

GENETICS COMMITTEE MEETING – 5 December 2021
MEETING RECORD AND ACTION NOTES

At 10.10am.

Present: Steve Crow (chairing the meeting)
Rosemary Fisher, Dr Karen Kempself, Anthony Nichols, and Dr Sue Moreland (GCCF VO)
Jen Lacey (GCCF Committee Secretary)

1. **Co-option of Caroline Turner-Russell**

Caroline was currently in post as the business systems analyst for GCCF, responsible for ensuring all registrations operated smoothly on Phoenix and were updated when BACs so required and had Council approval.

It was agreed it was sensible to liaise directly with the Office when problems occurred which involved the application of a registration policy, and to have input from Caroline that could be directly discussed with GC when consideration had to be given to policy updates.

All present were agreed Caroline should be co-opted as a consultant to GC as allowed for by the committee's remit, and it had been ascertained in advance that she would be willing to do this if GC agreed.

Action: Contact with CTR to inform her of the decision

JL

2. **Apologies for absence:** Claire Lewis

INFO

3. **Action notes from the meeting of 20 June 2021 and any matters arising**

a) Meeting notes

SM had amended wording for the information on FIP (13). With this insertion the minutes were agreed.

Action: the amended version to go onto the website

RF

b) Matters arising

(a) **Summary of non-recognised breeds:**

This was now on the website. It was believed that the balance was correct. Recognition for several breeds not recognised by GCCF would be straightforward if an application for name recognition was made. There were some that would require veterinary input, and others could not be recognised under the terms of the Breeding Policy. Both of these categories were in place because of welfare issues and for this reason were within the remit of GC and VAC, not other groups.

(b) **Name recognition:**

The guidance notes were on the website published alongside the table of non-recognised breeds.

(c) **Registration policies**

- Russian - GC advice had been followed and a protocol for testing imports for blood group b, with carriers on the genetic register, had been added to the Russian registration policy. The wording needed fine tuning and the BAC had been advised by the Board to have further discussion with GC. The difficulty was that the BAC wished breeders to ascertain the blood group of the partner in advance of mating a cat on the genetic register to ensure there could be no accidental bb kittens by use of an unknown Ab stud.
- Persian - testing for agouti was now included in the registration policy.
- Ocicat & Aztec - these registration policies had been successfully amended and approved.

(d) **Breeding policies**

- It was thought the Chartreux Breeder Group was making a start, and the Lykoi had only begun to work towards Championship Status so there was no incentive yet.
- The Egyptian Mau had an unpublished policy, and other breeds checked had been found to have policies, with the exception of the Siberian (on the agenda) and Burmese.

(e) **Testing for red series non-agouti kittens with an agouti parent**

Several registration policies included this, but it had been established it was at BAC discretion and not dependent on GCCF rules or policy. Discussion had not yet begun with CTR. BAC reasoning needed to be established to see whether this could be followed on the computer system.

Action: discussion with CTR

SC

(f) **The mapping of deafness in white cats**

KK confirmed there had been no progress on this. She believed the project leader at Nottingham-Trent needed to make contact and she would give a reminder.

IM had been asked for the number of white cats being registered, but had not yet responded. This was important information to ascertain how quickly it would be possible to obtain samples and with a view to breeder contact. It was possible CTR would be able to access the data.

Action: contact with scientific colleagues

KK

discussion on active white cat numbers

SC

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(g) **FIP - potential cure**

SM reported that as of August 2021, Remdesivir was a legal and licensed product to treat FIP. Following research at Edinburgh owners could obtain it with support from their vets, but it remained expensive. This information had been given on the GCCF website via the VAC and the FIP booklet was being updated with the relevant information.

4. **GCCF Breeding Policy update**

SC presented several amendments to the GCCF Breeding Policy which he had made to update it for the new website. It had been circulated with the following indicated:

- o Removal of the forward as Prof Gruffydd-Jones had not supplied this.
- o 2.3 Insertion of the link to the non-recognised breeds lists as positioned on the new website.
- o 3.3 Novice breeders should not purchase kittens registered on the Genetic Register.
- o 4.6 It was agreed there was as yet no update to Robinsons Genetics for Cat Breeders, so it should remain as the cited reference.
- o 4.8 removal of the 50% reference for consistency. Elsewhere it was stated as 40%.
- o Page 23 - a brief FIP update
- o Page 31 an update on the mandatory requirement to test white cats to ensure bilateral hearing if they are to be on the active register.
- o Page 32 a new link required for the AI paper
- o Page 33 a new link required for Langford. Also, the addition of the information on the Langford 20% discount for club members.
- o Page 33 "Independent Inquiry into Dog Breeding" – Sir Patrick Bateson FRS. This to be on the website with a link provided.
- o Page 33 There should be a link to the GCCF inbreeding coefficient information as use of this should be standard. Breeders' Assistant and Pawpaws could both be recommended if there were one or more import lines in the pedigree, as they contained international lines to give information on the ancestors of imported cats and so enable calculation of their inbreeding coefficients.

It was agreed that these changes should be made and the photographs and other illustrations would be fixed into the text once the wording was finalised. GC members would then be asked to give final comment and any amendments. The intention was that the revised Breeding Policy would be ready to upload onto the new GCCF website early in 2022.

Action: circulation of finalised document

SC

5. **BAC Breeding Policies**

a) Siberian

It was thought the second version of the policy was well put together and there was a sufficient amount of detail. The BAC could be congratulated on a job well done.

AN commented that it was awaiting the final approval of the BAC.

The only recommendation of GC was that some photographs should be added, and as there were some excellent Siberians being shown at present it should not be difficult to find these.

Action: feedback to the Siberian BAC

JL

b) Chartreux

The secretary of the Chartreux Cat Club UK had sent three documents for comment. He was hoping to use some of the information within a breeding policy.

The first concerned the way the club organised to sell kittens. It was agreed that whilst this could work while everyone was in the club and co-operating together it could not be mandatory. There was no certainty that all breeders would comply and action could not be taken against those who chose not to participate.

It was noted that patella luxation was recommended in checks for general health as from information elsewhere on the internet it seemed that Chartreux cats had previously had a predisposition for this condition though now it was rarer.

SM disagreed with the statement about removing all kittens from breeding with a heart murmur as a significant proportion of these would be juvenile physiological murmurs which abate spontaneously as a kitten matures. It was agreed that the advice concerning FIV, FeLV and FCoV was reasonable. The GCCF FIP leaflet could be used for reference on FCoV). It was very difficult to maintain FCoV free catteries.

It seemed from the CFA site on Chartreux that HCM was occurring in some lines. In those circumstances the recommendation from the Association of Veterinary Cardiologists was to do annual scans starting from one year old. However, it was recognised that although this was best practice it would be difficult for some and expensive. However, it would be sensible to advise that regular scanning should be carried out and the results shared.

The Information on blood types was confusing because of the reference to 'b and the a rare form of b.' SM wanted to know more about this, so reference to a study would have been useful. The club would be notified that results of DNA testing could be recorded on the GCCF computer so where outcomes were known (both parents homozygous for the same blood group or hair-length) it was unnecessary to test the offspring.

As there seemed some evidence of PKD it could be recommended that imports should be tested.

Action: Letter to the Breeder Group

JL

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c) Snowshoe

SM queried which form of PRA was known to be present in Snowshoes. There was a recommendation to test within their Breeding Policy, but for this to be useful to breeders a type needed to be stated. It was thought probable it was rdAc which was known to be the most widespread type within Siamese and Colourpoint Shorthaired breeds, but this needed to be checked.

Action: liaison with the Snowshoe BAC

JL

NB Langford

It was noted that there was no longer the same contact with Langford Diagnostics as when Chris Helps headed the unit. It was thought appropriate to contact the new director (Phillippa Lait) formally and make an introduction of the GCCF with GC and the VAC. SM wanted data information on blood groups, particularly the rare form of b and whether it could be tested for, and also up to date disease testing statistics. JL needed to make a regular check that no Ocicats or Aztecs had been detected carrying GM2, HK or the Burmese head defect. It would also be good to know if the lab would continue to have a presence at the Supreme.

Draft of a letter

JL/SM

6. Registration Policies

a) Maine Coon

It was observed that the Maine Coon BAC had not revised its registration policy since 2004. In 2019 they had expressed an intention via their revised Breeding Policy to require SMA and Maine Coon HCM DNA testing for breeding cats. GC had advised that this could only be mandatory if included within the registration policy, but there had been no response to this or to other comment on the breeding Policy.

It was agreed that the Maine Coon BAC should have some discussion on the inclusion of testing within their registration policy for breeding cats and/or imports. If they needed information on a testing scheme, and/or including results already obtained onto the GCCF computer, there could be a (video-link) meeting with some GC members. This was now a matter that needed to be treated with some urgency.

Maine Coon polydactyly

The Office had raised the problem of polydactyly as Maine Coons occurring in the pedigrees of some imports were designated as polydactyl, but the BAC's intention as stated in the Breeding Policy was not to recognise these. It was acknowledged that the genes causing polydactyly were dominant, but there could be low expression so x-rays were suggested as a requirement for those with one or more polydactyl ancestors. However, as it was an advised requirement (and expensive) the chances were that some importers would disregard it.

It was agreed that as Polydactyl Maine Coons were a separate breed, recorded as such in TICA, and one that was not recognised by GCCF, these imports should not be registered currently. However, as there was now a DNA test for three forms of polydactyly offered by one commercial lab, if the Maine Coon BAC wished to allow polydactyls cats in the pedigrees of imports as new bloodlines were important, then it should include DNA testing for such imports within its registration policy. It could then be sure the condition was not present non-visibly to be carried into the GCCF gene pool.

Action: correspondence with the Maine Coon BAC and breed club on both points

JL

b) British Shorthair

There was some discussion on requiring PKD testing, for British SH cats to be registered as active, but it was thought this was now at low occurrence as many lines had been tested, although the GCCF register had not been used for recording results. It was agreed that the testing of imports onto the register for PKD and ALPS were both important as if the gene pool was low incidence or clear care should be taken that neither was introduced.

The second point also applied to the **British Longhair**

Action: Contact with both BACs

JL

c) Abyssinian

There was discussion on requiring PKDef testing for Abyssinians on the active register with the results to be recorded on the GCCF computer. As some clinical incidence was on record it was agreed that the Abyssinian BAC should be recommended to use mandatory testing to clear lines and to make it a requirement for imports,

Action: Contact with the Abyssinian BAC

JL

d) Burmese

It was reported that the Burmese BAC was considering incorporating an HK testing into its registration policy. A decision would be made at the next BAC meeting.

e) other

SM was populating a spreadsheet to establish DNA tests available for particular breeds to determine whether there were other recommendations that could be made. She would circulate this when it was complete.

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f) GCCF recognition of TIMBA

The International Maew Boran Association (based in Thailand)) had been recognised by GCCF following an application supported by Korat breeders who had obtained cats from Thailand. This was a registry for Thai breeds based on western style registries with records of ancestors kept and pedigrees given. It was supported by Martin Clutterbuck and operated using English.

It was considered this could be useful information for the Balinese, Burmese, Oriental, Siamese and Tonkinese BACs as it would be possible for them to obtain foundation cats with known pedigrees if these were required.

Action: Contact with the relevant BACs

JL

7. The funding of the Cat Welfare Trust for future studies.

It was agreed that the investigations into developing a DNA test for deafness in white cats should continue, although the project would be more expensive as the collecting of DNA would have to be funded as it was no longer available from AHT.

SM suggested that the use of low dose megestrol for oestrus control in breeding cats would be a useful study to provide evidence of the safe use of this by breeders. There was plenty of anecdotal evidence that use at low doses in anoestrus was safe with few side effects, but vets were very reluctant to prescribe for legal purchase of European supplies.

KK commented on the need to make a link with partners to fund studies, particularly for further investigation into brachycephalic syndrome, HCM and other genetic diseases.

Action: KK to contact colleagues, & SM to speak to a Bristol Vet Med school contact re megestrol research

8. Recent scientific papers

SC thanked KK for the work she had done on amending the information on genetics for the new GCCF website. It was agreed links to the 'Cat Genome' information would be useful.

9 Any other business

KK observed there was pressure from some on social media to align the GCCF Manx SOP more closely with the CFA one. This would result in a shortening of the back which would be undesirable for welfare reasons.

It was reiterated there remained an interest in the recognition of breeds derived from outcrosses to non-domestic cats.

It was suggested that the Chair should ascertain whether those who did not attend meetings or participate in email discussion still had an interest in retaining a place on the committee.

The meeting closed at 12.25pm.