some breeds and/or colours are recognised by one organisation and not the other but continuing dialogue establishes the principle for the future. However EMS rules are not just FIFE but are there so that the system works for all that use it and to make exchange of cats across the world easier.*

*The second phase of the introduction of EMS codes has been slightly delayed in order that we can rectify any problems before the full usage of the codes is launched. We are therefore setting up a small group to look at any issues and to recommend a course of action to the Board. Where appropriate reference will be made to specific BACs. In order to gather as much information as possible a specific email address will be set up for clubs, BACs, breeders and exhibitors to send their queries and/or suggestions. This will be notified on the GCCF website this week and with the notes of this meeting. ([ems@gccfcats.org](mailto:ems@gccfcats.org))*

*This is just the start of a long process which our IT group has put many hours of work into and I would appreciate all your support to keep the momentum going. No decisions are being made without the Board's and/or Council's approval. If you have any queries please do send them to special email address for consideration. Helen Marriott-Power (GCCF Chairman)*

Sally gave further detail on phase two of the IT project. The computer system particularly concerned with cat registration would have a customised program, rather than anything that could be bought in. In the process registration policies would have to be put into a standardised format and the Registry Project Manager would be contacting BACs with this aim. At the same time communication had to be improved with the system cleaned to remove repeats of information held on people that resulted in unwanted multiple contact.

In the coming weeks there would be some surveys done to assess requirements for the provision of new services. Sally stated these would provide an opportunity for all to say what they wanted, and hoped there would be a good response so that the right services could be provided.

#### **REVIEW OF DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE – PRESENTED BY MARIA CHAPMAN-BEER (GROUP CHAIRMAN)**

The aim of the review was to see whether the system could be streamlined to make it both more cost effective and less time consuming. Consideration was being given to greater use of fixed penalties and whether there could be a revision of the committee structure. Currently the types of case and how they could be dealt with was being considered. Assurance was given that any changes recommended to the rules and byelaws would be brought to Council.  
(Reports of the meetings can be accessed on the GCCF website)

#### **CAT WELFARE TRUST STATEMENT - PRESENTED BY KEITH SCRUTON (CHAIRMAN)**

Keith gave an update on behalf of the charity. This time his focus wasn't on the work of the current project as the research into the genetics associated with immunity is still ongoing. Instead he described how a meeting with the Board had drawn his attention to the Trust's governing deed which had confirmed opinion that not only could support be given to projects initiated by universities, but it could be broadened to support clubs and BACs trying to solve health problems. Other trustees had agreed this type of help could be offered.

There are terms and conditions on costing, having a suitably qualified person doing the study capable of validating its aims and viability, together with a planned timescale. These can all be found on the GCCF website together with the full text of the report. However, it means that assistance could be given with gathering sufficient DNA samples and scan results, for example, to obtain a viable number for research. That's very good news indeed for breed clubs and BACs, perhaps considering a study into flat chested kittens, or contributing towards an HCM project to find a DNA test relevant to their breed, and wondering if there would be the support from breeders to do testing at a time when all are counting pennies.

The other excellent piece of information was that funds are available. The CWT was a recent beneficiary of £28,000 and some breeders are contributing their Agria rewards directly to it as their chosen charity.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS (AS PUT FORWARD BY MEMBER CLUBS)**

The first was presented by Keith Scruton on behalf of the Central LH and SLH Cat Club and suggested a change to the Byelaws so that the Chairman and Vice Chairman were elected for three year terms, (and stood down), rather than having annual elections in Council each June. It also added new instructions on what was to happen at the end of either officer's term of office. There would be the right to remain as an independent delegate for one further year with full voting and electoral rights, without having to be a delegate for a Member Club. This would prevent a situation where a retiring officer could find him/herself suddenly without a place in Council.

However, it was neither the loss of annual voting nor the detail of what would happen at the end of completed terms that most concerned delegates. Several commented that there was insufficient detail in the proposals as they stood about what would happen in the eventuality of either officer having to retire prematurely. If a Vice-Chairman became Chairman part way through the term would it be part of the time spent as Chairman, or would a period of Acting Chairman until the following June, when new officers could be elected, be discounted? Would the system be so regulated to keep the officer elections always in synch, which seemed desirable?

A straw poll at the end of the debate indicated a two thirds majority in favour of such a change to the byelaws, though Keith was advised to discuss with his club drafting the proposal to include more detail on the procedure should an officer retire for any reason part way through his/her term.

The item from the Abyssinian Cat Association had quite a lot of pre-meeting discussion on online forums, as people seemed fearful it was indicative of a price rise. The ACA presenter, Steve Parkin, was anxious to dispel any thought that his club was making a proposal or was planning to do so in the future. He stressed that when they had their spring AGM and wanted raise dual registration and transfer in Council it was because they had concerns they thought worth discussing, and hoped that would stimulate some new ideas. In spring it was uncertain that the ability to transfer online would actually make much difference, now the evidence was there that it had stimulated an increase.

At this point there were suggestions from the floor that perhaps there should be a reduced fee if breeders made a registration and transfer together. The Vice-Chairman replied to this as he said he'd done some maths in advance of the meeting. Calculations indicated that if a realistic reduction was made to attract breeders to take up the option, it would mean that the current number of transfers would actually have to double for the same amount of income to be generated. As the chances were highly unlikely, the best that could be done was to look for incentives to transfer from another direction, and breeders had to understand that by encouraging new owners to transfer which brought both income and new potential customers GCCF's way, they helped hold down price rises in other fees.

An alternative delegate suggestion was that prices should be reduced in an effort to attract more registrations. However, a quick look at the pie charts produced by the Office Manager showed the high potential risk of such a strategy, as so much of the company's income was dependent on its core business. It was less of a loss leader in supermarket style, and more of an outright gamble staking the family silver. So no price cuts looked to be forthcoming, but there was some assurance that there were no immediate plans for any increases either.

Steve said another club concern was that with the rapid transfer of cats via an online system, there was fear that breeding cats could be moved on from home to home without regard for their welfare. Mrs Rainbow-Ockwell responded that the actual transfers still received the same scrutiny as they always had done, as it was only an application to transfer that was received online, and the process itself still was subject to registrar scrutiny.

She concluded though that repeated transfers for a single cat were indeed something that should raise concern, and they could be noted for the list of improvements to be built into the new system. Then the computer would make a check and intervene by flagging any rapid transfers, therefore definitely bringing them to the registrar's attention.

Making the computer work to benefit cat welfare was a very positive note on which to bring the afternoon to a close. Mark had just one more bonus for delegates on the point of departure. The first Agria rewards were due to be paid into breeder bank accounts (or those of their chosen charity) on 31st October.  
The meeting ended with a round of applause.

Jen lacey 24.10.13