

The Search for a Stud

Wendy Newton – Swift Abyssinians

2004 was the year that we set about finding an Abyssinian kitten, Cenglow Swift, to have as a pet. In 2005 we discovered the show scene and in 2006 we had the beginnings of a breeding program with the acquisition of our first entire female Abyssinian kitten, Nile Runcible Cat, known as Billie. So 2007 became the year that we searched for a stud.

We always seem to underestimate the time involved in any cat related activity and finding a stud was no different. Looking back we should have started looking for a male kitten to purchase in 2006 when we had decided to start breeding but hindsight is a wonderful thing especially when you are just new to the cat breeding scene.

We thought we would be able to use another breeder's stud cat with whom to mate Billie once she was old enough; this was not as easy as it seemed. We had had trouble finding an unrestricted stud from another cattery in Sydney to use and did not want to send Billie out of Sydney so when the opportunity to buy an adult stud cat arose we decided that it was our best option. We had recently moved to a larger property and now had room to house a stud cat. Having gone down so many avenues just trying to find a stud cat to use we decided that we needed to start our research on getting a kitten right away. We already knew that even if we found the right kitten today it would not be ready to be a working stud for many months to come.

I would assume that all breeders have criteria for the selection of a stud or any kitten they are planning on adding to their breeding program. And of course depending on what you already have in your cattery you will want certain qualities in the stud cat to be. We wanted a cat that would complement our queens and give us the opportunity to breed well coloured tawny and cinnamon kittens. Once Billie had had her first litter we knew that she

carried both the cinnamon and blue coat colour genes, enabling us to breed blue and fawn coloured kittens as well as the other two coat colours. Billie's litter was a turning point for us in that she had a fawn kitten, Swift Storm, whom we have kept and hope to breed from later this year. She has opened our eyes to the fawn colouring and created another wonderful learning curve for us but more importantly her arrival made us want a stud cat that would be able to give us all four colours.



Photo: Swift Storm

So the search continued for a tawny stud who could carry both recessive coat colour genes. Initially we approached one breeder from whom to purchase a male kitten as a future stud. But we soon realised that a single option may not be the quickest or most certain way to acquire the kitten you want. We did some Internet searching, spoke with some other breeders and then found a kitten that we thought could be the one. He wasn't in Sydney so we had not seen him; we did some research and eventually decided that we would have to pass up that opportunity even though he looked like a gorgeous boy. So it was back to the drawing board.

During 2007, a well coloured male kitten had come on the show scene and one that reminded me of Swift, our pet Abyssinian cat. This cat was Tijah Trail Blazer, bred by Suzanne Hatcher and owned by Carol Collins of Johari Abyssinians. We decided

that once Blazer was old enough to take on his stud cat duties we would like a kitten from him. Of course this meant more waiting, waiting for him to be old enough, waiting for the litter to be born, hoping that there would be a male kitten and waiting for it to develop to see if it would be suitable as a future stud cat. So we let the breeder know of our interest in a male kitten from a mating with him when the time arose.

The Coordinating Cat Council of Australia National Show in Melbourne was our next expedition where we met up with a lovely selection of cat breeders. We were lucky enough to visit Sue Jentsch from Osiris (V) Abyssinians and peruse her beautiful selection of kittens from her intensely coloured German import, Rififi of Wonderlove. It was here that we found out she had just mated her other cinnamon stud to one of her blue queens. If that mating produced a tawny kitten it would definitely carry both coat colour genes and give us more variety in the Abyssinian genes in our breeding program. So once again we sowed the seed of interest in acquiring a male kitten, depending on all the usual variables.

We had had our adult stud cat, Dakota, desexed during the year as we had decided it was time for him to enjoy the pet life. He had been living inside with us for a few weeks and we couldn't get over what a gorgeous, home-body of a cat he was. He wanted to take all our 'inside' cats under his wing although Swift did not think much of that. This made us wonder if perhaps having two stud cats could give us more than variety. Would it be possible to raise two stud cats who could keep each other company, mentally stimulate each other and provide more socialising options for cats that potentially may otherwise have a rather sterile and secluded lifestyle? Architecturally we had room to house two studs separated, with the option of running them together.

Back in Sydney Blazer had sired a lovely all male litter of kittens. Things were looking up for us; would there be a potential stud cat amongst them? As the kittens developed we visited several times to watch their progress. In the meantime the Osiris (V) litter was born but it looked as though both kittens were female. Once again we had hit a brick wall on that lead.

Blazer's kittens were gorgeous and when they were about eight weeks of age we decided on our potential stud boy. We were so excited to finally be making some progress in developing our breeding program. Then we received a call from Sue Jentsch telling us that there was a male kitten in the Osiris (V) litter after all. Once again we were over the moon because this kitten being a tawny from a cinnamon and blue mating would carry both recessive coat colour genes. Finally, it looked as though all our research and searching for a stud had paid off.



Photo: Johari All That Jazz

At the beginning of December 2007 Johari All That Jazz became part of Swift Abyssinians and tomorrow Osiris (V) Royal Doulton, a.k.a Willow, arrives from Melbourne. We can't wait especially after a year...or two of searching! Good luck to all those who take on the stud search this year.