

PAWS FOR EFFECT



*The PolyTrak
Newsletter
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Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

Premier Issue – Vol. 1 – No. 1

WELCOME!

This is our inaugural issue of *Paws for Effect*, an undertaking of PolyTrak to provide interesting information about the Maine Coon Polydactyl. Officially PolyTrak was born about 9 months ago, but we have been organizing and collecting data for a year now. For those of you that have been counting digits and filling out paperwork, it may have seemed like you were sending in information to a black hole. Rest assured this information has been logged, compiled and entered into our website database. We have been ironing out the kinks and streamlining our procedures over time, so that today it is a much smoother operation than it was in the beginning. Also, in the beginning we did not have enough data to be really convincing on any trends that we observed, but now, with an increasing number of cats and kittens listed, we can begin to see interesting figures regarding Polydactylism. It is also at this point that we can begin to start sharing with you and the world, the fruits of our (and your) labour.

So sit back and read on. We hope you enjoy these issues of *Paws for Effect*. The first issue is dedicated primarily to who and what is PolyTrak, but as time progresses we will delve into the “nuts and bolts” of PolyTrak. This of course is the digit configuration, expressions of polydactyly and all the interesting things that make the Maine Coon Polydactyl, a cat to behold. 2007 will be the year of the *Poly!*



WHAT IS POLYTRAK?

In its simplest form PolyTrak is a collection service for any and all information regarding the Maine Coon Polydactyl. We collect information about cats and kittens related to MC Polydactyls. In addition we are expanding all the time to include information

and articles, definitions, pictures and many other aspects of polydactylism. You will notice the PolyTrak website is constantly changing, with hardly a week going by without a couple changes and additions.

There are many different areas or sections of PolyTrak, each covering a different aspect of polydactyl cats. We would like to briefly mention some of the major sections of PolyTrak, so that it will become easier for you to browse through our site or find something specific that you are looking for.

THE DATABASE

This is the actual file that stores all the information or details about each individual cat. The term database can instill fear into a lot of us that have a vision of some horribly complicated scientific report that is hard to read and even harder to understand. If you have not stopped by the PolyTrak website recently (<http://www.polytrak.net>) I think you will find that it is relatively easy to surf through the listings and view things in an easy to understand format. We also have the spreadsheet and more technical listings for those that are interested in data comparison and analysis. The listings are basically separated into 3 distinct sections. These are called 1.Litter Tracking, 2.Fanciers and 3.Heritage.

In this issue we will discuss the litter tracking section of the database. This was the original and largest section of PolyTrak. This is where we store information about litters of kittens born from at least one polydactyl Maine Coon parent. This was also the impetus for the founding of PolyTrak and its data collection. Sometimes it seems a little befuddling to understand what is needed to submit information to this portion of the database. Just keep in mind that we are collecting information about polydactyl kitten litters of registered Maine Coon parents. The research community, to further understand the expression of polydactyl (Pd) gene, will use this information, once it is collected. With this thought in mind, it is easier to see what information we collect and why.



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If you have a litter of Maine Coon kittens and one or both of the parents were polydactyl then the chances are very good at least one of the kittens will be polydactyl. Although there are cases where a litter from a poly parent will contain no polydactyl kittens. Since researchers are interested in litters and how each kitten compares to its littermates, we ask for information on all kittens in the litter, including the non-polys. We then ask questions about the litter in general, such as date, of birth, the Sire and Dam, as well as other general information. Next we request specific information about each kitten, poly or non-poly. This includes total digits on each paw, the digit configuration, colour and other pertinent data.

Now that we know this information about the litter and kitten, we have to tie this information back to a registered sire and dam. If the parents are not already listed in PolyTrak, we request that you fill out a Sire or Dam form prior to submitting the litter information. Now we know about the litter and the parents, the only remaining item is where did these parents and litter come from? This, of course is the Cattery. Actually this is the first form we ask for, if you are a new submitter and not already listed in PolyTrak.

This may sound like a mountain of information and hours of work to submit a litter. However, it is not nearly as complicated and time consuming as it sounds. If you have submitted previously, your Cattery is already listed and there is no need to go through it again. If the Sire and Dam were previously submitted then there is no need for these forms either. This leaves just the litter/kitten form to complete. If you had a litter of 6 kittens, for example, and 3 of them were polys and 3 of them were non-polys, then it is fairly short procedure. We don't need know to total digits and digit configuration of the non-polys, since that is standard the world around. In this case, if the information about the kittens is at hand, the procedure would probably take 10 minutes or less. The only other items to consider are pictures. Although not mandatory, we, and the PolyTrak audience enjoy seeing pictures of these great Maine Coon kittens. In many cases we can

use pictures from web sources, with your permission. Therefore this will not take up a great amount of time either.

As you can see, it may seem complicated and time consuming at first glance, but in reality it is really a fairly simple procedure. Keep in mind also we are available to help you at any time, if you have questions or problems. Just send an email to us at info@polytrak.net or email anyone one of us individually with your concerns. We are happy to assist. To submit information to this section of the database, just visit our website and click on the "submit" button, or send us an email requesting the forms be sent to you by email. If you are not submitting information, just visit our website and see the information already contained in the database or browse through the various sections of PolyTrak. We feel that you will find it to be an enjoyable and enlightening experience. There is much we have learned about the MC Polys and so much more to discover. We can continue to make these discoveries with your support and information.

In future issues of *Paws for Effect* we will talk more of the other sections of the database and the many additional areas of the PolyTrak website. We would also like to make a request for help in producing this newsletter. We could use a "volunteer" editor to assemble the articles and prepare the newsletter. If you are able to help us then we would appreciate a shout at ptnewsletter@polytrak.net.



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HOW TO RECEIVE OUR NEWSLETTER

Initially PolyTrak is sending *Paws for Effect* to breeders and fanciers who have submitted to our database. If you desire to be removed from the mailing list you may visit our website to have your name removed from our mailing list. Click on the “Newsletter” button on the main menu. Also, if you prefer, you can just send us an email at ptnewsletter@polytrak.net requesting to be removed. If you know of someone that would like to be added to the Newsletter mailing you may add an address the same way.

We always welcome your comments and suggestions about this Newsletter or PolyTrak in general. We have received many good suggestions and comments over the past months. We value your opinions and thoughts to make this undertaking even better. It is the participation of all that have brought us to where we are today. Thank you and we would love to hear from you.



WHO IS POLYTRAK?

The short answer is YOU! The participation of breeders, fanciers, poly-lovers everywhere in the world are the real PolyTrak. However there are 4 of us with well-worn keyboards who do the

day to day work of collecting data and presenting it on the website. There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes in correspondence, checking submissions, building web pages and studying articles to keep current on the latest news in the world of polydactylism. We are all volunteers who work together by computer on a daily basis to make the website happen. We are not a formal group but we have unofficially called ourselves “The PolyTrak Staff”. Our website, web hosting and domain name were all graciously donated to us and now, we as volunteers work to keep everything going. We would like to take a moment to introduce ourselves.



Hi, I am Vonne Bode and I live in Holland. My interest for the Maine Coon started 5.5 years ago when my first MC, Dizzy, entered my life. Since then my interest for the breed has gone far beyond a fanciers interest. In Syracuse I got the privilege to show some MC polys in the TICA New Traits. Back here I couldn't get one of them out of my head. Needles to say ... 3 months later Silverfoot P came to live with me:). Since then I have shown “Sil” in TICA New Traits several times to promote the MC polys. The Litter Tracking is my main working area within Polytrak. Together with Ken I go through the new submissions and check these for incomplete data, errors or typos. Recently I have also started to work on poly kitten statistics. Polytrak also involves a lot of e-mailing in which we discuss things like: toe definitions, the definition of polydactyl, changes in the submission forms, website development and plans for the far and near future. And of course it also means contacting breeders about their (incomplete) data or reminding them to submit;-). As the data comes in, we are learning more and more each day. This means we have to fine-tune things constantly. But I love it and I find all data super interesting. And ...we are doing something that has never been done before on a large scale, therefore Polytrak is unique:)). If you have questions regarding submitting data to Polytrak you can always contact me at this address: data.coordinator@polytrak.net.



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Hi I am Kitty Chandler and I live in North West Montana. I fell in love with the Maine Coon Cats in the 90s and started breeding Maine Coons in 1997. I had been searching for a Maine Coon Poly for years. Finally I found a handsome guy in 2005, Audie P. and he captured my heart. My first litter of Polys was born this year and it was amazing. My primary function at PolyTrak is Poly Heritage (line chasing) I find it is more rewarding finding the Polys in the lines of the Maine Coons dating back years, than it is to find my own ancestries. It takes a lot of patience and organization to do. Ken has been a big help in finally getting me started on the list of polys it can be overwhelming at times. It is very rewarding and interesting to trace together over 100 related Polys. If you have any poly pedigrees, information or pictures for the heritage section please contact me at kitty@glaciercoons.com.



Hi, I am Deb Brown and I live in Canada with Ken and Justin and our animals. We have 5 wonderful Maine Coons, 3 of which are polys, and a crazy cocker spaniel. Although we are not breeders we are Fanciers with a passion for the polys. When we have the opportunity we show our cats. It is a wonderful experience. We have met so many great people at home and around the world and made many new friends along the way. My main focus is with the Fanciers Database, but I work behind the scenes with PolyTrak. The Litter Tracking and Heritage databases deal with the breeder cats past and present and I felt an area should be created for the great alters that grace our homes also. This led to the creation of the Fanciers Database, a place for all great Maine Coon Polys to shine. Whether they were breeders in the past or cherished family members, this is their showcase. Anyone can submit Maine Coon Polys to the Fanciers Database. Please send your great cat & kitten pictures to poly.fancier@polytrak.net. I would love to show the world your wonderful Maine Coon Polydactyl!



I am Ken Bussard and I live in Canada also. My day-to-day work is in computers with my business. I began learning about and showing MC Polys 2-1/2 years ago. I am fascinated with the polydactyl cat and the genetics involved. I do some of the web site development for PolyTrak and work with the submissions. Everyday is a learning experience and I enjoy every minute of working with the breeders, fanciers and all who contribute to PolyTrak. My personal goal is to log as many of the great MC Polys around the world as possible, so that Science and the public will have access to this information for years down the road. We can't predict where we are going until we know where we have been. You can contact me personally anytime at PolyTrak at ken.b@polytrak.net.

We hope that you have enjoyed this issue of *Paws for Effect*. Next month we will discuss more areas of PolyTrak and begin to share some of the trends that we are beginning to notice from the data submitted. We will also be discussing some of the details of polydactylism as we see it. If you have any questions please address them to us and we may be able to answer in this newsletter so that all may see. By the way, there are a couple of pictures of pretty nice looking poly cats in this issue. I wonder who they are??? I would guess that the answer, or at least strong hints are in this newsletter.

BYE FOR NOW!

