



Editorial

Welcome to the summer issue of the BCA newsletter – my warmest thanks to this month's contributors.

The past few months have flown by for me as I had a litter of seven kittens to raise. I was fortunate to find six of them homes with experienced Burmese owners. Two of these families came for one kitten each and both ended up with a pair! No surprise there – Burmese really are addictive! It was not so hard to part with the kittens this time as one is staying at home with her Mum and me. It is very exciting to have a new 'baby' to show and hopefully, to breed from in the future.

Here in the North West, the numbers of people exhibiting at shows has visibly declined over the past few years. One pet food retailer has reduced his attendance at the shows by fifty percent as business has dropped so much that it is no longer economically viable for him. How will clubs cope in future if this trend continues, I wonder? Perhaps it is time for more clubs to share venues and split their costs. What do you think?

The club has been very busy over the past six months, organising and holding the first 'Cat Chat' day for members and also creating our fabulous new website. Please see www.burmesecatassociation.org

This issue includes a report on the very successful Cat Chat day, club news, articles on Hypokalaemia, contributions from members and lots more! Please don't forget to send me your news, photographs, articles, jokes, poems or any thing else you think might be of interest.

Very best wishes,
Chris



**Photos
from the
Cat Chat
Day...**

**Gr Ch
Hobberdy
Mendoras
Goldberry**



(left) Maureen judging the finalists (right)

The First BCA Cat Chat

Traditionally, the Cat Chat is held at Bremhill House, Maureen Smith's home, and has an air of a garden party about it. This year, because of the risk of the marquee sinking into the waterlogged ground, we decamped to nearby Goatacre Village Hall. Some of the garden party atmosphere lingered as there was a cricket match going on as we arrived. And there were advantages to being indoors – we were warmer, we could hear everything going on and the cats seemed to enjoy the intimacy and the proximity of their owners.

As usual there was a great deal of activity with the catering staff, aka Stevie Hillman, Gill Francis and a very helpful Tracey Keegan taking in delicious contributions (that chicken tikka salad was particularly good, Jan). Stalls were set up with garden produce, bric a brac and our usual hugely generous raffle. Maureen opened the meeting by asking for a minute's silence to remember Margaret Somers. Margaret's niece and her husband had been invited and it was a pleasure to welcome them and to share their company for the afternoon. Tributes from members recalling stories about Margaret and what she had meant to so many were commemorated on a memory board. You can now have a proper look at these on our website:

www.burmesecatassociation.org

The Treasurer, Helen Hewitt, then reported on the very healthy state of our finances and said we were swiftly moving into the IT age by being able to pay our subscriptions by PayPal – she tactfully ignored all the alarmed faces! Lunch and a good gossip was enjoyed by all during which we had to guess the number of items in a handbag (who could possibly have thought there would be over 1300?), attempt the customary cat quiz and buy raffle tickets. It never ceases to amaze me how very generous our members are and how willingly they give. There were just over 50 members present and yet during the afternoon nearly £300 was raised for the welfare fund.

The highlight of the afternoon was a talk by Tim Gruffydd-Jones who spoke about the new genetic test available for hypokalaemia and suggested how it might just be possible to eradicate the disease in future if breeders were diligent and responsible about taking the tests and making the results known before breeding. A more detailed account of Tim's talk and details about the tests may be found under the News menu on the website.

It was already time for tea and the judging. So much for the other entertainment we had planned – so we never did hear those stories about humorous events when breeding Burmese! Anna Virtue's Gr Ch Hoberdy Higgedy Piggledy was judged Best in Hall and awarded a very pretty silver spoon decorated with a cat that had been owned by Margaret Somers. It was a happy end to a busy and very enjoyable day.

Elisabeth Amies



Show Report from the Cat Chat

12 Burmese were exhibited and judged by Janet Tomkinson, Linda Martin and Jane Frances-Wilson, with Anne Kelly, Margaret Walkden and Claire Lewis mentoring. The Committee thanked all the judges for their time and their expertise.

When it came to judging 'Best in Tent' the judges nominations were unanimous and the decision was:

1st Grand Champion Hobberdy Higgleddy Piggledy

Brown tortie, bred and owned by
Mrs A Virtue

Judges nominations for the runner up brought 4 cats to the fore for Maureen Smith to judge and her choice was:

2nd UK Grand Champion Hobberdy Medoras Goldberry

Cream, bred by Mrs A Virtue and owned by Mrs A Bell

Both cats received a special rosette, a bottle of champagne and a beautiful silver teaspoon with a cat on the handle which had belonged to Margaret Somers. These had been donated to commemorate the first Cat Chat Photos from the day can be viewed at <http://sdrv.ms/LsbCB3> and if you wish to download any photos at full size you can find those at <http://sdrv.ms/JtcTck> During the day we held some fun quizzes, had a raffle, a plant & bric a brac stall and these together with entry fees and donations raised the Grand Total of £758.10. The proceedings will be divided between the Welfare and General accounts.

I think you will all agree that it was a superb result making every one's effort so worthwhile!

Sheila Kimmins

Hypokalaemia

Sheila Kimmins shares her overview of the presentation given by Professor Tim Gruffydd-Jones on May 20th 2012 at the BCA Cat Cat Day



The professor started by saying that Hypokalaemia was first identified in the Burmese Cat breed in the 1980s, however it is not exclusive to the breed. Hypokalaemia is characterised by a weakness in the muscles. During the 1980's quite a number of young Burmese began to develop this condition and a

picture began to build up of Hypokalaemia developing, usually around the time of puberty. The muscle weakness was displayed in the neck, with a

difficulty to raise the head; in the limbs; with a difficulty in jumping, abnormal posture and an ungainly gait.

The condition is episodic and in many cases only one or two attacks were seen. There was no obvious pattern. Blood tests showed a low level of potassium and high levels of creatine phosphokinase - CPK. Although blood tests did vary, the CPK test gave a better indication of the condition.

Hypokalaemia was believed to be an inherited problem. The kittens affected were given added potassium to help, however that was not very palatable, fortunately there is a more agreeable substitute now available. Whilst many kittens appeared to 'grow out of being Hypokalaemic' some would continue to need treatment for life.

The technology of genetics has developed over the years and Leslie Lyons (from University of California, Davis) has now developed a test for Hypokalaemia. See http://www.langfordvets.co.uk/lab_pcr_hypokalaemia.htm This new test will enable the breeders to have their cats tested. For a carrier to be paired with an unaffected mate which will produce 50% unaffected kittens and 50% carriers; as long as the cats are tested they may continue to be used for breeding as long as they are not paired with another carrier. The Korat Cat Club agreed that kittens could not be registered with the GCCF if not tested, it was in this way that they eradicated Gangliosidosis from the breed.

Professor Gruffydd-Jones went on to speak about the research into "in-breeding" within pedigree cats - the Burmese breed is second most inbred. He said that the breed was dangerously inbred, with cranial and facial defects being now found and that a new blood stock would need to be found.

The test for Hypokalaemia is an enormous advantage, swabs can be sent in, or may be carried out by a vet, and the form filled in. The Langford Veterinary Services Website shows how to take the swabs, http://www.langfordvets.co.uk/lab_pkdsampling.htm

Editors note: Please see the additional articles on HKL -

Our Website is Live!

After months of hard work we have our website up and running.

What we need to do now is fill the Breeder, Kitten & Stud lists and we need your help to do this.

So come on breeders, don't be shy, please use your website to "advertise" yourselves.

You should already have received a password, so "log in" as a member and have a go. www.burmesecatassociation.org

MARMITE'S MEW-SINGS

Hi fellow Burmese,

I'm Marmite. Now, this part of the Burmese Cat Association newsletter is just for Burmese. Mums and Dads can't read it as it's in code. They think they're reading about Cat Shows - Ha! So just snuggle up on a knee and have a read.

I was having a think between naps the other day and thought I'd ask. Have you ever wondered about your name? You see, my mum says she loves me then names me after something horrible, so where's that coming from? The only link I can see is that the dreadful stuff is as brown as I am! Mum says that if I'd been chocolate I would have been called "Truffle" - hmm! Not so sure about that either, but can see what she is going on about. Do they go mad or what? "Here Truffle, Truffle...." My whiskers!

I do get told I'm her mate a lot, which is great. Whenever she comes home Mum always calls out "Where's my mate Marmite, then?" So I run downstairs and tell her how much I love her and she picks me up and cuddles me.

Smashing! Mum seems to eat a lot of the dreadful brown stuff and often has it on toast for her lunch - I'll stick with the chicken, thank you very much! I know the brown stuff is horrid, as one day I thought I'd try it myself. So, after she'd put her Marmite toast on the table I nipped up and had a quick lick. Yes, I know what you're all thinking, she caught me, but that wasn't the worst thing - it was the taste! My claws - what a taste! Mum laughed and said "Serves you right! You either love it or hate it and I can see from your face what you think". Well, not that many names make sense to me. I mean I'm okay with the obvious "Snowy", "Blackie", "Ginge" type names but some of the others I will never understand. Then there's the fact that we all seem to have to have two names, and that's not counting occasional ones like "Thieving Rat" and "Pesky Nuisance". We apparently have to have one pedigree name and one pet name. Uh? What's all that about? As we are all pedigrees and all someone's pet, isn't that just a wee bit confusing?

Anyway, I'm getting tired again with all this mew-sing - far too much brain exercise going on, so time to see if there is anything in my bowl as I pass it on the way to bed.

Paws up, Burmese!

Signed yours faithfully,

Marmite (with help from Sharon Neal)

Potter



That's what it says on the box but at 5.7Kg?

(Photo of Potter sent by Carol Matheson)

God Created Cat

A newly discovered chapter in the Book of Genesis explains the origins of pets.

Adam and Eve said to the Lord, "When we were in the Garden you walked with us every day. Now we do not see you, we are lonely, and it is difficult to remember your love for us."

And God said, "I will create a companion for you, who shall be a reflection of my love. This companion will accept you for yourselves, and love you as I do, despite your faults."

And God created an animal to be a companion to Adam and Eve.

And it was a good animal.

And God was pleased.

And Adam and Eve were pleased.

And the animal was pleased.

And God said, "Because this animal will reflect my love for you, its name will be a reflection of my own, and you will call it "Dog."

And Dog lived with Adam and Eve, and loved them.

And they were comforted.

And God was pleased.

And Dog was content.

Time passed, and an angel came to the Lord and said, "Lord, Adam and Eve have become filled with pride. Dog has loved them so much that they believe they are worthy of adoration.

And God said, "I will create for them another companion, which will be with them forever, and will see them for what they are. This companion will remind them of their limitations, so they will know they are not always worthy of adoration."

And God created Cat to be a companion to Adam and Eve.

And Cat would not obey them, and they were reminded that they were not supreme beings.

And Adam and Eve learned humility.

And they were greatly improved.

And God was pleased.

And Dog was happy.

And Cat didn't give a ****, one way or the other.

(Thanks to Brian Fox for sending this story)

Nominations Wanted

According to our rules, one Officer and two Committee Members need to stand down this year. Helen Hewitt, Treasurer, and Anna Virtue, a Committee Member are both standing down, but are willing to stand again. Lee Orton has resigned due to work and family commitments. Nominations are therefore invited from the membership to fill these vacancies. The nominations must be proposed and seconded by fully paid up members, together with an acceptance from the nominee, who must provide a short CV. These must be received by the Secretary no later than 1st October 2012.

CALENDAR PHOTOS

The calendar was very well received last year and your committee has asked me to produce another one for 2013, which I am very happy to do but I will need good quality, clear photos to do it.

Please look through your files (electronic or physical) and see if you can find photos of your beautiful Burmese that you would be proud to see in print.

This year I would like to include the cat's name, owner and photographer on the page, so please send that detail too.

Ideally photos should be emailed from digital copy or emailed as scanned pictures. If you are not able to do this please post them to me and include an SAE for their return.

The cut-off date entries is August 31st. I look forward to receiving your photos.

Anna Virtue - email anna@hobberdy.co.uk





IMPORTANT BREAKTHROUGH FOR HYPOKALAEMIA by Claire Lovell

We have wonderful and important news!! A swab test for Hypokalaemia (HKL) is now available from Bristol University's Langford Diagnostic Lab.

It's been a long haul to get to this point. I started collecting data in 1984, when a good friend of mine gave up breeding and gave me boxes of paperwork, mostly pedigrees and old stud books, but amongst them a letter enquiring to bring a queen into stud. The letter explained that the queen had had several successful litters but that the last one had produced two kittens that had developed a potassium problem and had been sent to Bristol Veterinary Hospital for treatment. What caught my eye was that one of these kittens was in a pedigree I had been given of a cat with HKL. This was the all important 'white feather'- a verified starting point. Shortly after this I met Prof. Tim Gruffydd-Jones and



Anna Virtue & Prof. Leslie Lyons
(Left)



Prof. Tim Gruffydd-Jones, Dr Chris Helps, Claire Lovell, Prof. Leslie Lyons (L-R, Right)

asked him about HKL. He told me that he had some samples if anyone was interested to do the research. There were no DNA tests available back then and gene research was still in its infancy. There seemed little to do except keep records. Joyce Dell (ACA President) was also collating information to try to gauge the extent of the problem.

Eventually in 2007 (in desperation to be shot of me I suspect), Tim suggested I contact Prof. Leslie Lyons at Davis University in California and generously said that he would be willing to work with her and her team. With a feeling of 'nothing ventured, nothing gained' I sent the email. Leslie quickly replied saying she would be interested and pleased to help. Finally, the ball was rolling. Having bored everyone for so long (and I really do apologise) it was time to spring into action (or in my case hobble).

Anna Virtue who you will know is a force of nature when it comes to organisation, soon had things moving. I tend to be a bit on the lazy side so need a good push occasionally. Hundreds of swabs were collected and sent to Davis from all over the country, and then we waited. Leslie came over in 2009 to discuss the plan of action and to explain what she needed next, we proceeded to do all of that and then we waited some more. Asian exhibitors kindly allowed swabs to be taken from our show which really boosted the data. Later in the year Tim went to the Burmese show and swabs were taken there to enable Anna and me to put together the 'control' group, these were cats that were unlikely to have the HKL gene. We were really getting somewhere! On November 19th 2011 Leslie sent an email saying that things were looking good but we needed some more blood samples from affected cats in order for them to examine the RNA (*DNA makes RNA, RNA makes the protein. The defect in the DNA will transfer to the RNA, then to the protein, which in the end makes the cat ill*). Bloods were quickly taken and sent off. By this time we had lost two of our donor cats from old age, we prayed that we would have enough from the few cats still available.

And then in February 2012 it came! The email to say that the final tests were proven and that a simple swab test would be available very soon. Leslie came over in again in April and Anna and I went to Bristol to meet up with her, Tim and Dr Chris Helps (Head of Molecular Diagnostic Unit at Langford). We were privileged to sit in on a lecture she was giving to some of the students at Langford. It was just surreal to be listening to our dream becoming reality. We actually got goose bumps when the chart showing the first all important DNA spike came up on the screen. So after nearly three decades, a test for Hypokalaemic Polymyopathy is here. We should all be extremely grateful to have this test which will improve our breeding programmes tremendously. We owe a big thank you to everyone who has helped over the years in so many ways. A special thank you I think is owed to the cats with HKL whose owners have generously allowed them to donate the all important bloods for the tests. Mostly of course we are indebted to Langford and Davis for making this amazing outcome possible.

HKL - THE NEXT STEP by Claire Lovell and Anna Virtue

We all need to ascertain the status of our breeding stock. This is really easy to do.

The first step is to take a cotton bud swab from the inside of the cat's mouth, at least one hour after it could have eaten any food.

You can either contact Langford Diagnostic Lab who will send you the necessary swab and form or you can send a normal cotton wool swab.

Details of how to, what to and where to send the swabs is covered comprehensively on the Langford website www.langfordvets.co.uk/lab_pcr_hypokalaemia.htm

Once the swab has been tested you will receive a Certificate (usually within a few days) stating whether your cat is Normal, Carrier or Affected. This is what we all need to know about our cats in order to produce kittens that will eventually be clear of HKL.

Two Normal cats mated together will have ALL NORMAL kittens. In other words no HKL.

One Normal cat mated to a Carrier cat will produce a whole litter that will not have HKL. However, it is likely that half of the kittens may be carriers.

These are the two scenarios we need to work with. What we need to avoid is mating two carriers together as this is likely to produce kittens with HKL disorder.

Cats that have an AFFECTED certificate should not be bred from.

The BCA has arranged for a member's discount with Langford, the code for this is available from the Secretary or Vice-Chairman. Just quote this when ordering your test kit.

OK nearly there....

How do we share this newfound knowledge?

We suggest that stud owners ask for the status of any visiting queens, in the same way that you would ask for a FeLV/FIV test prior to coming into stud.

After mating a copy of the stud's HKL Certificate should be attached to his pedigree and given to the queen's owner.

Any kittens sold for breeding from this mating should have a copy of BOTH parents HKL Certificates attached to their pedigree.

A new paragraph should be added to the stud's Mating Certificate stating this as a requirement. This should be signed by the queen's owner.

If the parents of your cat have already been tested, simply ask for a copy of the HKL Certificates to keep as proof.

If your cat is a carrier, please don't panic. This is not a problem if handled correctly.

You simply need to ensure that it is mated only to a non-carrier and then any kittens required for breeding can in turn be tested. The whole point of having this test is so we don't have to neuter carriers who often have a very valuable contribution to make to the gene pool. For instance a carrier may have a wonderful temperament, super type, be resistant to kidney disease etc. All of which are important for the health and diversity of the breed.

There have been several suggestions as to how this test information should be managed. We would like to recommend to our BACs sending the Lab certificates to the GCCF in the same way as the stud boy's Certificates of Entirety. The GCCF already hold Gene Test Certificates for other breeds. This would bring them under the umbrella of the GCCF should anyone at a later date be found to have fiddled the books. Although why anyone would bother is beyond us, as it is in everyone's interest to sort this as soon as possible.

We need to avoid burdening breeders with unnecessary expense so would not recommend verified swabs taken by the vets which would also involve compulsory micro chipping. A quick phone around to local vets gave a middle estimate of £75 per cat!

Hopefully common sense will prevail, as all these things combine to make breeding more difficult. With everything becoming so expensive it puts an added financial burden on breeders and every time someone gives up, we lose gene pool, and ultimately show entries. One breeder we spoke to says she will register with another body should this be enforced. Food for thought!

We are more than happy to help and advise on any of the above, so please do feel free to contact us. It may sound complicated, but it really isn't! If we all pull together at this stage we should be able to rid the gene pool of this disease fairly quickly.

Obituaries

Margaret Somers

Margaret Somers died peacefully in her sleep at Ledbury Nursing Home on Wednesday 14th March 2012. I first met her in 1972 on a visit to see her stud cats. That day was to alter the course of my life. Margaret's modus operandi was the word 'must'...So I *must* join the Burmese Cat Club in order to learn how to become a breeder. Then Jerry *must* stand for committee & I *must* join the stewarding scheme!

Margaret was a lady and a good person. She had to be for Vic Watson to pick her as his successor. He wanted a safe pair of hands to hold the Burmese Cat Club together for the well being and advancement of the breed.

She was a keen observer of the human condition, both witty & expressive. Once, after a somewhat noisy AGM at the Great Northern she whispered in my ear - all Clubs should be run by a benevolent dictatorship of one. She was, of course, exactly that. A few gentle shoves & suddenly people found themselves doing things, which they had never thought about or even intended! She was a powerful woman, much admired for her honesty & sheer

dedication to the BCC. I loved her & so did hundreds of club members. If the many cats which were helped by the Benevolent could speak, they would too.

Judy Potter

Margaret's prefix, Kevitor, means "the very best". It is a definition that applies not only to the cats she bred but also to the enormous and lasting contribution she made to the strength and success of the Burmese breed both in this country and abroad.

I bought my first Kevitor kitten over 50 years ago and still have one – at 17 1/2 she could well be the last survivor of Margaret's breeding – but I would love to be proved wrong. When Charles retired he and Margaret moved from Knutsford to Ledbury and we became close friends. I was introduced to the show world at Wolverhampton but when it became clear that I was not an enthusiastic exhibitor Margaret, typically, found something else for me to do. This was her way, she did not miss opportunities and nor did she accept failure. Difficulties were overcome and often solved by her "just get on with it" attitude. She assumed we would all try our best to meet her expectations – and we did. It was often advisable to take her suggestions as instructions. No-one let her down simply because no-one wanted to. I can remember being at a Club table with at least 8 other bidden helpers – and yet she made us all feel useful and appreciated.

From her very early days Margaret became a steward and then, quite quickly, a judge – something of a foregone conclusion because of her reputation as a responsible and caring breeder. Her first breeding queen was Helsby Mignon who was bought in 1958 partly because of the family connection to Burma and also as a present for a friend who then refused to take "that rat". She was mated to Ch. Casa Gatos Darkee and so began the Kevitor breeding line. As a judge Margaret was very respected, reliable, consistent and extremely fair minded. She always tried to make at least one nice or positive remark about a cat no matter how many faults it had. She would spend time discussing her opinions with exhibitors without prejudice and bias and would linger long after the show was over. Judging commitments and her own work as an HMI inspector for the Dept of Education and Science often restricted her from showing her own cats but there were plenty of Kevitor champions both here and abroad.

The name Ch. Tapawingo Tahltan means something to every Burmese breeder. He was Margaret's stud cat, imported from Canada in 1970 and bred from Dormin Psyche and Kevitor Brown Sprite. He spent months in quarantine and Margaret and Charles would drive to Bristol to spend time with him (or bond as they would say nowadays). It was felt that a new bloodline should be brought to British born Burmese and Tahltan fulfilled his role admirably not only by becoming a champion very quickly but by passing on his superb eye colour and shape. Look back into almost any Burmese pedigree and Tahltan's name will be there. Margaret would visit all of Tahltan's litters – wherever they were, giving encouragement and advice to all the owners as well as making many long lasting friends. It was an outstanding contribution to the strength and reputation of the Club and its members and was a unique quality everyone remembers with some awe.

Goodness knows how many miles she travelled. She attended meetings, conferences and shows all over the country – she rarely missed one. Being her driving companion could be a little unnerving at times – Yvonne Bruckel

remembers driving back from a visit to a doubtful breeder in Wales and Margaret whizzing into a lay-by and out the other end without a word of explanation. If she wasn't driving she would quite often take a nap mid-conversation and wake up to carry on with what she was saying a few minutes later without apparently noticing. Not to mention travelling throughout Britain (with frequent detours) she also travelled to Scandinavia and the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa judging and taking the renown of the Burmese Cat Club with her. It was largely due to her efforts that it became the largest and most respected cat club in the UK.

As Chairman Margaret introduced some innovative policies for the Club. One of the most successful of these was setting up a scheme of Regional Advisers throughout the country that provided a network of advice and help with welfare and rescue work and drew in a scattered membership. She oversaw the establishment of safe houses throughout the country – even having a couple in her own period garden at The Southend. Her attention to rescue work was meticulous and extremely understanding of all the complicated and emotional problems involved. She rarely missed a chance to rehome a cat no matter how reluctant the new owner might initially be. Once one was marked out to take on a rescue or rehome it quickly became a fait accompli. And it always worked and brought great happiness to cat and owner. From the tentative but optimistic beginnings of the Benevolent Fund with an initial contribution of 10/- Margaret oversaw the establishment of an active and readily accessible fund which is now a registered charity. She was principal trustee and insisted that money should be immediately available when needed, a most valued strategy and certainly a reason for its success. Her influence and guiding hand were felt throughout all activities of the Club and, very probably, the whole of the pedigree cat world.

Margaret became President in 1994 and remained so until her death on 14th March this year. Although, physically, she became frail her mind remained very active and her memory for names and pedigrees continued to put us all to shame. Many people who have been in touch since her death describe her as being a true lady, yes, she was that, but she was also an extraordinarily talented administrator, her work characterised by her integrity and determination and yet she was very modest about her achievements always insisting she didn't want "any fuss". She was, quite simply, the Burmese Cat Club and a real friend to all its members. She will be greatly missed.

Elisabeth Amies

Sue Vickers

I first met Sue Vickers around 15 years ago, but we only became good friends 10 years later. She was a very kind and lively person who loved the little things in life and had a great sense of humour. I can remember many occasions when we have sat laughing our heads off with tears pouring down our faces.

Sue bred Burmese for over 30 years under the prefix Srekciv during which time she had some lovely cats including Champion Srekciv Peggy Sue, a lilac queen and a chocolate boy, Grand Champion Srekciv Artfull Dodger who was her first stud, and whose name appears in a lot of lines. A mating between these produced another good stud, Grand Champion Srekciv

Mistermaccorber, a lilac boy. Sue had old fashioned values and principles and firmly believed that the "old style" Burmese was the true Burmese cat. She was a member of all the Burmese Cat Clubs, and helped out on the BCC table, both in the years of the "spotted cat" where stick on spots were pulled off a cat toy to reveal a prize and more recently at the Supreme show. She was very knowledgeable and helpful with breeding and well-being queries from both Burmese breeders and owners and always gave good advice to novice breeders. It was natural for her to support the Burmese Cat Association given her views on the breed, and she was looking forward to being able to help out whenever she could at our Club tables in the future. Sue celebrated her 61st birthday in December at which time there was no indication that she had a terminal illness. During what was to be - mercifully for her - a short illness she was so very brave, worrying more about others and the effect that her illness was having on family members than her own situation. Sue died of pancreatic cancer on 18 March 2012, leaving a loving husband, Bob.

Those of you who knew Sue will be sorry to have lost her. Those of you who didn't know her, I'm sorry that you missed out because she was a lovely lady and a loyal friend.

Sharon Neal



BRISTOL CATS STUDY

What's it all about?

The 'Bristol Cats' study is a pioneering study investigating cat health, welfare and behaviour. It was launched in the Bristol area in June 2010, and rolled out across the U.K. in March 2011. The study has proved to be extremely popular with over 1000 kittens enrolled. The study will continue to register kittens throughout 2012. We hope you will help us gather more information by encouraging kitten owners, breeders, carers or anyone with a kitten to take part. Kittens from all backgrounds are welcome, including non pedigree and pedigree breeds, littermates and multiple kittens from the same household. We hope to enrol a further 1000 kittens this year so please get in touch and proudly tell your friends "My cat is a 'Bristol Cat'!"

How we collect information

We are collecting information from kitten owners to help identify factors that increase or decrease the risk of common behaviour patterns and diseases of cats, for example, obesity and hyperthyroidism. Kitten owners complete online or postal questionnaires, initially when their kittens are between 8-16 weeks, then again at 6, 12, and 18 months of age. If further funding becomes available, the study will continue to a lifetime study of the kittens – but kitten owners can leave the study at any point should they wish to. We will then analyse the data to see what extent specific problems (e.g. obesity) are associated with management (e.g.



diet, lifestyle) and other factors (e.g. breed).

What are the benefits?

We aim to provide information that can be used by veterinary practitioners, cat breeders and owners to improve the health and welfare of cats in the future. The study is the cat-equivalent of the 'Children of the 90's study' which has been collecting information relating to children in the Bristol region since the early 1990's. This study has already identified ways to prevent many important conditions, such as cot death (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/alspac>). The lives of many children have been saved by those who gave their time and enrolled during the 90's and we hope you can spare a little time to help our study make a difference to cats.

How to get involved:

You can help by spreading the word to kitten owners, cat breeders or anyone with a kitten. Please contact us, using the details below, for a supply of posters and flyers to display and pass on to kitten owners.

If you have a kitten between 8 and 16 weeks of age, are resident in the UK and over 18 years of age, then please log-on to our updated website and tell us about your kitten - we also love to hear from owners of more than one kitten. Full details can be found at www.bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/cats together with a link to the first questionnaire. Please also contact us if you prefer a paper copy of the questionnaire sent in the post.

Can I speak to someone about the study?

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the study, then please do not hesitate to get in touch. My colleague Emma Gale, will be working with me over the coming months and either Emma or I will be happy to talk over the phone, or to answer questions by email. You can also check our website for newsletters and updates about the study.

Thank you in anticipation of your help and support with this study.

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