

NZ Abyssinian and Somali Cat Club Show 2011

As seems to be the way these days, the number of exhibits at shows is declining. This phenomenon is not just seen in Australia; over the ditch, in New Zealand it is all too apparent as well. In August 2011, I was visiting New Zealand and popped in to the NZ Abyssinian and Somali Cat Club Championship Show held on the 6th of August at the Blockhouse Bay Community Centre in Auckland, eager to view a range of New Zealand bred Abyssinians and Somalis. Somehow, a few sneaky Aussie bred Abyssinians managed to feature too.

It was a four ring open judged show with just under fifty exhibits entered. Several other breeds apart from Abyssinians and Somalis were invited to take part including Burmese, British Shorthairs and Scottish Folds. There were twenty-one entire exhibits, four desexed adults and nine kittens as well as three desexed kittens. There was a section for domestic and companion cats too that consisted of eleven exhibits.

I was hoping to see a range of Abyssinian and Somali exhibits; however, there were only two Somali exhibits both bred by L. Foley. One was a five-month old tawny male kitten and the other a blue adult male named Champion Shyiragiralong Aurelius Azuli. The adult Somali cat had a longer style face, nice colour although the ticking did not seem very pronounced.



Kemenkat Fire Bird



Ankober Wyldefyre

In the kitten section there were three Abyssinians: two tawny kittens and one cinnamon, or sorrel as they are known in Aotearoa. The standout kitten for me was the six-month cinnamon female named Kemenkat Fire Bird, bred by Gail Warwick in Christchurch and now owned by Maureen Elder. Fire Bird is from Kemenkat Fire Hawk and Kemenkat Song Bird. She was very playful and had an expressive face with lovely golden eyes and a rich cinnamon coat. Ankober Wyldefyre was the star of the kittens, being Best of Breed in every ring and gaining two best in show wins as well as a third kitten in show. Wyldefyre is an eighth month old tawny female kitten bred by Thelma Blythen and owned by Maureen Elder. Both of her tawny parents were being exhibited at the show. Wyldefyre's sire is an Australian import, Gr Ch Osiris(v) One Cool Dude and was bred by Sue Shawn (formally Jentsch); the kitten's mother is Ch Ankober Blaze who was bred by Thelma. Currently, One Cool Dude is 15th Shorthair Cat of the Year in the 2011 New Zealand Cat Fancy Inc. awards. Wyldefyre is 11th Shorthair Kitten of the Year in the 2011 NZCF Inc. awards.

The adult section had a few more Abyssinian competitors with three tawny exhibits and two cinnamon exhibits. The remaining tawny exhibit not mentioned already is another Australian import also bred by Sue Shawn, Gold Dbl Gr Ch Osiris(V) Ace of Spades now owned by Maureen Elder. In

the Aby/Somali specialty ring of the show, Rhondda Watson judged him as Best Exhibit. In 2010, he was Best Shorthair Cat in the NZ Northern Region Awards. The cinnamon exhibits consisted of a female bred by Maureen and owned by Bev and Sharon Thomas. Her name is Ch Shan Ling Rosy and she was sired by the Australian import Ch Bairengu Teddy who is a Somali bred by Lin Veitch. The other cinnamon, Exodus Take On Me was bred by South Island breeders, S and C Johnstone, and has two Australian parents, Nile Magnum Opus and Nile Solveig. He is owned by D Thomas and A B FT who are Auckland based Abyssinian breeders.

The desexed section of the show only contained four cats, two of them Abyssinians, both tawny, a neuter and spay who are litter mates, Besha Tigger and Besha Jemma bred and owned by Bev and Sharon Thomas.

The Abyssinian exhibits at the show seemed to have a fairly Aussie influence; however, despite this connection I think the exhibits looked quite different from many Australian Abyssinians on the show bench, in particular those that I have seen in NSW and Victoria. In general, the cats seemed to be more robust looking, with long bodies that were generally thicker than those observed in NSW. From appearances, the body type seemed less muscular although this is hard to tell without holding them. Ear placement on the kittens' ears was balanced and the ears were of a medium size. Coat colour was good in terms of darkness with Kemenkat Fire Bird being a standout in terms of

depth of colour. I would say that the richness of coat colour we are observing in a large portion of Australian Abyssinians is deeper and the Australian cats seem to have glossier coats. I cannot really comment on undercoat but some of the Abyssinians at the show had definite leg barring. Eye size and colour was good and was mainly of the gold or yellow colouring.

At some NZCF cat shows a Breeder's Award of Merit may be awarded by a judge who thinks a particular exhibit is worthy of the award. One award may be given to an entire cat, one to an entire kitten and one to a desexed exhibit. The award is passed on to the breeder of the exhibit.

The show had a community feel and seemed to run smoothly. Like we are seeing in the cat show scene Australian-wide the numbers of exhibitors and exhibits are falling in New Zealand too. Along with this there does not seem to be an injection of younger people interested in taking up the challenge of breeding and showing cats, this particularly seemed evident at this small NZ show. It is almost inevitable that small clubs and shows will soon become a thing of the past. Maureen Elder mentioned that some breeders do not attend smaller shows in New Zealand due to not being able to gain as many Cat of the Year points when competing against fewer exhibits. It seems that different associations across NZ and Australia have different policies and rules in place for award systems to try to make the awarding of points fair; however, there always seems to be some aspect that is not covered.

Wendy Newton,
Swift Abyssinians

Feline Health Seminar 2011

For 2011, the annual Feline Health Seminar was held at the St. George Rowing Club in Arncliffe, Sydney on the 27th November. Once again, it was a very enjoyable and informative day with more than seventy people attending the seminar.

Doctor Barbara Fougere discussed natural remedies to maintain the health of cats and natural diet options. Doctor Jacqui Norris presented a recap on feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) as well discussing the latest research; she went on to break down the fact and fiction about Feline calicivirus. Professor Claire Wade, who is a very accomplished geneticist, spoke about the genetics and inbreeding of animals with a focus on pedigree lines.

Doctor Fougere was an interesting speaker who has a natural medicine practice in Sydney. She mentioned a variety of herbs and plants that can be used to help maintain the health of animals. Of particular interest was the use of natural Marshmallow, *Althea officinalis*, as an anti-inflammatory. The leaf and root of the plant can be used with hot water to make an infusion that is suitable for cats in a 1-2ml dose. She suggested it be used after desexing when some cats have a slight cough or aggravated throat lining from the tube. Chamomile is another well-known anti-inflammatory and is particularly good for the lining of the stomach. Several papers were published in 2010 about its benefits. Records of Marshmallow

and chamomile being used for medicinal purposes date back to the 1800s.

Doctor Fougere's warnings were not to use tea tree oil or concentrated essential oils on cats because of their phenolic compounds. Also be aware that Garlic is known to be a good antimicrobial, anti-worm and anti-fungal agent; however, garlic along with onions, leeks etc. may be harmful to cats if ingested as they may counter oxidation processes and cause inflammation.

Environmental enrichment is important for animals and there are several cat friendly plants that people are able to grow at home that are beneficial to cats and people such as catnip and lemon grass. Apparently, only 50-60% of cats respond to catnip. Lemon grass is an antimicrobial and anti-fungal agent that cats can chew on like cat grass although Doctor Fougere considered it better for cats with bladder issues as it does not contain oxalates. The crushed roots can be used to make lemon grass tea for humans while catnip can be used as a stomach calming agent in people.

Doctor Fougere's suggested pet medical chest would include: Lemon grass, Marshmallow, Calendula (Marigold family) for external use such as burns and conjunctivitis, Aloe plant for skin irritations, Manuka or medicinal honey for external use to heal wounds and to prevent infections, a probiotic, green lipped sea mussel dried extract for osteoarthritis and Rescue Remedy.

Another topic that fascinated the audience was Doctor Fougere's knowledge and experience with the implantation of gold wire or beads in animals to reduce inflammatory and bacterial conditions including rheumatoid arthritis. It is being used to reduce chronic gingivostomatitis in cats and Doctor Fougere performs the procedure in Sydney. It is thought the gold ions produced from the gold beads rubbing against each other suppress the inflammatory process. Studies have been carried out on dogs and it is used in humans in Denmark. A 2006 scientific paper by Jaeger, Larsen & Moe outlining the results of the pain relieving effect of gold beads in dogs was updated in 2010.

Doctor Jacqui Norris has spoken at previous Feline Health Seminars about feline infectious peritonitis (FIP). Currently, research into the use of PCR tests for FIP diagnosis is being completed. Doctor Norris does not feel these tests are adequate and still stresses that too many cats are misdiagnosed with FIP and are put to sleep unnecessarily. A scientific paper that has analysed the extent of FIP in the

Australian cat population is due for publication in early 2012. Doctor Norris briefly went through some of its content including some graphs indicating the number of recorded cases of FIP in various breeds as well as the expected number of cats to be affected by FIP for each breed using state companion animal databases for cat registrations. Abyssinians had a higher occurrence rate of FIP relative to the number of registered Abyssinians in Australia.

Doctor Norris discussed the signs and symptoms of Feline calicivirus responsible for upper respiratory infections. There are several different strains of the virus and each strain may produce varying symptoms. She spoke about the notable differences between it and Feline herpesvirus. The initial symptoms may seem similar; however, on closer inspection and as the virus takes over there are some significant differences. In terms of symptoms, corneal (eye) ulcers are seen in Feline herpesvirus and not in Feline calicivirus whereas mouth ulcers and limping may be seen in cases of Feline calicivirus. Keeping food bowls and surfaces clean is important as the virus may hang around on these surfaces for up to a month. A 5% bleach is the best surface cleaner for eradicating this virus. Long-term, the main differences are that Feline herpesvirus remains in the cat's system for life whereas in most cases Feline calicivirus will dissipate from the cat's system after a month or so.

Professor Claire Wade has worked on various gene sequencing projects in America and recently moved back to Australia. The title for Professor Claire Wade's talk was "Inbreeding or line breeding?". Inbreeding will show you what you have in your lines and highlight the disorders. She classifies inbreeding and line breeding as the same thing and warned breeders against using it in their breeding programs stating that no cat should appear twice on a cat's five generation pedigree for it to be a genetically sound breeding line. As we all know, this is sometimes difficult to achieve but perhaps something we should be striving towards. It is important to keep genetic lines diversified to prevent the many genetic disorders present from showing up in pedigree animals.

Overall, each speaker brought some new information to the table for me so it was well worthwhile attending. I look forward to the 2012 Feline Health Seminar.

Wendy Newton, Swift Abyssinians