

PAWS FOR EFFECT



*The PolyTrak
Newsletter
March 2007*

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Maine Coon Polyductyl



International Database



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3,000,000!

PolyTrak reached another milestone short time back. On February 17th, early in the evening on a cold snowy night (at least in this author's neck of the woods) PolyTrak added another million successful requests. This brings PolyTrak's total to three million since PolyTrak went online March 28th, 2006. In our on-going shameless self-promotion, we are proud of our

another million requests

efforts and equally thankful to all of the breeders, fanciers and contributors that have

provided information and done so much for PolyTrak. Likewise we thank the visitors to our website, which now total well over 4000 different, or unique, visitors as well as the readers of this publication. Thank you for your efforts and contributions!



BEHIND THE SCENES

(PART 2 – By Vonne Bode)

As mentioned last month, the Polytrak database is partly a tool to dispel some of the myths about polydactyly that have put the Maine Coon poly in a bad light. But of course, not only that, it's also there to find out more about polydactyly. For example the relation between gender and poly, toe configuration of the parents and offspring or to get an idea of all possible forms and combinations on the polydactyl feet.

So what info to ask the submitters? During our discussion about what info to collect, we decided that the more info we could get on the cats now, the better. It would be much

harder to go after the data at a later time. Researchers probably won't be interested in all the info we collect. But who knows...it might give us even more insight about polydactyly in the end. 😊

One thing we noticed in the beginning was that a lot of breeders, although they adored those poly feet, so far had never looked into them that much nor had they kept records on them. They didn't seem to be aware of when to call an extra digit a thumb, toe or dewclaw. What was a thumb for one breeder would be a long dewclaw for the other.

So one of the first important things for us to do was to make sure we all meant the same thing when talking about those poly feet. 😊

standardized digit definitions were born

It was necessary to come up with some structure... So both Ken and I dove into

whatever we could find on the feline paw. This was also our opportunity to learn more about these poly feet. 😊 We were pretty excited to see there were indeed ways to distinguish the different digits from each other. And so the Polytrak standardized digit definitions were born.

It was time to work on the submission forms now. In the beginning we sent out some proof Word submission forms, so that people at least could submit something. We were afraid that we would otherwise lose all the data on the many poly litters that were announced on the list during that time. And this way we also had a bit more time for the online submission forms, meaning improving the questions, looking for typos, making sure everyone would be able to submit the info online and for us to receive the data once the submission was completed. So a lot of testing had to be done and Ken had to learn PHP and MySQL, and make a website that would work for all browsers. 😊



After we went online and the first data was coming in, we thought it would be nice if



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the submitter would receive a copy of the submitted data also. So a nice looking “pdf” file with the entered data and a Polytrak registered number on it was created. Once sent, it was up to the submitter to check it for possible errors / typos and inform us. We added the “Thank you” screen that would show up when someone had submitted a form. After this...oh well...it went on and on this way almost every week. 😊

Each time we found something new to improve or add and we still continue to do so. So this was the set up, but what happens after you hit the submit button online? Is your data then automatically transferred and displayed on the Polytrak website? Find out more about this next month. So far I’m very proud of the Polytrak database and all the data we’ve received so far. And I’m also very pleased to see that most of you with polys are now looking more into those feet and eager to learn more about digits. 😊



CORRECTION

In our February Issue of *Paws for Effect* we inadvertently misspelled the author of one of our articles regarding a great young lady in her quest to study polydactylism. Traci Merrill wrote the article. We apologize for the error and rest assured the editor of that article was given a new keyboard and sentenced to 6 months litter box duty. 😊 We do look forward to hearing more and following the pursuits and accomplishments of Shannon.

Everything I know I learned from my cat: When you're hungry, eat. When you're tired, nap in a sunbeam. When you go to the vet's, pee on your owner. - Gary Smith



Heritage: Past - Present - Future

(By Kitty Chandler)

I like to think and problem solve. While we try to overcome the obstacles of Polys being recognized in the show ring I noticed the opposition would bring up it was speculative about Polys being a part of the Maine Coon Cat's heritage or it was just a fad and not many out there today. I decided I would work on trying to prove this otherwise. I thought for a while about how do I go about this? I had a vision of a huge pedigree form of Polys being traced in most lines today. Where do I start though? I read articles with Maine Coon Poly names and have gone from there to searching through the Pawpeds databases and searching web pages of Poly breeders and contacting breeders. Now I had a list and where to go with that? I started with one cat and worked forward as far as possible. There over a 100 descendents from Grey Luv Perry, a foundation Maine Coon Poly, and those are just the ones found on the web. It is just the tip of the iceberg and not everyone sends in his or her pedigrees to Pawpeds, especially pet owners. Back when Grey Luv Perry was a

There are over a 100 descendents from Grey Luv Perry

kitten there was no Internet or database. It takes a lot of patience and no distractions to keep looking through the pedigrees. I have a list of names to continue on with this research. I might not know if they were 2 or 4 wheel drives or their toe count, but they are Polys. Grey Luv Perry descendents are traced to today's cats and will be traced to future generations. They are in our show lines; some even have titles as no one noticed the extra toes. It is obvious that the Polys are a big part of the Maine Coon Cat heritage. When the first standard was written by the Maine Coon Cat Fanciers Association, they



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poly feet were included, but later had enough problems of a “barn cat” in the show ring that they dropped the poly feet from the standard. Today the Pixie Bob from Pacific Northwest of the USA has been accepted by TICA with their Poly feet that are part of their heritage. The original Polys seem to have come across from South England on the boats that came to the USA. My huge pedigree will take a while to complete but will be a great step for the heritage of our beloved Maine Coon Polys. If you have any information please contact me at kitty@clawws.org I am always looking for more Polys and pictures to go with them or the ones already in my heritage section.



WHAT IS SUB-NUMERARY?

(By Ken Bussard)

Polytrak has logged 3 kittens out of 279 kittens that are missing a dewclaw in front. We are speaking of a kitten with just 4 toes on a front paw. Even though they are polydactyl by virtue of their rear paws, these kitten have the 4 standard toes on one or both of their front paws. There are no dewclaws, thumbs, nubbins or any other visible digits. Now this is a rare configuration that, at least from our records, occurs in the polydactyl kitten population only in 7 out of a 1000 kittens or seven-tenths of one percent (.7%). Is this a different expression of polydactylism or the Pd gene? We think not...but we have no real way of knowing at this point.

The first question we are trying to answer is: What is Sub-Numerary? The online dictionaries (at least 4 that this author checked) do not even list the term as: one word, two separate words, or even as a hyphenated word. Even my spell checker does not like it. 😊 It is

listed in some medical areas, but the term deals with areas of medical science not related to paws or digits of any animal. The term has been applied to cats in some papers and is defined as having less than the standard number of toes. In other words, it is the opposite of polydactyl. However, sometimes the term is used in the context of fused, joined digits or joints and appears to not be related with polydactyly. This expression of affected toes and claws is NOT what we suspect we are seeing.

PolyTrak is using the term “Sub-Numerary” in its strict translated sense: “Sub”=less or fewer and “Numerary”=number. However it has nothing to do with fused claws, nails or digits. That expression sometimes referred to as “lobster claw” or Syndactyly. Syndactyly is also defined as the opposite of polydactyl and is a genetic expression not at all related to the Pd gene. Two important distinctions to make: 1. - Syndactyly is a genetic expression of fusing toes (not missing dewclaws) and to date has NOT been noted in our Maine Coon data and 2. - We suspect that our “Sub-Numerary” entries in PolyTrak are not genetic expressions, but are the result of some non-genetic factors and as such, we feel would not be a consideration in breeding decisions since Cat

Sub-Numerary entries in PolyTrak are not genetic expressions

Associations appear to have no problem in breeding with a sub-numerary cat. It will not be passed on to offspring. This is why we have chosen the term “Sub-Numerary”. These are simply cats that are not visibly showing a dewclaw on their front paw and in our database they happen to be polydactyl on the rear paws.

Before we jump to any conclusions, we must keep several things in mind in looking at this data. First of all this occurs rarely (7 out of a thousand kittens born from a poly parent - we do not have anywhere near a 1000 kittens sampled yet, so the percentage is a large extrapolation). Secondly the missing dewclaw occurs in non-poly kittens from non-poly parents also. We draw this conclusion from the fact that some cat associations speak of it being OK to breed this kind of kitten, but not to show them. This, to me indicates: 1. Sub-Numerary non-poly kittens exist. 2. There are no records that we are aware of that track digit



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configuration in the general non-poly Maine Coon population as we do in the poly world. 3. They obviously exist (non poly) or it would not be mentioned in a show standard. 4. It likely is not an inherited or genetically related, or Associations would frown upon breeding with a sub-numerary cat.

What conclusions can we draw from this information? Not Much! The sampling pool is too small to have any meaningful numbers and we do not have figures or data from the largest data pool involved (the non-polys). So we cannot say it only occurs in the polydactyl population, nor can we say it is more prevalent in poly or non-polys.

"The Sky is Falling!"

We have 3 kittens with 4 paws affected. These 3 kittens happen to be male. We certainly can't say or even suspect that this is gender related with the small sample we have. All 3 kittens we have listed are polydactyl on the rear paws. We can conclude that these kittens are likely expressing the Pd gene, but we cannot make the jump to the conclusion that if Mother Nature shorts you a dewclaw in front, she will make up for by giving you an extra digit in the rear. It likely is not an inherited trait, since two of these kittens are from one Sire and Dam and the 3rd is from a separate Sire and Dam. None of these parents are showing this trait in any other litters. These kittens are from different Countries and from different breeders, so it is not geographic or Cattery related.

In conclusion: There are no conclusions. If there were a conclusion to draw from this, we would need a much larger sampling and the interpretation scientific research community to put this in perspective. PolyTrak is merely collecting data and draws no conclusion from it, nor should the breeding and fancier community. This is not a disease, genetic defect, nor a quality of life issue. It should also not be the basis for rumour. Many of the anti-poly community has taken tidbits of fact and twisted things of this nature into a full-blown "Chicken Little" cry of "The Sky is Falling!" In my personal opinion, this is neither a good or bad observation. We must, at this point, chalk it up to certain things happen at certain times and we have no idea why (at least for now).

"After scolding one's cat one looks into its face and is seized by the ugly suspicion that it understood every word. And has filed it for reference." - Charlotte Gray



FROM THE STAFF

We hope you enjoyed this month's *Paws for Effect* and we will be back next month dressed in our "Sunday Best" with our Anniversary edition of this newsletter. On the 28th of this month our website will be one year old. You may remember from our first issue where we mentioned that the expenses for the PolyTrak domain and web hosting fees were donated to us. We are thrilled to find out that this has happened again. Everything has been renewed for another year. Even though we are all "volunteer labour" there are certain expenses incurred in maintaining a project of this size and we are grateful for the assistance.

We welcome your thoughts, ideas and input for PolyTrak. This is a user-driven project. We read, listen and incorporate a lot of the suggestions we receive; so tell us what is on your mind (nicely we hope LOL).

BYE FOR NOW!

