

PAWS FOR EFFECT



*The PolyTrak  
Newsletter  
March 2008*

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*Maine Coon Polydactyl*



*International Database*



# Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

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## WELCOME!

Hello everyone! It is another month and another issue of *“Paws for Effect”*. We welcome our new subscribers this month and hope that you enjoy this newsletter each month. For those of you that are new to us, we would love to hear from you. Share any comments, questions or opinions. Above all if you have an experience or story related to the Maine Coon poly, we would love to feature your story in *“Paws for Effect”*. The poly movement is growing by leaps and bounds with new poly supporters, breeders and fanciers each month. As always you can view any past issue of this Newsletter by clicking on the newsletter button on our main page and then selecting the archive issues link and choose which month or issue that you desire to view. All issues from our inaugural newsletter in January of 2007 are available here. The current issue is added near the middle of the month following release.

This month’s issue, we feel, you will find very interesting and informative. March may be a benchmark time for the Maine Coon polydactyl cat. After over 30 years of being relegated to the back shelf, the MC poly is going to have its day in Court. The PolyStandards group has informed us that notification of a formal application for acceptance in TICA has been made!!! Make sure you read more in this newsletter about their hard work and efforts. PolyTrak will soon be making changes to its formal digit identification guides as we try to simplify the many different combinations of digits we are seeing in today’s Maine Coons, Vonne will be writing in this, and future issues, more about those great polydactyl “toes”. Why has it taken nearly 40 years for a move to accept the poly? Ken will give you a brief history of the poly movement what was planned in the early 1970’s and why today we finally are the road to fulfilling that dream. It hasn’t been an easy road, but, to say the least, it has been an interesting road. So sit back, take a few moments and read on...

After a long day of exploring at the Cattery



From the Witch’s Litter at Vaskebjorn – Born Feb. 13th

## NOTIFICATION OF INTENT

(By Deb Brown)

The **BIG** day has arrived. On February 29<sup>th</sup> the following notice was sent to TICA:

### ADVANCEMENT TO CHAMPIONSHIP STATUS

#### Notice of Intent

33.8 New Traits of a Championship Breed.

303.8 Trait: A visible distinguishing characteristic.

33.8.2.7 Cause a Notice of Intent to Apply for Advancement to Championship Status to be published in the TICA TREND at least 120 days prior to the meeting at which the application for advancement will be heard, and which invites comments about the breed to be forwarded to the Executive Office.

The following new trait or traits, polydactyl, in the Maine Coon breed intends to apply for Advancement to Championship Status at the 2008 Annual Board Meeting.

#### Maine Coon – polydactyl

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The day has arrived that breeders, fanciers and supporter of the Maine Coon polydactyl have worked towards for so many years. Notice of Intent has been sent to the TICA Trend and the TICA Executive Office and will be seen in the April/May issue of TICA Trend. The proposal for the TICA Board is in motion!

Stand up and be counted and lend your voice to this great endeavour. This will be part of the Maine Coon history.

For many years the mention of Maine Coon polydactyls would generate derision. Unfortunately over the course of time, different unrelated conditions concerning digit architecture were seen in the domestic cat population and in error all

conditions were lumped into the polydactyl category. This had nothing to do with the naturally occurring trait of the polydactyl digits of the Maine Coon

cat but it was seen as such due to lack of knowledge. The term polydactyl became distasteful and rumours and misinformation perpetuated the unsavoury tales.

As with anything in our world, once a reputation has been lost or tarnished it takes an enormous amount of work to return it to its original status. It is harder also to have people listen to true facts, especially when it contradicts what they held to be true in the first place.

This is true today with people that would rather misinform or present analogies that are meant only to cloud the facts.

Today the Maine Coon breeders have risen above this and their continued championing of this cat have revived the trait in the Maine Coon breed. The voice of the polys will be heard world wide because of the dedication of the breeders, fanciers and supporters are continually promoting these wonderful cats.

We will succeed and these great Maine Coon polydactyls will attain Championship Status! Now more than ever, give your support.

Thank you from PolyStandard, PolyTrak....and yes: our future Champions! 😊



*There are two means of refuge from the miseries of life: music and cats.*  
- Albert Schweitzer -



Miss Mia Coon Oswaldline P of Krammedyret  
Proud Mom of a litter of 6 born Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007.



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## POLYTRAK FACT

As of March 1<sup>st</sup> there are 462 kittens listed in PolyTrak born as part of a polydactyl litter. 256 of these kittens listed are polydactyl.

- 2 Kittens (0.8%) are 1WD
- 90 Kittens (36.6%) are 2FWD
- 7 Kittens (2.8%) are 2RWD
- 17 Kittens (6.9%) are 3WD
- 130 (52.8%) are 4WD
- 10 Kittens have unknown paws
- 238 litter kittens are from poly Sire
- 204 litter kittens are from poly Dam
- 13 litter kittens – both parents are poly
- 7 litter kittens have homozygous Sire
- No litter kittens with homozygous Dam

- Why didn't it make any difference when it was determined by geneticists and medical experts, that there were no quality of life issues with the MC poly?
- Why did the original breed standard for Maine Coons include the poly, only to be replaced by a second standard with the poly removed?
- Why? Why? Why? (insert the rest of your questions here!) 😊

These are all valid questions. If you have a good answer, let us know. We would love to know too. 😊 Seriously though, acceptance of the Maine Coon poly has been discussed in one form or another, since the 70's.

Much of the work for introducing the breed of Maine Coon was done many years ago by the Maine Coon Breeders and Fanciers Association (MCBFA). The MCBFA was creating a breed standard for the breed that the various cat associations could use in their own Associations. The MC poly was part of this proposed standard. There were some that did not favour the inclusion of the poly. In fact there were even some that did not care for the non-poly either, feeling the Maine Coon was, as some put it: "a barn cat". As discussions continued and politics and personal likes/dislikes entered the picture, it was decided rather than risk acceptance of the entire breed, it might be better to at least take the poly out of the picture for the time being. Depending on whom you talked to, many say it was just a temporary thing and that once the Maine Coon was accepted, then the poly would be brought back into the equation after acceptance.

One of the strange things that emerged, as the breed and show standards were adopted by the various Cat Associations, was the fact the Maine Coon poly could be registered as a full pedigreed Maine Coon. It could be used for breeding programs, used as foundation stock and for the most part was accepted as any other Maine Coon. It was just not allowed in the

## WHERE HAS THE POLY BEEN OVER THE YEARS?

(By Ken Bussard)

We have been asked why the Maine Coon Polydactyl is not accepted for show status in the Championship Rings around the World. Why has it taken all these years to just apply for championship status?

- Are not MC polys descendents of original stock that was up to 40% polydactyl naturally occurring in the wild?
- Why were MC polys allowed to be registered in Associations as full pedigree Maine Coon, but disqualified from the ring?
- Why didn't it make any difference when MC polys were studied and analyzed over the years and found to be without any harmful forms of polydactylism?



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show ring. Some breeders worked with polys in the background as breeding stock for their non-poly show cats. They felt the poly breeder cat would add heavier boning and other traits that would produce a better non-poly cat. Others felt the poly was a defect, in spite of the research and literature that was available, even in those times that showed polydactylism in the Maine Coon was nothing more than a benign trait. A few of these “elitist” breeders began calling for the culling of the poly to eliminate it from the pedigreed MC gene pool. MC Breeders that worked with polys were shunned in their circles. There were even a few that did both; railed against the ‘defective’ poly, and yet used poly blood lines in their breeding and show programs. 😊 This is a rather interesting dichotomy and somewhat of an indefensible stance.

“Bad press” (mostly unfounded stories and fear-mongering) for the “poly” continued throughout the years. By the 90’s it was suggested that there were only two active poly lines still going...or at least well known poly lines as others suggest. By 1994 an unofficial estimate placed the poly population at 1-2% of the total Maine Coon population. It was also

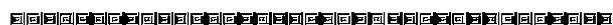
about this time that a “cat-lover” living a little “off the beaten-path” in Canada fulfilled a childhood wish of owning a polydactyl Maine Coon when



Furkats Buttercup P Meadow arrived in her home. Deb Brown from Coldwater, Ontario, Canada and part of our PolyTrak staff today was this Fancier. Unaware, at the time, of the poly’s plight she marched her new MC poly off to a local cat show, to find that it could be only shown in Household pets without points.

With a lot of research and seeking out many breeders and fanciers around the World who also felt the polys belonged in the show ring a common cause and goal was formed. Breeders and Fanciers banded together to begin the task of acceptance. TICA allowed the MC poly to be shown and judged as a Maine Coon in the New Traits Division. PolyTrak was formed to document as much information as we could about the Maine Coon Polydactyl for the benefit of research and to try and confirm or dispel the many stories floating around Maine Coon world about polydactylism. Good, bad or indifferent it was important to approach the idea of acceptance from fact and not from “wives-tales” handed down through the years. It was also during this time, with the talk and publicity about the Maine Coon poly, that a sudden increase breeders and fanciers working with polys was noted. The list of Catteries on PolyTrak working with MC polys more than doubled in 2007.

Unofficial straw polls, both in the USA and Europe, showed a high rate of acceptance (over 90% in some cases) on the idea amongst the Maine Coon community for the entry of the Maine Coon polydactyl into the Championship Ring. So with the wave of interest in the MC poly, a mountain factual paperwork, and a group of hard working and knowledgeable “poly-people” it was time to begin the formal road to acceptance. On March 1<sup>st</sup>, PolyStandards, a group of 23 people filed with TICA a “Notice of Intent” to have the Maine Coon polydactyl brought into the Show Ring for Championship Status. This group is doing all of this on a volunteer basis and **financially** from their own pocket. If you would like to help out in any way (**time or money**) just drop a note to [polystandard@polytrak.net](mailto:polystandard@polytrak.net)



PolyTrak



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Cameron Coons Terence Higgs P



*Most beds sleep up to six cats. Ten cats  
without the owner.*

*- Stephen Baker -*



## MORE ABOUT THE PAWS

(By Vonne Bode)

Last month I presented to you an article about rear thumbs. This month I'll walk you through the rest of the digits as we define them in PolyTrak. This to fresh up everyone's memory and also to explain them to the new readers of our newsletters.

### Digits:

Most people talk about "toes" on a cat's foot. We prefer to use the word "digits" which will include all that sticks out from the cat's paw. And these digits can be specified into the following:

1) Toe, 2) Dewclaw, 3) Thumb and 4) Nub

Let's have a closer look at these digits.

### 1. Toe

-Like the four last fingers on our hands. These digits point forward and are parallel. A toe touches the ground (carries body weight). Any additional/extra toe, will have the same conditions as the standard toes on a cats paw.

### 2. Dewclaw

-This is an underdeveloped digit that doesn't touch the ground. On a non-poly cat you can find this claw on the inside of the paw. But with a poly foot you can also have an (extra) dewclaw between 2 other digits or the dewclaw can even be absent. When between two digits it will look like it supports body weight/touches the ground, but it doesn't.

### 3. Thumb

-This digit is comparable to our own thumb. It's opposable, placed (grows from) higher on the paw and sticks out at a different angle. A thumb touches the ground when the cat stands on 4 paws. With the polys you can see different lengths and types in the thumb, which sometimes makes it hard to determine an additional toe from a thumb. But then determining the pads on the back of the paws will help. More on that later. 😊

A thumb on a back paw looks a bit different from the one on a front paw. In fact it looks much like an extra toe. This digit will be parallel to the rest of the toes instead of growing from a different angle. This is because the back paws are constructed differently. But a back thumb does have the same separate pad like we see with a regular thumb on the front paw. And of course it also touches the ground. More about back thumbs you can read in our last February issue of "*Paws for Effect*".

### 4. Nub

-This is a very underdeveloped digit, which easily can be overlooked. It doesn't have the developed claw of a dewclaw and sometimes the nail has not even broken the skin. And just like the dewclaw this digit doesn't touch the ground. We don't see this type of digit that often though.



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- Ø All digits, except the nub, have a good developed claw.
- Ø A non poly cat will only have digit types 1 & 2. A non poly cat has on front 5 digits (1 dewclaw, 4 toes) and on the back 4 digits (4 toes).
- Ø A poly cat can have all types of digits. The paws of a poly don't have to be symmetrical! A poly can have additional digits, but can also have 5 digits where the standard dewclaw has been changed into a thumb or toe.



**Poly kitten with thumbs (and tiny dewclaw between thumb & toe) (Picture courtesy G.Pugh)**

## Pads

Another important tool to use when determining the digits, is looking at the pads on the back side of the paws. In the previous issue I already explained a bit how to look at them, comparing them to the fleshy parts on the inside of our hands. So let's have a closer look at the pads. 😊

:On a standard paw we see:

### 1. Terminal/digital pad

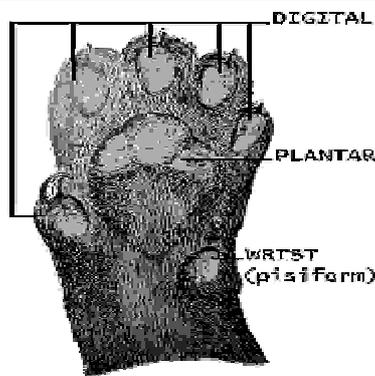
-The pad at the end of each digit is called a terminal/digital pad (comparable with our "fingertip"). The only digit that can have no pad is a nub.

### 2. Standard plantar/palmar pad

-Then there's a large pad opposite the 4 standard toes, which consists 3 pads attached/slightly fused together. This is called the standard plantar/palmar pad.

### 3. Wrist pad/pisiform

-Then there's a small pad much higher on the paw which is called a wrist pad / pisiform. This pad will be of no importance to you or us, so you can forget about this one. 😊



**Back side of a standard, non poly, paw (Drawing Courtesy of [www.pawsonline.info](http://www.pawsonline.info))**

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## **Additional pads**

On a poly paw we will see additional pads. For example:

### **4. Additional plantar/palmar pad**

When a cat has 'extra' toes, each toe will have an additional plantar/palmar pad. This pad will be attached to the standard plantar/palmar pad. And any other extra toe will have its plantar/ palmar pad attached to the previous one. So it will look like a 'necklace string' of pads. In other words the original standard plantar/palmar pad will be broadened.



**Poly back paw with additional toes and pads added to the standard plantar pad**

(Picture Courtesy C.Boulidoires)

### **5. Seperate (mouse) pad**

A pad comparable to the mouse part of our hand is what I prefer to call a mouse pad. This is, (just like on our hand), associated with the thumb on a paw. A separate pad not attached to plantar/palmar pads. Also this pad is further up on the foot then the standard plantar/palmar pad.

- Ø All digits (except sometimes the nub) have a terminal pad (fingertip).
- Ø Only toes and thumbs have an extra pad. The plantar/palmar pad for a toe and a mouse pad for a thumb.
- Ø The plantar pad of an 'extra' toe will be attached/slightly fused with a planter pad of another toe/to the standard planter pad.
- Ø A dewclaw only has a terminal pad (fingertip).
- Ø Only toes and thumbs touch the ground and will carry some body weight.



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**MC poly kitten showing the back side of its front paws. On his left paw (right on the pic) we see a thumb, dewclaw and 4 toes. Do you see it too?** (Picture courtesy B.Sørensen)

Ok that's it for now. More about digits, pads and poly feet **Next month in Part Two.** 😊 Hopefully the different types of digits are now a bit more clear for you all, especially for the ones who don't have English as their first language. In the follow up I'll give info on how to start the determination and there will be more examples of poly paws including descriptions. 😊 If you've questions about the content of this article so far, please don't hesitate to ask! You can contact us at [ptnewsletter@polytrak.net](mailto:ptnewsletter@polytrak.net)



That's a "wrap" for another month. We hope you enjoyed looking at this month's issue and that you will join us again next month and throughout 2008 for more of the latest news from PolyTrak. Let us know your thoughts. Visit PolyTrak at <http://www.polytrak.net> for the latest info. We would love to hear from you. Until next month:

## Bye for Now!

