

PAWS FOR EFFECT



*The PolyTrak
Newsletter
February 2007*

Volume 1 - Number 2

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Maine Coon Polydactyl



International Database



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THANK YOU!

Our inaugural issue of *Paws for Effect*, was a great success, judging by the comments received from many of you. We have received approximately a 25% increase in requests to be added to the mailings. Most of the new people that are receiving this issue by email may not have seen the inaugural issue. For those that would like to read over the first issue, a copy of it is posted on our Website. Just go to <http://www.polytrak.net> and click on the button marked Newsletter.

At the top of the page you will see a link to archived issues of *Paws for Effect*. It is our intention to post previous issues of *Paws for Effect* sometime after the mailing of the Issue. Also, there is a link on this page for answers to

...Subscriptions are up 25%.

puzzles or quizzes. Last month we asked if you knew the names of the cats listed in some of the pictures in the issue. Well if you were unable to tell, the answers are now there. We will continue to do this in some of our issues of *Paws for Effect*. We will wait a couple of weeks before posting the answers. We don't want you cheating. (lol)



A BUSY PLACE

(by Ken Bussard)

PolyTrak is one busy place. I don't think that we had any idea when this project began, the amount of interest and visitors that would take advantage of what the staff and the breeders, historians and fanciers have to offer on this site. Since March of last year the servers have processed over 2.8 million successful requests and even a few that were not successful. That represents over 38 gigabytes (billion bytes) of data. PolyTrak's original (and still is) mission is to provide information and analysis of the Polydactyl Maine Coon for the scientific research community and breeders around the world.

One thing we have noticed is a substantial increase in the number of visitors from the research, academic and medical communities. Later in this newsletter you will read a fascinating story of a young lady in California that is attempting to win a scholarship by doing research on ailments that might be associated with Polydactylism. With the assistance of Kitty from PolyTrak and other breeders and resources, she has done a great job in research and investigation. Personally and on the behalf of PolyTrak and its supporters we applaud her efforts. A project like this is another way that information on Polydactylism in Maine Coons is a vital contribution to further knowledge of the trait. We have kept a list for just the past 30 days of visitors to our site that is associated with the academic and scientific community. It is quite an impressive list compiled from December 28, 2006 to January 27, 2006:

Austria - University of Vienna *** United States - New Jersey - Edison - Southern Regional Medical Center *** United States - Massachusetts - Worcester - University Of Massachusetts Medical Center *** United States - Oklahoma - Stillwater - Oklahoma State University *** United States - Texas - Humble - Northeast Medical Center Hospital *** United States - Georgia - Atlanta - Georgia Public Library Service *** United States - Tennessee - Memphis - University Of Tennessee *** United States - California - Los Angeles - Activision Publishing Inc *** United States - District Of Columbia - Washington - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency *** United States - Michigan - St. Clair Shores - Macomb Intermediate School District *** United States - Texas - Austin - University Of Texas At Austin *** United States - California - Palo Alto - Stanford University Network *** Canada - Ontario - Hamilton - Mohawk College Of Applied Arts And Technology *** United States - Georgia - Atlanta - Georgia Institute Of Technology *** Canada - British Columbia - Victoria - University Of Victoria *** United States - North Carolina Research And Education Network

Although we at PolyTrak are quite proud of this project, we are well aware that most of this would not be possible without the submissions and participation of the breeders, fanciers and historians that have contributed so much to PolyTrak. Give yourself a large pat on the back and accept our thanks for your efforts. Keep the information and ideas coming in. It can only get better!



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Polytrak Fanciers Database ... and whom it is for?

(by Deb Brown)

What is a cat fancier? Anyone that is owned by a cat can be considered a fancier. Then it goes in different degrees. At the top are the breeders and show people, then show people, then cat lovers. That just about covers all the fanciers.

Most cat lovers have never heard of the cat fancy and probably never will. Most will have domestic cats and some will have pedigree cats and be very content in loving them. The people that decide to have pedigree cats will be quite content to have the breed of their choice living like royalty in their homes. They will have done their homework and found a breeder and know something about their breed.

... and WOW... look at those toes!

For the sake of this article we will deal with the Maine Coon Polydactyl. Sometimes people discover the Maine Coon by accident. See one at a friend's home, a picture in a magazine or paper or a chance meeting at a cat show. One way or the other they discover the Maine Coon is the cat for them. While doing their homework they will discover the Maine Coon Polydactyl and WOW... look at those toes! This will change the course of thinking for some and they will realize that they would like to have this living piece of history in their homes. Now the hunt is on and the learning begins. Soon they will find the cat of their dreams and before long the new family member will grace their home.

The next stage of fancier depends on the people. For the most part they are now content to have their cat and live happily every after. But some will ask more questions from the breeder and start to develop an in depth interest. This will lead to looking at other Maine Coon Polys and possibly learning more about the history and the breed. It is like one salted peanut ... you need more. Usually these fanciers will become supporters of the breed and promote the wonderful characteristics of the

poly. Now comes a stage that is one step further. Not only do the new owners of these great cats have them but now want to show them. They will work hard and learn great deal and finally enter their first cat show. They will enter some cat associations as House Hold Pets or in New Traits classes and the fun begins.

This is the non-breeding side of cat fanciers. Most websites for these great cats are the Maine Coon Breeders that have decided to take up the challenge to protect and promote the polys. With out these people the poly would be lost. Some of their kittens will go on to be breeders but for the most part they will be cherished pets.

This led to the thought of the Fanciers Database. For all the great MC Poly pets, show alters and retired breeders; this is their showcase. Most cat fanciers do not have websites. The Fanciers Database is their medium to show these great cats to the world. So you don't need a cattery, or a website, or to be a show person for your poly to be here. Just the love of the Maine Coon Polydactyl and a picture is the only requirement. 😊 Welcome to PolyTrak and the Fanciers Database!

... With out these people the poly would be lost.



"Of all God's creatures, there is only one that cannot be made slave of the leash. That one is the cat. If man could be crossed with the cat it would improve the man, but it would deteriorate the cat."

***** Mark Twain



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DISPELL ONE MYTH AND THEY WILL CREATE MORE!

(by Vonne Bode)

The set up for the Database was to collect data on the toes of MC poly kittens. These could be poly kittens from non-poly x poly or a poly x poly mating. By collecting this data we would be able to dispel some myths and worries that the cat fancy seems to have concerning the polys.

An example is the amount of toes. Some MC breeders and judges think that accepting these extra toes means that people will only try to breed for more toes on one foot. That is why they advise us to set up a maximum of toes in a future standard and breed poly x non-poly.



It is too bad they weren't that concerned when they accepted the breeds that now really do have defined problems with ears, breathing, spines and etc. Then there was the advice to keep the trait heterozygoot by breeding non-poly x poly. This is because they're afraid it will give too many

... but only the harmless Pd gene...

toes on the paws or otherwise will cause other problems and deformities. A lot of breeders working with MC polys have been breeding with this poly x non-poly rule too. If they were asked why, they said that if trouble with the feet would come up, it would be easier to trace back since only one parent would be poly. Was this precaution based on bad experiences when breeding poly x poly? I believe not! To me it looks like it was done to keep the MC breeding world satisfied or maybe...the MC breeders working with polys weren't 100% sure if working

with polys was really that harmless? By choosing to breed poly x non poly as a rule, it really has given the MC breeders that are against breeding with polys another reason to think something is indeed wrong. Because why breed only poly x non-poly if polydactyl pd gene is, as they say, so harmless?

She told us nobody in the cat fancy knows about this

If we believe the statements from geneticist Dr. S. Pflueger, that within the MC breed there's no RH gene, but only the harmless Pd gene and that there's an upper limit to the toes a cat can have, then there's no reason to not breed poly x poly...is there? Well this is something we can find out by collecting data on poly x poly breeding. Of course here we depend on the breeders, to submit their info to Polytrak!!

Not that long ago the Pixie Bob, including the polydactyl variation, was accepted within TICA. Polydactyl is accepted within this breed based on it being part of this cat's heritage. Sounds familiar? 😊 If this reason satisfied the committees, board and voters within TICA, I see no reason why the Maine Coon polydactyl couldn't for the same reason. And since they have already accepted polydactyly within the Pixie Bob, there really is no reason why we should defend ourselves against the myths. And they know that too. But it seems that after each time we have an answer that dispels a worry, someone else comes up with something new to worry about. 😊 One of the judges warned of the outward turn of the foot and legs, because this could cause too much pressure on the shoulder blades, making them break at old age (at least that's what I understood from her story about her cat). She claimed the Pixie Bobs have their feet straight even with more toes. Luckily I found a picture of a mitten TICA CH Pixie Bob female. She has her paw and leg also slightly turned outward, which, to me, is logical when having thumbs. In rest those paws and legs are normally also perfectly straight, pointing out forward. She told us nobody in the cat fancy knows about this, but the horse people do and are well aware of this problem. Well lucky



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(cont...)

enough we have horse breeders on the MCPI list and one of them has dispelled this myth too;-). You can't compare heavy horses with cats can you? It seems a lot of people in the cat fancy are trying really hard to talk us out of getting the MC polydactyl accepted. Well they have to try harder! 😊 (Part II Next Month)

The mathematical probability of a common cat doing exactly as it pleases is the one scientific absolute in the world. - Lynn M. Osband

CALIFORNIA STUDENT RESEARCHES POLYDACTYLISM

(by Traci Merrill)

Are polydactyl cats or felines with more than 5 toes, at higher risk for medical problems? Many people would read this question and think, what is a polydactyl cat? To Shannon, an 8th grade student at a local San Diego middle school and a recent first place winner in the San Diego Science Fair, this has been her passion for the past five months.



Shannon began her interest in science in the 6th grade. Her science teacher had always said science was fun and encouraged students to be involved in any way possible. That same year, Dr. Anne Sturz took Shannon on a "behind the scenes" tour of the University of San Diego Shiley Center for Science and Technology. She was shown: labs, classrooms and all the requirements to be a marine biologist, Shannon's dream. After the USD tour Shannon

promptly signed up for the *Expanding Your Horizon's* conference and registered for all areas that would offer her additional information on marine biology. Following EYH she went out to participate in the *World Water Monitoring Day*. In 7th grade she won an essay contest

... field trip to work with scientists at Biogen Idec

allowing her to attend a daylong field trip to work with scientists at Biogen Idec in La

Jolla. By the end of the school year, Shannon knew she needed to pursue her dream to be a scientist.

In 8th grade, and with high enough grades to enter the Science Fair competition, Shannon decided she wanted to study polydactyl cats. Having lived with Arthur, her multi-toed cat with asthma all her life, she wanted to know what the cause was. She gathered information from many people including Dr. Leslie A. Lyons from the U.C. Davis School of Veterinary

Her project has earned first place in two science fairs.

Medicine; Dr. Kim Dembinski at the Carmel Mountain Ranch Veterinary Hospital; Kitty at Poly Trak; Friends of

Cats Shelter and numerous cat owners and breeders.

Once the research was gathered she started the task of identifying what it all meant. Were polydactyl cats truly at higher risk for medical problems versus the normal toed feline?

"The health results of the normal toed group of cats tended to go different ways, with five of the cats having medical problems and 20 of them being in perfect condition. The medical conditions that affected five of the cats were a urinary tract infection, skin cancer on the ears, resulting in removal of the ears, diabetes, cancer in the sinus cavities and upper respiratory problems. Besides these five cats with medical problems the other 20 normal toed cats are in perfect condition with good health."

"Like the normal footed cats, the polydactyl cats medical problems, had a mixture of good and bad health. Out of 25 cats, only four of them had a medical problem. These medical



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(cont...)

problems included heart disease, twisted front legs and two cases of asthma. Besides the four cats that had medical problems, the other 21 were in good condition with great health.” At this point Shannon realized how much work it takes to be a good researcher and that many attempts need to be made to answer even the simplest of questions. The value of the experiences she has had with Expanding Your Horizons, Biogen Idec, University of San Diego and various scientists has given her the passion and understanding of what it takes to work in the science field. All the effort she has undertaken in Advanced Math and Advanced Science is paying off. Her project has earned first place in two science fairs and she is moving on to the next round of the San Diego Regional Science Fair Competition. Her personal goal is to win the \$1,000 scholarship, which will be awarded to the winner.



SOLVE ANOTHER POLYDACTYL MYSTERY!

How can you look at a picture of one of the great Maine Coon Polydactyl cats or kittens that are listed on PolyTrak if the picture is in pieces? That's easy! Just head for PolyTrak (<http://www.polytrak.net>) and check out our new jigsaw puzzle of a featured poly. And below the puzzle is a detail listing of the cat in the puzzle. Great relaxation and frustration remover (or frustration enhancer - depending on how skilled you are) after a hard day with litter boxes and can openers. You will find the "Click Here" link for the puzzle on the main page at the top of the news items, or you may find it also at "Info-Article" button and select: V. Relax and enjoy!. Puzzles will be changed from time-to-time so check back often.



DO YOU REALLY UNDERSTAND THOSE POLY FEET?

Have a look at these footprints in the snow – Do you see:

- A. Footprints in the snow from a poly cat with 5 toes on each foot
- B. Footprints in the snow from a cat with at least 4 toes and a thumb on each paw
- C. Footprints in the snow from a cat with 5 digits on each paws and maybe more
- D. A, B and C are all right
- E. None of the above answers are right, these are just prints of a standard footed cat

Have a look at the picture with the footprints again. How many dewclaws did this cat have?

- A. Two, one for each paw
- B. Three
- C. At least one
- D. None of the above

We hope that you have enjoyed this issue of *Paws for Effect*. Again this month there are some unidentified pictures and a poly-print quiz. The answers will be on the PolyTrak website in a couple of weeks if you would like to know the answers. You may also use the Newsletter section of PolyTrak to add new subscriptions or to be removed. As they say in the movies: "That's a WRAP!"

BYE FOR NOW!

