

PAWS FOR EFFECT



*The PolyTrak
Newsletter
July 2007*

Volume 1 - Number 7

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Maine Coon Polyductyl



International Database



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WHAT'S HAPPENING?

It is summer in the Northern Hemisphere (we looked it up and sure enough it is in fact summer ☺). That also means that it is winter in half the world. Maybe sunbeams are like a dominant Pd gene. Half are winter genes and half are summer.

But even with the fun and busy summertime activities work goes on with the Polys here at PolyTrak and throughout the world in Catteries and “show halls” everywhere.

Last month we mentioned the “RAI” held in Amsterdam, attended by Sharon, Vonne, Yvonne & Winnie. Vonne, one of the participants in the exposition has an article later in this issue, that we think you will find interesting. The Cat’s-of-Finger Lakes club sponsored a show recently in Syracuse, New York, which also had polydactyls shown and judged in the “New Traits” division.

Gordon Pugh of UpperValley, Cathy Pettey of Pettey Cats, Mike & Elkra Hammond of Blueblaze and with a little international flavour added, Deb Brown from Canada participated in the show. A survey was handed out to all Maine Coon Breeders in attendance for their views on MC Polys being accorded their full rightful place in the show ring alongside their brother and sister Maine Coons.

Cathy, in her role as newly appointed co-chairperson of the “Standards Group” designed a brief questionnaire that were handed to the Maine Coon breeders at the show. It was an unsigned unofficial survey to get a feel for the attitudes and knowledge of the breeding community about polydactylism in the Maine Coon breed. We hope to have regular report from the Standards Group in “Paws for Effect” to keep you up-do-date on the latest news and a chance for you to comment, ask questions or make suggestions.

When God made the world, He chose to put animals in it, and decided to give each whatever it wanted. All the animals formed a long line before His throne, and the cat quietly went to the end of the line. To the elephant and the bear He gave strength, to the rabbit and the deer, swiftness; to the owl, the ability to see at night, to the birds and the butterflies, great beauty; to the fox, cunning; to the monkey, intelligence; to the dog, loyalty; to the lion, courage; to the otter, playfulness. And all these were things the animals begged of God. At last he came to the end of the line, and there sat the little cat, waiting patiently. "What will YOU have?" God asked the cat.

The cat shrugged modestly. "Oh, whatever scraps you have left over. I don't mind."

"But I'm God. I have everything left over."

"Then I'll have a little of everything, please."

And God gave a great shout of laughter at the cleverness of this small animal, and gave the cat everything she asked for, adding grace and elegance and, only for her, a gentle purr that would always attract humans and assure her a warm and comfortable home.

But he took away her false modesty.

Lenore Fleischer - The Cat's Pajamas



MORE "MC" POLY EXPOSURE!

By Vonne Bode

We can do a lot of things to support the MC polys and one of the things is to bring them to a show. And no, your poly cat(s) won't win any points / titles then. 😊 But that shouldn't be a reason for not bringing your poly(s) with you, is it? It's important that judges see that the group interested in the MC polys is growing within the fanciers and breeders and that the breeders are not 'hiding' their polys at home. Remember, before the MC was recognized as a breed, these breeders also brought their cats to shows, knowing they wouldn't get any points / titles for their 'barn' cat. But the fact that they did show these cats for over a year, with often a group of 30 cats!, shows they believed in their goal to get this great cat recognized as a breed. And look at the MC now! It's one of the most, if not the most, popular cat breed in the world. 😊 We don't have to get the MC polys accepted as a new breed, since they're already a breed. But we do need to show them to the public (MC breeders, judges and fanciers) on shows or other events. It's all about making people get used to them, educate the public and show them how proud you are of your poly MC. 😊 There are cat shows, but there are also other animal events.

On the weekend of 26, 27 and 28 May there were the "National Pet Days" in the RAI in Amsterdam. The RAI is one of the biggest



convention centres in the Netherlands. These days are a must for the pet lover. During this manifestation people get the most up to date info on nutrition and care of their pet. Health, well-being and communication knowledge are central during these days. At different stands you can get information, explanation and advice about the care of all kinds of pets. Hereby the event can contribute to a better, more responsible and respectful way of interacting with animals. There are dogs, cats, birds, fish, reptiles, rodents, cattle and horses to see. And there are shows, demonstrations, presentations and for the kids, special activities. The hall has a lot of pavilions dedicated to a certain type of animal, stands with suppliers and a lot of animal (rights) associations. One of the biggest pavilions was the "Kittyplaza" (sponsored by a large pet food company 😊). Felikat (a Dutch Fife organisation) was asked to organize the cat breed presentations and to fill up the pavilion with different kind of cat breeds. This was a great opportunity for the breed clubs to inform the public about their breed. But also it was a great opportunity to present the Maine Coon polydactyl. 😊 So we did! 😊

Sharon brought her poly boy Butch P Cassidy and her lovely poly kitten Thunderchick P. And of course I brought my boy



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Silverfoot P. There were 2 separate benching areas with lots of space, chairs and tables. Between every 4 cages there was a market stall. This you could use for presentation material and also put your cat on to present it to the passing public. But the real presentation was done during the cat breeds presentations in the arena. This was a big area within the middle the presentation area with high pedestals to put the cats on. On the left and right side were seats for the public and in the back was a podium. The presenter, Martin Gaus (famous in Holland because of his dog training school and animal programs), would walk between the cats while telling something about each breed.

On the 26th I entered this huge hall and went looking for our benching area. 'Sil' was given a huge double cage. Of course he decided to lay himself down in the smallest corner behind the litter pan. 😊 Next to our benching area there was an enormous cage with tree trunks and all kinds of parrots. One parrot constantly did the Nokia ring tone. 😊 I took 'Sil' on his leash to this big cage with me to meet his first parrots. With big eyes he looked at these strange birds that would climb against the wall of the cage to have a look at him, while making a strange sound. 😊

During the event a lot of people stood still at our



cage to look at 'Sil' ("Ooohhh" and "Aaah"). Most just loved his colour and his MC look, but there were also people that noticed his big paws. Only they didn't seem to realize it was because he has extra digits:-). So I told them he was polydactyl. Which of course raises the question "what's polydactyl?" And then I explained it to them. One thing I noticed is that the public isn't really interested in the story of its history and the road to getting them accepted. They see a cat with a great look, that's bigger than an average cat and next to that (when the cat stretches its paws or is taken out of its cage and put on all 4 feet on the market stall), it turns out this cat also has extra big paws. And they like what they see! They want one too. 😊 Further there were people that had a cat at home that looked like a MC or they had a MC and wanted to know if their cat (already adult age) would become as 'big' eventually. And there were questions about maintaining the coat, getting rid of stud tails and what type of food to give. Also, do all MC's have extra toes and how to get one? 😊 I had fun answering these questions.

During the days I also had the time to have a look myself at the different animals and stands in the two halls, often taking Sil with me with his harness. This way Sil saw a lot of animals he hadn't seen before. As the



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time for the cat breed presentation came near, we all went to the podium to wait till it was time to put our cat on one of the empty pedestals. All cats were very relaxed and didn't show any aggression towards each other at all (which you sometimes do see in the show hall). During the wait people came to see the cats a bit closer and to take lots of pictures (the cats must have felt like pop stars 😊) Some parents wanted to put their kid on the picture with the cat (but not all kids wanted to 😊). When the presenter, with his microphone, had said something about one cat and would go to another, the owner would go to the back of the arena so another cat could be put on the pedestal. For Sil this type of presentation was totally new and I was curious how he would react. But he was great, laying down on the pedestal, looking around and often looking up at the ceiling. The ceiling had a ventilator that went on and off and apparently he found it funny to watch 😊. The first day the presenter didn't know much to say about the poly feet, but the next days he tried a bit harder and even asked something about them. Sharon and Winnie did some poly talk, while showing of the poly feet:-). At the end of the presentation we would all do a round in the arena, presenting our cats in the show stretch to the public. This was the opportunity for



All photos reprinted with permission. and are courtesy of Vonne, Yvonne, Sharon, Hugo, Jan, Winnie and various exhibitors. PolyTrak says thanks you for sharing a great weekend!

the public to get a closer look at the cats and to even pet them. I called this the 'petting parade'. 😊 And of course pictures were taken and lots of questions were asked which had to be answered. At the end of this round Sil became very heavy, although he isn't. Next to the presentations we (Sharon & I) of course also had material to promote the MCPI chat group and the Polytrak database. And of course talked about the polys;-). Overall it was great fun to do. If there is a similar event in your country, try to be there with your MC poly, because it's a great opportunity to present them and to get the public familiar with these great cats...a Maine Coon with just that little bit extra. 😊

DE NATIONALE



HUISDIERENDAGEN

AMSTERDAM RAI
PINKSTERWEEKEND
26 - 27 - 28 MEI 2007



Confront a child, a puppy, and a kitten with sudden danger; the child will turn instinctively for assistance, the puppy will grovel in abject submission, the kitten will brace its tiny body for a frantic resistance.

- Saki -



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So What Happens When You Show Your Maine Coon Polydactyl – Syracuse 2007 By Deb Brown

Our family has had the great fortune to show Maine Coon Polydactyls in Canada, the USA, Holland, and Germany. Wow what a great time. Planning to get to these events involves lots of work, a multitude of emails and bathing, bathing, bathing (if you are taking a cat) 😊 But once you are on your way and finally arrive...this is when the good times roll!!

There are all the kinds of things happening all at once it seems. Did I remember all my stuff...where is the cat...where am I going...what time does it start...will I find anyone there...I am soooo nervous...what if I do something wrong...and on and on it goes. The most important thing is....Don't Worry...it will all come together and probably you will have more than enough helping hands to smooth things out, and know you are going to have a great time.

Each time you go to a show it can be different. Not a familiar show hall or even a familiar country. You may go alone, with a friend or

family member or plan on meeting some one there.



The Cat Runners

Sometimes you do the meet and greet in an airport, motel parking lot or show hall, or go on your own and hope someone finds you. Whatever the venue the one thing is, you are probably representing the Maine Coon Polydactyl and this alone will make you stand out in a crowd 😊. We have always been lucky. Some say the harder you work the luckier you get haha. But our experiences have been great and so have the ones we have heard about from others that show the MC-Poly.



Deb Brown's "Hokey"

The biggest pleasure is planning to go to a show with the polys, and also plans to have other poly people there. Sometimes you know them and sometimes this is the first time meeting. The only contact has been email and chat groups. But it only

seems to take a couple of minutes and before you know it everyone is talking and chattering like you have been neighbours for years. It's great!

The show in Syracuse was a unique experience. Although it was an all breed show the Maine Coons were showcased the first night with the CoonClave. And what did they see ... the Maine Coon Polydactyls in the New Traits class!! For some this was the first time seeing a poly and for some it seemed to be almost nostalgic. People watched as they came out of the cages and also watched where we were benched. It wasn't long before people started wandering by looking at the cats and asking questions. This is what we came for!

For the next two days we ran cats to the ring. Cathy, and her daughter Sadie, had a big handsome silver poly boy they were showing, Morty. Wow what a guy. Gordon was clerking but had his silver youngster Smooch. He was just a dream to handle. It's hard being a kitten in the ring against adults sometimes but he was a looker for sure. And people loooooove kittens 😊. Mike and Elektra had Socks with them. Wow has he ever grown since the last time we saw him! Unfortunately or fortunately, depending on how you look at it, Socks was indisposed for the weekend with a hot



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date in a motel room. So we didn't see too much of him but I heard he had a wonderful time 😊. And I had our silver boy Hokey there. Lol he is a little too laid back sometimes and looked rather bored with things. The riding joke with the judges seemed to be that all Maine Coon polys are silver. We had a good laugh with this and the judges were great at explaining that they did come in all colours.

So what happened in Syracuse you ask?

Lots! The judges were pleased for the most part to see the polys. Many gave good commentaries, comments and advice. In the ring we had Morty, Hokey and Smooch. Morty is a silver mackerel tabby, Hokey a silver classic and Smooch a silver mackerel with white. Morty was about 4 months younger than Hokey. He probably outweighed Hokey by 3 lbs and had a heavier bone structure. Hokey had the great head and pattern for a classic. Smooch, being a baby was showing potential and with a little growth will definitely turn heads. More than once we were told if we could get Hokey's head on Morty's body we were really in the ballpark for great typey mc's. This was said over and over. But the great thing that was said was "these cats are getting very close to the type for Maine Coons. Work on the weak areas and we look

forward to what we will see in future rings."

Some commented they were in Syracuse two years ago and there was a lot of improvement since then! Wow they remembered 😊 and some remembered the polys from Hannover and in shows afterwards.



Gordon's "Smooch P"

They cautioned to make sure that in the quest for the great heads you don't forget the bodies. Seems the heads are the strong point in MC's in Europe but body shape and size needs to catch up and almost the reverse in North America. This is just a general observation and not directed towards all Maine Coons. Lol now we need to get these two features in one cat and look out!



Cathy's "Morty"

Different judges will see different things in each cat. Some prefer one feature to another. This is to be

expected. But they all pretty much hammered home the phrase...adhere to the Maine Coon Standard in all respects and we will judge them as Maine Coons regardless of the toes. These judges usually took the time to go over each cat and tell about strengths and weaknesses. What to improve, what was doing well and what they would look for in the ring. Great feedback. But in a lot of respects it is nothing we didn't know already. Breed for type. The nice thing is they are talking about the polys as if maybe some day...who knows. 😊

So what else happened in Syracuse?

It was a busy show, cats being run far and wide. But the curiosity was there about the Maine Coon Polydactyls. Not only with people dropping by the benching area to chat but sitting in the audience watching the cats being judged. People were asking questions...and the funny thing was they were asking a lot of the "myth" questions. Well, for those of you that know me this was my open door to do a little cat chat and dispel a few myths. It was great. They weren't asking to be "catty" they were truly interested in the poly and listened....asked more questions and listened again. They left with a very new and different perspective. Lol some of them even brought friends back to hear it all



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once more. Many took cards and pamphlets with them. Who knows...maybe they will tell two friends and so on and so on. I met a lot of people, many that breed Maine Coons and had a wonderful positive reaction. This isn't to say they are all going to run out and get a poly but they are now definitely watching to see what comes up in the ring.



Gordon clerking.

This is where the exposure at shows is critical to the success of the Maine Coon Polydactyls being accepted. It's not just a matter of getting any polydactyl into the ring, but showing the cat fanciers that Maine Coon Breeders that breed polydactyls, are serious and committed to standard and type. For those of us promoting the MC-polys we are being judged as well. It may be a long road yet but so far so good. People are starting to pay attention because they like what they are seeing.

So what happens when you show a Maine Coon Polydactyl? You become an ambassador for these great cats. You are showing the cat fanciers that the Maine Coon Polydactyl is worthy of its place in the

show ring. You are showing you are committed to a cause and serious about seeing it through. You are going to have lots of fun, meet wonderful people and have adventures you will remember for a long long time, and most of all... see some of the great Maine Coon Polys that are leading the way to the future.

A Maine Coon Polydactyl is a Maine Coon! This is Poly Power

UPCOMING!

Those are a couple of events where the poly was featured prominently. "What's coming up", you ask? We received this announcement from Sandra van Kluiven:



Hi Friends! We from the Dutch TICA Club Cats and Tulips have found a very nice show location. Our show date is November 10 and 11, 2007. Here are some details:

The show will be in Hellevoetsluis. Show hall DETAILS:

Sport- en Recreatiecentrum
De Eendracht
Sportlaan 2
3223 EV, Hellevoetsluis
T: 0181-313584
F: 0181-312144

http://www.sportfondsen.nl:80/index.php?sid=37&mod_id=14362

Because there is not a hotel in Hellevoetsluis we found this nice Resort "Citta Romana".

Here is some information:

Our Citta Romana Resort is just a 5 minutes' walk from Haringvliet Beach. Our luxury resort is situated on the magnificent South Holland island of Voorne Putten and it boasts more than 263 spacious villas. You can rent these villas with 6 persons.

The old fortified city and naval base of Hellevoetsluis is well worth a visit. Seaside resorts in the direct vicinity, such as Rockanje and Oostvoorne, are absolute musts! Our park is an ideal spot for a whole range of activities, outings and water sports. For more detailed information, just take a look at our HIER magazine!

The resort centre houses the reception, the restaurant and bar, the indoor swimming pool, the sauna and a mini-market.

Rotterdam is only a half an hour's drive away, Schiphol (Amsterdam Airport), an hour away and Zeeland a mere quarter of an hour from our resort. They are delighted to welcome you as a guest at our resort and they will make sure that you



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get everything you need!For more information you can book at <http://www.cittaromana.nl/>

So if we can organise something nice for the polys just let me know.

Sandra van Kluiven
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SHAMELESS PROMOTION

By Ken Bussard

“Shameless promotion” is a bit of a comical phrase that we use jokingly as something we do promoting the polys. Are we as Poly supporters being outspoken and a bit “cat-focused”? You bet! Should we be promoting the polys? Of course we should! 😊

The “Poly movement” is gaining momentum everyday. PolyTrak was born 16 months ago and now has broken the 5 million successful requests mark. Listed poly breeders have

more than doubled in the same time period. The Polys are now showing in “New Traits” in TICA. A poly breed standard group has formed to design a standard along with supporting documentation for the eventual full acceptance of the Maine Coon poly in the competitive show rings of TICA. More than 200 people a month are arriving at PolyTrak from using the Wikipedia encyclopedia service to find out more information on polydactylism and then clicking on additional links to find out even more about the poly. Slowly, but surely, informed opinions about polydactylism are replacing a “closed mind” about factual polydactylism and old rumours. The scientific community is beginning to revisit this trait. Maybe “Mother Nature” didn’t make a mistake after all. Maybe humankind should spend a little more time preserving a quality, instead of trying to “cull” it.

A recent comment by a show judge eluded to the question of why would anyone want to perpetuate a trait that people have worked a hundred years to eliminate. I guess my answer would be: “Why would you want to spend a hundred years trying to eliminate a harmless trait?” Cats have had four legs for as long as we know. Should we see if we can build one with 3 and then get rid of the 4-

legged version? Of course not!

The point of this is: These kinds of idiotic comments are becoming fewer. Education and promotion by many of you is making a difference. People are asking questions and learning. So in this light, “Shameless Promotion” is not only a good thing....but a necessary thing.

List your cats in PolyTrak and other websites. Write articles and become informed about the poly. Show your polys at shows in your area. And above all Talk, talk and talk some more with people about the poly. The biggest share of them are fascinated about this trait and will want to learn more. To the “nay-sayers”, do not argue, but educate and inform!

Maine Coon Polydactyl



International Database

Well that is it for another month. We thank you and hope that you enjoyed this month’s issue of *Paws for Effect*. We hope that learned a little (or a lot) about the Maine Coon polydactyl. If you know someone that would like to receive this monthly newsletter just email ptnewsletter@polytrak.net or visit our website at <http://www.polytrak.net>.

BYE FOR NOW!

