

**GENETICS COMMITTEE MEETING – 12 MARCH 2019**  
**MEETING RECORD AND ACTION NOTES**

Present: Steve Crow (chairing the meeting)

Dr Gillian Bennett, Rosemary Fisher John Hansson, Dr Karen Kempself, Jen Lacey, Anthony Nichols and Dr Sue Moreland (VO)

Guests: Sarah White (Agria) Prof Kym Jarvis & Esther Atkins (Breeder Scheme consultation, for this part of the meeting only)

1. **Apologies for absence:** All GC members were present. Dr Peter Collin and Julia Oughtibridge (Breeder Scheme consultation)

2. **Minutes**

These had been circulated after the previous meeting and were confirmed as accepted at the beginning of the afternoon session.

3. **Action notes from last meeting and any matters arising**

a) **Action arising from item 8 - the GCCF Breeder Scheme**

A consultation had taken place with contributions being requested from those on the GCCF email circulation list and via the GCCF FB page. The pre-lunch session of the meeting was a discussion to plan action for the outcomes of this. Guests had been invited who had specialist areas of expertise.

When the Breeder Scheme was established it had been intended to be aspirational. Those who wished to would sign up to an enhanced Code Of Ethics and this fact would be promoted, with a dedicated area on the GCCF website for advertising the kittens of BS members. Monitoring would be via customer feedback into the Office. It was deliberately planned not to be difficult or costly to join the BS as it was hoped to encourage and incentivise rather than deter breeders. To date there were 211 members.

However, comment from the consultation had suggested that inspection of a breeder's premises should be mandatory at some point, possibly prior to joining and/or a part of a more rigorous monitoring process. Almost all contributors had mentioned it as giving the BS more authority and validating it for the public who were looking to buy kittens. The conclusion was that the GCCF Breeder Scheme should be closer to the Kennel Club's breeder accreditation. Therefore, the discussion this session considered:-

- Setting standards - as breeders would need to know what was expected of them (the requirements of the AWA enhanced)
- Ensuring that any inspection was objective - measured against the standards set
- The inspectors - qualification, experience and training
- Funding and administration.

It was concluded that the sudden imposition of inspection, and the cost of it, could deter existing scheme members and it was preferable to extend and develop the BS, building on what existed, rather than make it less attractive. Therefore, aspirational levels were proposed (bronze, silver, gold) with bronze being the current scheme (with minor CoE adjustments) and inspection at the point of transition to higher levels.

It was noted that when cattery inspections were required by other organisations for a voluntary scheme (LOOF's was legal requirement organised by the government) inspection was carried out by the breeder's vet, arranged and paid for by the breeder. This had to be a possibility, but would not necessarily be independent and would probably be expensive. It was thought the idea would be to have suitably qualified people who would not be employed by GCCF, but participate on request for the cost of their time plus travelling expenses. (SM and EA were prepared to act in this capacity). It would then be possible to hold an occasional training seminar to ensure consistency in applying the standards. The breeder undergoing inspection would be expected to contribute, but there would also be financial support from GCCF.

In addition to inspection (of the cats, the cattery environment and cattery records) it was thought essential that breeders should be able to demonstrate knowledge of breeding & kitten care, welfare & hygiene for cattery management, genetics and GCCF requirements. AN had provided an outline of knowledge required and it was known that Juanita Sharp (awarded in this respect by ICC) had prepared information that could be used. It could be inserted into the BS at the appropriate levels and demonstrated via an online test. A knowledge of showing was thought essential as the BS was for hobby breeders, those breeding commercially should be licensed by their local authority. It was also concluded breeders at the higher levels should be checked on the information they were providing to buyers, particularly in respect of the mentoring for any kittens sold on the active register. They would be ensuring transfer of ownership as well.

The BS website had a fair number of mentions in the consultation. The KC's Accredited Breeder page and the Love Burmese site were both given as examples of a better style of presentation. The Google map wasn't much liked, and the method of searching for a specific breed needed improvement. Tick boxes that were all empty (rather than all completed at the outset) would be preferable, and possibly more information could be on the breeder cards.

It had also been requested that the feedback left by buyers should get back to breeders. The initial idea was that it should provide GCCF with an alert if several buyers raised the same concerns about a particular breeder, but it was agreed that it would be useful if breeders were told of problem areas so that they could improve. There had to be a balance between sharing information and protecting confidentiality for the buyer.

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**Recommendations and actions:**

**It was considered essential that the Board should establish a new group to be responsible for the management and further development of the Breeder Scheme**

It could include some members of GC but add others who were prepared to work on the administration and organisation that would be needed. SC was prepared to contribute, but not lead.

This group could also be responsible for scrutinising new applications, and monitoring and passing on feedback, in addition to the future development of the scheme.

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| <b>I. Presentation of information on the BS section of the meeting &amp; its outcomes to the Board</b>         | <b>SC</b>              |
| <b>II. Standards</b>   | <b>KJ</b>              |
| <b>III. Feedback from the meeting to all consulted, with a query on whether a tiered scheme would be liked</b> | <b>JL</b>              |
| <b>IV. Appraisal of the website, with discussion on improvements with Leon</b>                                 | <b>RF</b>              |
| <b>V. Leaflet preparation for those registering a cat active for the first time</b>                            | <b>JL/RF</b>           |
| <b>VI. Review of current Code of Ethics to update</b>  | <b>JL/SM &amp; all</b> |
| <b>VII. Adaptation of inspection criteria for GCCF</b>   | <b>SM</b>              |

There was discussion with the Agria representative about the age a cat could first bred from and be covered by 'breeder insurance', as there had been a complaint that this had been raised to 15 months. It was confirmed that it had reverted to 12 months, and agreed by all that this would be the GCCF recommendation. **INF**

b) White Cats & Deafness (2a)

There was some concern expressed that as RF was connected to the CWT she could be construed as having a financial interest when it came to applying for funding. It was confirmed that she was the CWT Secretary and not a Trustee and therefore did not participate in any voting. It was agreed RF should remain as the GCCF liaison for the project.

The project was briefly outlined to SW as a potential investment.

The partnership contract (non-disclosure agreement) was almost ready for signing. **INF**

c) Future Proofing of GEMS Codes (3)

It was queried whether there had been any liaison with FIFe and others to ensure a continued supply of letters and/or symbols for EMS use. JH responded that a discussion was planned to take place in June at the next WCC meeting.

**Action: liaison with FIFe at the WCC conference** **JH**

d) Oriental Whites & Foreign Whites (6b)

The recommendations had been put to the GCCF Board. They had been considered appropriate and it had been agreed that they should be passed back to the Oriental Joint BAC prior to recognition of the Oriental White SH. To date there had been no response from the BAC, but there was report of exhibitors not being happy that blue eyed white OSH could not be shown. However, there was agreement that not only was there insufficient difference between OSH w and SIA w, but also that there should not be encouragement for the breeding of more white cats with blue eyes because of the increased risk of deafness.

4. **Updated Terms of Reference**

SC reported that the terms of reference needed some updates and that it was a good time to prepare now as they would go before the Board in July. It was agreed that appropriate changes should be made, including some reference to welfare, and they would then be circulated to GC members for approval.

**Action: revision & circulation** **SC**

5. **Review of breeding and outcross policies**

Burmese:

The BAC had requested that the Board should allow access to the pedigrees of imported Burmese to check for foundation cats other than those currently on record, to see if the the gene pool had been widened by cats imported since 2010. Expert opinion (Chris Helps) was that this knowledge could be achieved more satisfactorily by DNA profile, but it was acknowledged that this was more costly. The Board had agreed to the request if accessing the pedigrees was practical and not too time consuming for the Office.

Abyssinian:

Continued refusal to participate in any discussion re outcrossing.

Ragdoll:

It was noted that the Ragoll BAC had initially included an outcross in its registration policy, but this had been discontinued. Advice would be given that it was sensible (and required to be compliant with the approved Outcrossing Policy) for the BAC to reinstate an outcross, though not necessarily PER, as previously.

Siamese, Balinese & Orientals

It was noted that the Balinese BAC had proposed to introduce outcrossing in its recent registration policy revision, but it had seemed as though any breed would be acceptable, without the detail on any necessary testing, or a defined method of breeding the outcrossed line back to BAL. The Board had queried the BAC's intentions so that advice could be given.

It was noted that SIA, OSH, OLH and BAL did not breed outside the combined gene pool at present. A recommendation to consider including foundation cats had been made to the SCJAC, but there was concern about the cats known as Thais in other registries as these could have new S E Asian lines, but also include outcrossing to breeds of other origins.

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Persian & British:

Neither had an outcross, but both were derived from domestic populations over many decades and broadly based.

**Actions: review to be made of all registration policies to be certain of those that did not include any outcross. an assessment to be made of those deemed to be at risk because of a restricted gene pool recognised by genetic studies the BACs of those breed to be given until 2020 to include a suitable outcross, or GC would propose to Council an amendment of their registration policies to include at least one, as allowed for by the rules. (Section1: 20a). To be drafted for the next agenda** **JL**

6. **List of breeds not recognised by the GCCF for use by SMs**

AN had revised an existing list with almost 50 breeds not currently recognised by GCCF, and SM had added two more that she knew were being bred in the UK. Some stood a good chance of recognition if it was applied for; others, particularly those based on a species outcross or unnatural morphology probably would not. There was also a group with nothing to preclude them except that their appearance was close to that of existing breeds.

It was agreed that a list should be sent to SMs so that they would know that none of these breeds could be on exhibition, as there should be no breed promotion until recognition was approved.

It was acknowledged that vets and judges would not always recognise a household pet that was a member of non-recognised breed. Exclusion from the show/being judged was at their discretion. Anyone with actual evidence that a cat was of non-recognised breed could send it to the Office for the attention of IC.

**Action: information to go to Duty Vets and into SM packs** **SM/JL**

\* It was noted that some show envelopes did not carry sufficient information to identify the cats and link it to its vetting-in card. The sex, DOB, and breed were necessary. It was thought to be a STAR related problem.

**Action: to be reported to the IT team** **SC**

7 **Ano-genital abnormalities in BSH**

Dr Moreland outlined the concerns raised in Edinburgh that this rare condition occurred more frequently in BSH (particularly tipped) than in the general population. It was therefore suspected that it was inherited and some research was being undertaken. DNA samples were required from affected cats and their normal parents and/or siblings.

Samples were being supplied from an affected chinchilla kitten.

There was discussion on whether the condition should be particularly looked for at shows. SM would inform vets, and suggested judges should also check, but it was acknowledged that with some cats this would be difficult. It was agreed that breeders should be made aware of the condition so that they could alert their own vets to the possibility if an abnormality was detected in a kitten. Some cats and kittens were severely affected, but not all. However, no affected cat was suitable to be used for breeding.

**Action: the BSGC to be informed & awareness raised generally** **SM**

8. **Mapping of the deafness gene in white cats**

The research was progressing and was supported by the AHT who were keen to collaborate. Candidate genes had been identified, with three very close to the white spotting gene (KIT). It was possible that there would be links with the investigations into deafness in dogs and this would be welcome.

Two institutions had given quotes for the required genome sequencing, with the one located in Hong Kong being the more cost effective (£12,500) by a considerable amount. It was hoped that cost could be covered by a CWT contribution, support from Agria and via the clubs and BACs.

**Action: it was hoped a summary could be presented in June Council** **KK/SC**

9. **Review of GEMS codes**

I. The latest GEMS Code paper was dated 20/8/18, but the one from the previous year was on the webs site. It included Karpati, but not amber in NFO as t1 and zolotoy in SIB as t2, as had been agreed. It was known that this had not yet been programmed into Phoenix either.

II. It was observed that the Karpati code (28) within the numerical list for tabby was not entirely fit for purpose as some Karpati were tabby. It was not known if the intention was to number them twice.

III. It was noted that the notes included on the sheet summarised GEMS policy adopted by the Board in November 2013, and not amended since that time. Therefore, an eye colour code was specified for white and high white cats unless these were colour pointed and this meant that the BSH harlequin required an eye colour code.

IV. From the policy document it was noted that Chinchillas had the eye colour code 64, but Cameos were not given 62, although this was designated. Also, the use of 21 was not being restricted to tabby pointed and high white cats. It was being used for those that should have a tabby pattern defined.

**Action: to be brought to the attention of the IT team and Office** **SC**

10. **Understanding Genetics Paper & Breeder Training**

AN had circulated a paper that gave information on cat genetics followed by some quizzes on the information. It offered an example of the type of content that could be prepared for the breeder training sheets mentioned in the morning session, and circulated in advance to GC members. It was thought that if used within the Breeder Scheme the genetics paper would probably feature at the highest level, though some of the easier sections could possibly be extracted. Breeders had to understand the 'toolkit' provided by an understanding of genetics. **INF**

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11. **99 Lives Project List - how to encourage support**

AN had circulated an update of the 99 Lives Cat Genome Sequencing Project. In 2017 25 cats associated with 16 different disease/trait projects had been submitted for whole genome sequencing, which was completed in March 2018. DNA variants known to cause significant problems to various genes were identified in each case. However, funding was now required to confirm the correct DNA variant for each, and more would then be required at the publication stage. It was agreed the paper and funding request should be publicised. It needed to be sent to the BACs of the breeds involved in studies and there was a suggestion that individual donations could be asked for at the checkout point when purchase were made via the GCCF website.

**Actions: circulation to the relevant BACs**  
**discussion with the IT team re a donation 'button'**

**JL**  
**SC**

12. **Update on Negative registers**

SC reported that after receiving a complaint that displaying the negative registers could be a breach of GDPR he had made checks with ICC. He had been give copies of the authorisation the charity had secured to ensure that all necessary permissions had been obtained. Therefore the registers were now accessible for viewing on the website once again. **INF**

13. **Feedback on welfare issues from the CFSG**

SC had circulated a CFSG paper that summarised the impact of Brexit on dogs and cats. It covered the movement (travel) of animals both pets and commercial, veterinary medicines and the veterinary workforce and pet food, as ingredients were sourced in the EU. If there was a deal and trading arrangements came into place there would be changes to the regulations doing a transition period. The difficulties would be significant for a 'no deal'. Codes of Practice for Cat Breeders and the Kitten Checklist were waiting an official launch. **INF**

14. **AOB - ADCH Conference**

SC reported he was giving a presentation on GCCF at the rehoming charity's conference. He was sure he would meet opposition to some of the pedigree breeds and to the purpose of pedigree breeding and practices used by breeders.