

The Electoral Meeting of Council 2012

The June meeting is the first Council of the new GCCF year, with the traditional start at midday, so that elections can be held alongside the usual meeting business. New delegates introduced themselves and were welcomed. I counted 10 in a total of 123 delegates. Then it was time to remember colleagues and friends who were no longer with us. Many of you will have known Helen Light and Margaret Somers, both. Possibly some will have encountered Linda Whitaker at the Bridgwater office who was the secretary for disciplinary matters for many years. Long-term breeders/exhibitors were also named and thought of by those who worked with them.

Unfortunately, Christina Dugdale, GCCF President wasn't well enough to be present, though she was now home from hospital. She'd sent a message of thanks to hardworking officers and committee members, and all those sharing our hobby with enthusiasm, with good wishes for a happy and prosperous future.

Mrs Wolstenholme and Mr Wickham-Ruffle were confirmed as new Vice-Presidents. Both had been thrilled to be asked, and sent good wishes to all in GCCF.

Election results:

Helen Marriott-Power and Steve Crow were returned to their positions as Chairman and Vice-Chairman unopposed.

Board of Directors

L Ashmore 97
D Goadby 88
J Hansson 88
G Bennett 82
C Leighton 81
A Gregory 78
J Lacey 75
R Fisher 74
P Perkins 71
S Rainbow-Ockwell 70
J Robinson 69
H Dean 67
S Heavens 59
S Farrell 59
S Woodley 56

Finance Committee

M Chapman-Bear 108
D Goadby 107
T Goss 88
R Fisher 81
S Rainbow-Ockwell 81

Reserve S Heavens

1st reserve (after a tie) S Devereux 65 2nd Reserve I Roos 58

There were two new directors as Joyce Green and Michelle Codd did not stand again, and

all that did were reelected.

Shelagh Heavens and Sandra Woodley were welcomed to the Board.

Investigations Committee

Gillian Bennett 105
M Codd 105
K Jarvis 85
C Lewis 64
H Meekings

Res. C Patey

Disciplinary Committee

J Hansson 86
C Leighton 85
S Bullock 83
L Ashmore 81
J Lacey 78
H Dean 75
B Prouse 70
V Kilby
S Crichton

Res. S Amor
S Devereux
S Morris
H McCrae

Appeals Committee

M Chapman-Bear 104
D Harper 96
P Perkins 83
R Fisher 78
B Shingleton 71
J Fleming 59
S Rabey 56

Res. E Murphy
J Tonkinson
E Stark
N Ryan

Chairman's Report

Once voting was underway for the Board and Disciplinary Committee it was time for the Chairman to present a report on her first year in office. She promised her remarks would be brief as there was now a comprehensive, detailed and illustrated end of year report on the company's achievements, presented to all delegates and available from the website. However, she wanted it noted that GCCF as a company had come into being on March 1st 2011 and had grown steadily since then. All those on the Board, committees and in the GCCF office had contributed towards this and their efforts had accomplished financial stability in difficult economic times.

The website (Marcia Owen and Anne Gregory thanked) was presenting GCCF professionally, with up to date information available. The London Pet Show was memorable occasion giving GCCF an opportunity to raise a high profile with the public. Anne & Brian Gregory and Tania Murray were to be congratulated. Over the year GCCF had acquired business partners; Zoflora at Earls Court, and a link had been formed with Agria Insurance Company, which would contribute funds to the computer upgrade. The new professional style had been complemented by the office, with the development of the new registration stationery and printing services.

The general economic climate was difficult but GCCF was operating successfully. Shows

were continuing, and breed clubs and BACs went on with their work. The Chairman remarked she had a great deal of respect for all who had developed breeding policies, and were active in upgrading their registration policies to incorporate new testing. She hoped too that road shows would continue to explain new policies and listen to what breeders and exhibitors wanted.

Finance

The GCCF accounts had been approved in February as in line with company practice they covered the calendar year. However, The office manager gave a quick up date on the year so far. The figures confirmed that the predicted small profit was achievable with income slightly higher, and expenses a little below forecast. However, there was no certainty as these were volatile times.

Club News

Doreen Goadby was able to confirm that all clubs had made at least a partial return. None had become non-viable during the year. The bye-laws setting out the requirements for membership were revised to reflect membership of a company rather than affiliation in a private members' club. Later in the afternoon one new club, the United Kingdom Ragamuffin Society was welcomed to full membership of GCCF, and The Turkish Van Breed Association, Australian Mist Cat Association, Northern British Longhair and Shorthair Cat Club (breed club), Khao Manee and Household Pet Cat Club of Great Britain (special interest club) were granted provisional membership status.

IT Update

There was more positive news when Sally Rainbow-Ockwell stood to give an update on the IT refresh. This has almost reached the point where a trial can be run, and she expected that by the time of the next Council a fully operational pilot scheme would be up and running. She explained that the changes had been made in two parts. There was the construction of the online system where people would make application to register and transfer and pay for the service. This was completed and ready to test. Part 2 involved the changes made in the office to receive the applications, which was almost finished. The two parts would be tested separately initially, then together and if all was functioning well the pilot would begin. All very exciting, and delegates enthusiastically applauded Ian Macro and Judith Merritt who had worked on the scheme in their free time and given their skills for well below commercial rates.

The Annual & Business Reports

The first Annual Report was complete and would be available from the website and in printed format. Helen thanked Steve for producing it and he said how grateful he was to all who had contributed. The Business Report (also on the website) would now reflect progress through this year, as assessment could be made on what aims had been

accomplished so far at the midway point. He intended to get the 2013 plan ready to be for the Board by November so it was prepared ready to view from the very beginning of the year.

Business Partnership

The October Council meeting would begin at midday to provide an opportunity to meet Agria representatives. Delegates were told a little more about this partnership formed to be mutually beneficial to both companies. Agria was reputable and well established in the pet insurance industry having worked for several years with the Kennel Club. Some minor glitches at the launch were acknowledged, but the company was anxious to sort out problems quickly. Cover would be provided for breeder/breeder sales (it hadn't be realised from dog scheme how frequently this happened between cat breeders) and the email requirement had been made optional as soon as it was noted as causing difficulty. Breeder incentives would be detailed on their website and could be linked to registration charge reductions. The scheme was well worth a try and tribute was paid to Bernard Morris who was instrumental in the initial organisation, but had not lived to see the successful outcome.

Rule Changes

Rule revisions went through without queries. BACs and clubs promoting new breeds will need to read the amended rules on gaining breed name recognition and preliminary status. They have brought the process up to date. Those who import should note simplification of the pedigree requirement (bringing it in line with the GCCF policy for the breed) and the need for a certificate of entirety for the sire of a registered cat or kitten.

There was nothing new to report on the show system review. The debate had produced ideas, but no strong preference for any form of immediate change. It had been agreed that no new proposals would be brought forward for this year anyway, and new suggestions for the future could be forwarded to the office to be passed on to the working group considering this.

Reviews and reports completed it was time to move to more regular business.

The list of judges for approval was accepted with the following amendments:

The Oriental Bicolour BAC's proposals were removed as they had appeared on the agenda for February and been accepted.

Mrs E Culf: Probationer Judge for Burmese

Mrs C Kaye: Full Judge of Snowshoes

Mrs L Dutton: a year's extension from the Patched BAC

The Oriental BAC requested that certain of its variants be allowed into show classes. The representative stressed this was for show purposes only. The breeding and registration

policies would ensure each breed remained defined as a separate entity. However, these cats could and would be shown with other organisations and there was no reason to exclude them. They would win or lose on merit. This was approved by a majority with immediate effect. Exhibitors will be able to enter shows that are still open.

The Nebelung was accepted for Preliminary Recognition with two small changes to the registration policy. (Unnecessary to DNA test Nebelung variants with a Nebelung parent for the LH gene, and recommended that a microchip number is recorded on any test results)

The Registration policy revisions for Oriental SH and Oriental LH and Foreign White cats were approved, with the substitution of 'any LH gene' for 'FGF5 mutation'; as was the Persian Tipped BAC's revised policy for Smoke Persian Cats with the addition of 'and the cat's own veterinary record' in respect of the microchip number in the final sentence.

The Russian Registration Policy was withdrawn after comment from Genetic Committee members on the number of generations required to bring an outcross back to full registration. Steve Crow (GC Chairman) remarked that BACs should not be unrealistic in an outcrossing programme. Breeders could not work through many generations, nor could the office apply an effective checking procedure.

There was a small change made to the proposed SOP of the Shaded Cameo Exotic as the representative explained this was to bring it in line with Persian equivalent, which had recently changed, and this was the general purpose of the Exotic SOP revisions: "The deepest intensity of colour should be most defined on the face, along the spine from the head to the tip of the tail and on the legs and feet." (Removed from the introductory paragraph).

Mrs Leighton answered queries on the Supreme Show, commenting that plans were in pace and the schedules would be out by the end of next month. This year MF Penning was responsible for the whole show and it was expected all pens would be in good condition. It was hoped that negotiations had been successful and the overhead section signs would be hung once again.

The Chairman remarked that plans for the World Cat Congress were in preparation and news would be on the website once they were definite. It was hoped that there would be a back-to-back show with Suffolk and Norfolk. However, there was nothing new to report on either the BAC review or the GCCF International project.

For discussion:

a) The Premier Prefix Scheme

The 'Premier Prefix Scheme' was introduced as the GCCF's equivalent to the Kennel Club's 'Accredited Breeders', though obviously not identical in format and scope. Steve Crow, who had been one of the team who put it together, explained that its prime purpose

was to further promote and encourage healthy responsible breeding. It would assist breeders who wanted to prove they followed 'best practice' and the general public who were looking for evidence that they were buying from a responsible breeder. In doing this it would promote GCCF as the registry caring and concerned for its cats and kittens, wanting to raise the bar on standards, proving its strap-line message.

However, he was candid in acknowledging that it was also a way of growing GCCF as a business. Breeders would gain from the accreditation. New owners would have a certain amount of assurance of the breeder's level of commitment. Cats and kittens couldn't lose out because their welfare was central, but GCCF would also have an additional source of income, some of which would be used on the scheme's administration, probably all or most initially. If it wasn't accepted by breeders it would wither and die, because it was entirely voluntary. Nobody would be made to take part and it was expected that many would wait and watch how things went before they decided whether or not to go ahead.

The cost to a subscribing member would be £10 application fee (payable once) and a £20 annual charge. Premier Prefix Holders would be listed by location on a dedicated area of the GCCF website and have the right to advertise kittens via this medium at an additional £5 per litter. They would have to sign up to enhanced code of ethics, be prefix holders, registering all kittens, and remain a member of at least one breed club. As well as vaccination, insurance and kitten information, help, support and advice to the purchaser would also be important. Indeed the link between breeder and new owner would be central as it owners who will send feedback. An absence of feedback forms or a clutch of critical ones could trigger investigation.

Questions from the floor were to do with practicalities:

Would all kittens have to be registered, or could there still be declarations? A PP holder would be committed to register each litter, but the option for declaration would still be available to those who preferred not to be part of the scheme. It had to be remembered it wasn't compulsory.

Would your vet be expected to visit your home? Not as part of the scheme. The vet declaration was to link the breeder to using and being known by a vet, not for a veterinary statement on home hygiene and husbandry.

What inspection check of your facilities would there be? Initially none. Later it could depend on feedback, as lack of feedback or mostly negative comment could mean there were problems. If the scheme really took off in the future it might be possible to finance more regular inspection.

Could a breeder be stripped of the PP status? Yes, if investigation found serious problems.

Would there be a period of time between gaining a GCCF prefix and becoming a PP holder, a sort of apprenticeship period? The answer of 'no' to this was thought wrong by some, others were of the opinion it was right to get going following best practice from day one.

There was concern expressed too that small breeders who perhaps wouldn't want to take

on the extra expense and commitment would lose out to those who were already well established, making it harder to get started. Some thought small breed clubs could be losers too, as they could lose advertising revenue from those who thought promotion through the GCCF website offered better value. It was pointed out that PP holders would have to be members of a breed club, making it less likely they would drift off after obtaining a prefix, as some did currently, and the committed would surely continue supporting their own club.

However, most negative comment came from those who believed it established a two-tier system. Opinion was that all prefix holders should already be committed to best practice, so why make people pay to prove it? Instead it should be a matter of disciplinary action when proven inadequate. The suggestion that it was a form of extra tax on registrations drew appreciative applause.

However, is only looking at the financial aspect one sided, and the question really be whether it would be effective in raising the bar on breeding standards as intended? Interestingly the second report into pedigree dogs, the one for the parliamentary committee, thought not; but the third, Sir Patrick Bateson's far more detailed inquiry, found in favour and concluded that incentives towards best practice could be effective. As Steve and the Board had determined it seemed worth trying to see what take up and results were.

At this point though there was a diversion as one delegate raised the issue of whether the Board had the right to determine whether the scheme should go ahead without the approval of Council. It had been presented as a discussion item on the agenda, not a proposal, and yet the start date was set for September 1st. The Vice-Chairman confidently asserted it was a matter of 'business' and the Board had the prerogative to determine company action, with the elections that had just taken place expressing Council's confidence in the Board. Some delegates did not seem as sure.

The discussion ended with straw poll taken. Approximately 60% of delegates raised their hands in favour of the scheme in principle, with the remainder balanced between abstention and against. So a clear majority approved, though as is often the case those who had objections had been more vocal than in expressing them.

b) Vetting-In Pilot Scheme

In Council John Robinson took the lead to detail the project and explained its purpose was not to do away with vetting-in as a cost cutting exercise, but an evaluation of the process to see whether it was possible to stream line it and build in improvements without adding additional risk. The assessment would take place at a few shows over a year, with data collected from these shows and ones that were operating in the standard way. He confirmed that vaccination cards would still all be checked by a qualified person, that a percentage of cats would still be vetted, and that judges and exhibitors could draw the attention of a vet to a penned exhibit who appeared unwell. Reassurance was given that if any sudden rise occurred in the numbers of cat needing isolation or being sent home the

pilot could be stopped immediately.

Much of the debate focussed on whether there was additional risk to healthy cats present and picking up infection, and to those who would have been left at home being made more unwell because their owners took a chance on bringing them. Various additional assessments were suggested, such as checking on the number of cats who became ill a few days after being at a show, but impossible to know whether a cat picked up a new infection, or stress caused it to show symptoms of an existing one. Much was open to conjecture.

However, John noted that there had been benefits in just raising the matter with the Veterinary Sub-Committee and Duty Vets. Much had been learned from observation and discussion, and there were already ideas for improvement to prevent risk of infection spread, for the training of new vets, and in record keeping. It was also observed that the vets held differing views. Some were very much in favour of no change, whilst others supported it and one opinion was that the vetting-in process itself was high risk for the spread of infection.

Views from Council having been noted, this subject also goes for further Board/Vet discussion. Assurance was given that if the pilot went ahead in the proposed format, any show taking part would have it in its schedule so that exhibitors would be aware in advance of entering.

Council finished to time and on a high note. There was a question in any other business about the Olympian medals. That gave the Chairman the opportunity to congratulate Jill and Stephen Bunce for achieving the gold standard with GOLD OLYMPIAN, UK & IMPERIAL GRAND PREMIER COONTASTIC NIJINSKY.

A fantastic achievement.

Jen Lacey