

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CATS

The Tonkinese Breed was first recognised by the GCCF nearly 30 years ago (although they were bred in the UK for a while before that) and we'd like to find out something about how the breed has developed. People may have asked you how long your cats live, what sort of illnesses they might be susceptible to and so on, but most of us only have the experience of our immediate feline family. We would like everyone to contribute to a memory survey: tell us about your tonkinese, how long they lived, problems or illnesses they had (if any) as kittens and adults, what they died of. This could give us valuable information that will help us to safeguard the future of the breed, as well as answering many of the questions that people ask us. Vets often have only one Tonkinese in their client list, so a list of possibilities of things Tonkinese suffer from would be useful for owners.

If you're a breeder but don't have kittens, or a pet owner with friends who might be interested in homing an adult Tonkinese please consider sending on enquiries to Val, the Club Welfare officer. She has a number of Tonkinese in need of homes and a few more referrals would be a great help. You can also send people to the kitten list as this is a valuable resource for locating breeders whether or not they have kittens. Being listed here is also a good way of bouncing people to your website.

• If you have a stud cat *please* put him on the Club stud list: it's often very hard to find a stud and this would be a great help to many breeders.

• The Club now waives the joining fee for new members joined by the breeder of their kitten as part of their 'kitten pack'. See the club website for more information.

• We have a number of useful links on the club website, www.tonkinese.info, for various cat-related issues including items on health and two very useful links about pet travel and Brexit. Please do visit the website!

Updated GCCF rule 10b.ii: All cats and kittens must be fully vaccinated against infectious enteritis (FPV), FHV and FCV ("cat flu") at least one week prior to sale and/or leaving for a new home. Note: in the event of an emergency that requires a cat or kitten to be rehomed that is not fully vaccinated, the office should be informed as soon as possible.



TONKINESE BREED CLUB 16th CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW

7 December 2019 – Bracknell Leisure Centre

(Back-to-back with the National Cat Club Show)

TONKINESE BREED CLUB OFFICERS & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President: Mrs Linda Vousden
Vice-President: Dr Sarah Caney BVSc PhD DSAM MRCVS

CHAIRMAN: Dr Julia Craig-McFeely
Tel: 01865 241323 julia.cmcf@gmail.com

VICE-CHAIRMAN: Mrs Jo Sturgess

HON. SECRETARY: Mrs Linda Vousden
Lansdale, 12 Robinhood Lane, Winnersh, Berks RG41 5LX
Tel: (0118) 9619444 tbc.uk@ntlworld.com

HON.TREASURER: Mr Mike Vousden
Lansdale, 12 Robinhood Lane, Winnersh, Berks. RG41 5LX
Tel: (0118) 9619444 michael.vousden@btconnect.com

Committee Members:

Mrs Sarah Brooke
Mrs Jacqueline Leah
Mr Gerry Smith
Mrs Lizzi Smith
Mr Mike Smith

Delegate to GCCF Council and Tonkinfo Editor
Julia Craig-McFeely julia.cmcf@gmail.com

WELFARE

Mrs Valerie Chapple val.chapp@btinternet.com

Lucy's Law

The Government has announced that new legislation (called 'Lucy's Law') will ban the sale of puppies and kittens through a third-party agent, this means pet shops or pet dealers, as of 6th April 2020.

The new law will require animals to be born and reared in a safe environment, with their mother, and to be sold from their place of birth. The rules, which will apply to England, are also designed to deter smugglers who abuse the Pet Travel Scheme to bring young animals into the UK to be sold. Lucy's Law is named for a badly treated Cavalier King Charles Spaniel bitch who died at a puppy farm in Wales.

HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

Linda Vouden

Hello everyone, I hope you've been able to make the most of the good weather, Mike and I have been working hard on our garden, to repair as much damage as possible caused by the long hot summer last year; so many mature shrubs lost. This year brings its own trials – honeybees have nested in one of our chimney pots and keep coming into the kitchen!

Besides the recent loss of our sweet Chiffon, who was the gentlest Tonkinese we've ever had and will be missed every day, the biggest change for us is our new kitten (many thanks to Ulla Korterman). Malu is utterly mad, fearless, confident, loving and gorgeous. She already rules the household. Hopefully this may mean a revival of the Mymystics and an added bonus is that she is descended from our glorious and much missed Pharoah.

So far this has been a fairly serene year for the Committee and hence the Club. We do have space for a couple of Committee members if anyone is interested.

I'm going to be boring again: we still haven't had input from more than three breeders on their current and past breeding queens/studs or kittens. As I said before this is important for our archives, as it is now the only way we can trace the separate breeding lines and help breeders looking for suitable partners for their cats. Remember, the forms are available from the web site. Please spare a minute or so to add your information to this historical record.

I look forward to seeing you all at our next show, either as an exhibitor or visitor.

Cheers,
Linda

Fake news: feeding scares

I have recently heard from several people that feeding raw *will give your cat Campylobacter, Salmonella, Coccidia or Trichostrongylus Foetus*. This is not true. Several people who were alarmed after their vet suggested diarrhoea was caused by these things because their cat or kitten had been eating a raw diet have had tests come back completely negative. The scare originates with a single case in the USA where an owner successfully sued her vet for telling her to put her cat on a raw diet for health reasons, claiming her child became seriously ill after touching the food. As a result of this single isolated case (where there was no absolute proof the cat food had affected the child) the RCVS in the UK recommended that raw-fed animals are housed separately from those who do not eat raw, while there are reports of vets refusing to treat any raw-fed animals, despite the fact that most vets have been treating and housing raw- and non-raw-fed animals in the same environment for decades without problems, and without knowing which is which. Raw feeding has been used since pet cats have been kept and food hygiene today is better than it has ever been. Raw meat has not suddenly become any more dangerous but the internet and pet food companies are actively fuelling this fire. There is no cause for panic.

A second urban legend made my vet laugh out loud: there is a rumour going round that if you feed your cat both wet and dry food simultaneously it will get 'twisted stomach' and die. Millions of cats have been fed wet with dry ever since kibble was invented and none have ever had a 'twisted stomach'. There is a condition *dogs* can get that might be nicknamed twisted stomach: in order to get it they have to take **violent exercise** immediately after eating a **very large meal** (and no, it doesn't matter whether it is wet or dry). But this does not happen to cats. So this is another hoax.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Although there is almost always a lot of information in our newsletter about and for breeders, We do aim also to make it relevant to our non-breeder members. Very few people send things to me for inclusion, but it would be lovely to include more items from our readers. Please do send us stories, anecdotes or anything you think might be interesting, but particularly pictures. With our lovely colour format it is a great opportunity to show off your beautiful cats.

The committee continues to have concerns about the availability of kittens from reputable breeders. There are quite a few people on pet-sales websites advertising unregistered Tonkinese kittens who are probably breeding from cats that were sold to them in good faith as pets only—possibly even brother and sister.

We need to ensure there are enough breeders to maintain a diverse gene pool and that breeders are working within GCCF guidelines and following best-possible practices for welfare. If you have ever thought about breeding but feel you don't know enough to consider it you can come along to a 'new breeder day' (please contact me if you are interested as these are organised when there is sufficient demand) where you will get masses of information and have a chance to ask lots of questions. Some people decide after this that it's not for them, and some that this is just what they would like to do, so there's no commitment in coming along just out of interest.

Unlike many breeds the Tonkinese community is very pro-active in supporting and mentoring new breeders. If you're lucky you'll get to see a birth from one of your mentor's queens, and there will always be someone on the end of the phone, day or night, to help and support you.

Cat breeding is in decline even though the number of people who want to own a pedigree cat is probably stable or even growing. Lifestyle has changed so that the housewife with time on her hands (!) who used to be the backbone of cat breeding has disappeared, and everyone seems too busy. High-priced designer breeds are increasing, and that has led to an increase in bad breeders who know nothing about breeding and are just in it to make money (keeping the Tonkinese relatively cheap has helped our breeder profile enormously). Financially, I think also people have less disposable income and time for a hobby like this, and if they do, there seem to be so many other things to use it on.

As well as finding people who have the time and interest to breed we also need to change the long-standing suspicion of breeders about selling a kitten for breeding. Naturally we're all cautious about this because of the potential for harm, but as long as new breeders have access to good support and mentoring this is a wonderfully enjoyable and fulfilling hobby that will help to ensure the future of this lovely breed.

ton^sinfo



Club Greetings Cards

We are delighted to offer a selection of high quality large greeting cards (A5 size), with envelopes.

Single card - £1.00 & postage

Pack of four cards - £3.50 & postage

See our website for more details!

www.tonkinese.info

ton^sinfo

www.tonkinese.info

An introduction to Feline Psychology

This is the second in my series on feline psychology, and I hope you will continue to find it useful.

Linda Vousden

KITTEN BEHAVIOUR DEVELOPMENT or The Psychology of How Cats Learn Part II

NOURISHMENT—The Building Blocks of the Future.

Unlike a house, that can be reduced to its foundations and re-built, a kitten has only one chance of getting the right start in life. It is absolutely essential to feed the pregnant queen correctly. If she is under-nourished during pregnancy, or in the weeks following the kittens' birth, critical stages of the kittens' development will be delayed—such as eye-opening, walking and playing. Consequently, the kittens will have diminished learning abilities in later life and are likely to be more neurotic than kittens raised by correctly fed mothers.

Within half an hour of birth, the neonate (new born) attempts to feed, although the queen usually waits until birthing is complete before settling to nurse her litter. It is vital for the kitten to feed from the queen soon after birth because during the first 24 hours the queen produces colostrum, a rich concentrate of nutrients that is low in lactose and contains essential anti-bodies to stimulate the kitten's own immune system. When born, kittens instinctively burrow head-first into a warm object such as their mother or littermates. With bouncing movements of the head the kitten finds and attaches itself to the nipple for the first time. This is the *rooting reflex*, which lasts for up to 11 days. The kitten's feeding behaviour will change several times before it is old enough to leave its mother. There are three significant phases of mother-infant interaction during nursing: first, the queen initiates feed-

ing by arousing the kittens in the nest; second, feeding is initiated by a mutual interaction of queen and kittens; third, suckling is mainly initiated by the kittens.



Suckling

At birth a kitten weighs between 80g and 140g according to its breed, and normally doubles its weight in the first week. The queen instigates feeding sessions by washing the kittens to arouse them, and then she'll lie on her side and almost enclose them with her legs. The *sucking reflex* is present from birth, strongest on awakening, and is initially stimulated by gentle pressure on the kitten's muzzle, be it the queen's breast or the finger of a person trying to bottle feed it. A few days from birth the sucking reflex is only stimulated by lip contact or by small objects in the mouth.

Kittens develop a preference for a particular nipple, suckling may be restricted to that nipple after a few days and a suckling kitten will reject a strange queen's nipple. However, nipple preference declines with age and kittens then accept a foster-mother more easily. A queen with very young kittens may accept strange kittens but, as her own kittens mature, she is likely to reject or avoid newly introduced kittens. Although durations vary, kittens generally suckle for about 4 hours a day in the first week; this drops by about an hour per week over the next two weeks. The queen's constant nursing is essential to en-

sure that the kittens are sufficiently nourished for the correct development of the brain and nervous system. The *treading reflex* of suckling kittens not only assists milk flow but comforts them; the treading, or air-paddling, of forepaws is often seen in adult cats when they are cuddled by their owners. During weeks 3–4 the kittens occasionally leave the nest to follow their mother and instigate nursing, they approach her with specific cries to let her know they want to feed. Her response is to lie down and expose her nipples to them. This is an important social interaction.

Weaning

Weaning begins once the kittens start to eat solid food, it is a gradual process and suckling may continue for several months, especially if there is only one kitten or the kittens are confined with the queen. The duration of this phase depends mainly on the accessibility of the mother and the availability of alternative food sources. By 10 days the milk teeth are visible beneath the gums. They erupt between 2–3 weeks and by 8 weeks the kitten will have a full set of 26 deciduous teeth. From around the fifth week the queen begins to discourage her kittens from suckling, her maternal behaviour begins to decline and she leaves them for longer periods. She often avoids her kittens but may instigate play behaviour, patting, wrestling, chasing and tail-flicking for them. Although they chase her and try to suckle, she spends longer in places inaccessible to them, lying on her stomach so that they cannot reach her nipples, or she simply kicks them away from her.

As the availability of the queen's milk decreases, the kittens start to develop their predatory skills; they are normally fully weaned by 8 to 10 weeks. A queen with a small litter is more inclined to nurse her kittens over a longer period than a queen with a large litter. After 12 weeks, the queen may still be lactating but the milk has little nutri-

tional value. Initially the kittens spend a couple of minutes each day attempting to eat solid food, by the end of the fourth week they will be eating for about 25 minutes per day and up to 50 minutes per day by the time they are 6 weeks old



Eliminative Behaviour Development

Neonates are unable to control their own waste elimination and depend upon their mother to stimulate *uro-genital* and *ano-genital reflexes*, for urination and defecation. The queen licks the kitten's genital areas to stimulate elimination and consumes the waste to keep the nest clean during the 6-week period in which the nest is the centre of the kittens' activity. These reflexes are present until between 3 and 5 weeks of age. Kittens naturally display "earth-raking" behaviour to cover strong scents in their nest, a habit that they later use to cover unwanted food or urine and faeces, This is an innate defence mechanism to avoid attracting predators to the nest.

Around 3 weeks of age they begin to explore their litter-trays, digging in the loose substrate and assessing the particles orally. After the oral exploration, the kittens begin to use the tray for elimination. This innate behaviour in kittens is reinforced by watching, smelling and copying their mother using specific toilet areas and burying waste. An orphan kitten, or one whose mother is an outdoor cat, won't have examples to learn from so the breeder must teach the kitten by placing it into a litter-tray after it has eaten and manipulating its paws to make digging motions. It may be necessary to leave traces of other cats' urine or some of the kitten's

own droppings in the tray, as scent clues to reinforce the learned pattern.



HUNTING BEHAVIOUR—Learning to be Self-Sufficient

In nature, when the kittens are about 5 weeks old the queen may bring dead prey to eat in front of them; by example she is encouraging the kittens to eat it. As they mature she brings live prey for them and helps them to capture and kill it. Where the queen is restricted to the house she may bring substitute prey to her kittens, such as toys or other small objects. Although the hunting behaviour patterns (the crouch, stalk, pounce and killing-bite) are innate it is by observing and imitating the queen during the hunt and kill, that the kitten's skills are refined. Where they are unable to copy their mother, it is important that breeders stimulate the kittens' hunting instincts by providing rustling balls of paper, toys that rattle, rope 'snakes' or feather wands, i.e. anything that mimics the movement and sound of natural prey.

The stalking and response patterns, chasing and pouncing, are apparent in play behaviour before a kitten is old enough to kill. A kitten that is not exposed to live prey may never kill as there may be a critical period for 'prey killing' in a kitten's early development. Kittens that develop full predatory

skills tend to hunt and kill the type of prey they saw their mother kill. If they are given the opportunity, they will later increase their range of prey type. The connection between making a kill and eating it (or even realising that it is food) has to be learned. Cats raised on a tinned and dry food diet may also kill prey, but are less likely to eat it. The euphoria of a prolonged hunt may be why the cat continues to play with its prey well after the killing-bite has been executed.



COMMUNICATION & PLAY BEHAVIOUR

Socialisation is based on communication. Cats have an extremely sophisticated system of communication using both vocalisation (17 different phonetic sounds have been recognised) and posture; they are able to vocalise definite statements, demands and queries, and to demonstrate expressions of emotion and social status etc. By not attempting to understand the basics of the feline vocal and physical language, the relationship between many owners and their cat is considerably diminished. Breeders should bear in mind that if any young animal is deprived of the opportunity to play, to explore its environment and socially interact early on in life, it is likely to suffer from emotional problems and a diminished learning capacity later on.

The early weeks of life are crucial to a kitten's future social development; this is when they first start to become aware of their environment. Kittens separated from their

mothers at two weeks have a tendency to be unduly reactive (aggressive and nervous) in later life, a significant cause for this behaviour is the lack of opportunity to play. Play is usually classified into three categories: locomotory, social and object.

Around the third week, as locomotory skills improve, play behaviour develops and kittens begin to exhibit more complex social interactions. Initially they bite/mouth and paw at each others face and body, later the more co-ordinated movements develop such as stalking, chasing, leaping, climbing, rolling over, and wrestling with hind feet kicking and forelimb claspings around the play-mate's neck. Social play behaviour may be solitary or involve siblings, other cats and other species. It includes actions associated with fighting, chasing, prey catching and killing. By 5 weeks of age the play behaviour has almost completely matured and tends to peak between 9 and 14 weeks of age, at which time one may begin to observe mature behaviour patterns.

Object play (individual or with others) and self-play (such as tail chasing) is essentially hunting behaviour, a simulation of the predatory behaviour patterns including object manipulation and chasing—whether the object is real or imaginary.

Social play with siblings results in social attachments and development of individual relationships; it reinforces group relationships among adults and young cats. Rolling over, to expose the vulnerable belly indicates trust and solicits social play; play with, and investigation of, objects improves the kitten's knowledge of what may or may not be suitable to eat, and where to find food. A kitten without siblings can only play with its mother who may respond but not to the same extent as a sibling. Kittens raised by human hand are even further restricted in their socialisation, isolation from other cats often

results in easily provoked reactive aggression in maturity. Even at an early age social play between kittens may be rather rough, and in older kittens it can become quite a serious physical dispute; kittens soon learn to reduce the severity of attack in order to avoid painful retaliation. Kittens are often quite vocal during play fights uttering low-pitched growls with an occasional squeak, to higher pitched and loud yowls.



HEREDITY AND TRAINING

Heredity determines the range of behaviour potential in a given situation, limited by the physical capabilities of the cat. While it affects the emotional make-up or 'personality' of your cat, it doesn't define exactly how your cat will behave. It has been demonstrated that excessive inbreeding and line-breeding may produce strains of animals that are emotionally unstable and possess a narrow range of behavioural potentials. Breeders should pay close attention to the emotional makeup of the cats from which they breed, remembering that both heredity and environment have their effect upon behaviour.

The sensitive period

In kittens the most sensitive period is usually between 2 and 7 weeks, so it may end before weaning is completed (around 8 weeks) but in some cats the socialisation period may extend to 10 weeks of age. Therefore, the kitten's character development is principally the breeder's responsibility. It is during this developmental period that the kitten's behaviour is most changeable. The effect of experiences at this time determines exactly which behaviour is given an opportunity to develop or not.

Generally, by this stage the kitten hasn't had any 'bad' experiences so it is quite uninhibited. As it gets older some of its behaviour patterns are eliminated and some are reinforced, the kitten develops its own responses to stimulus—it is 'developing a personality'. It is important for breeders to broaden the kitten's range of behaviour potentials by providing a variety of experiences. For example, the kitten should be exposed to the type of everyday noises that it will encounter in the home (washing machines, telephone, tumble dryers, vacuum cleaners, hair dryers etc.).



Socialisation with people is very important. Early handling accelerates both physiological and emotional development. The more contact a kitten has with several people (research shows that a minimum of 4 is optimal) the more extensively sociable it will be in later life. Cats that are not handled prior to 7 or 8 weeks of age (eg. feral cats) usually make unsatisfactory pets. Kittens who have contact with only one person tend not to 'generalise' their friendliness to others.

Breeders should make time to ensure that each kitten is handled daily and gradually increase the handling time from 15 to 40 minutes per day. However, about 15% of kittens are resistant to developing friendly characters even with the most intensive early handling. Some of these cats may be extremely friendly with their owners but will not allow themselves to be easily handled. It is worth the breeder spending extra time on the social development of a 'resistant' kitten, to raise a pet that can have a rewarding relationship with its owner.

Although this is a crucial developmental period, it is not necessarily the kitten's final opportunity to acquire its social skills and experiences, but breeders should know that learning opportunities missed during this period are more difficult to make up later in life and it is far easier to instil appropriate behaviour patterns at this time than to try to modify inappropriate behaviour later.

Keeping a cat at Stud (part 3)

Julia Craig-McFeely



In this final 'episode' of my series on keeping a stud I want to look at alternatives to the traditional way of keeping boys in outdoor runs.

Some years back I sold two Siamese boys to breeders in Germany, and was interested to see how different their model is from ours. Basically we keep our boys separate for two reasons: 1. the smell if they spray and 2. because they usually know the girls are going on heat before we do and can mate them before we have a chance to decide whether the timing is right. I know more than one breeder who ran on a boy from a litter only to find he had mated his mother or sister before they realised what was going on!

Both the German homes my boys went to kept the boys indoors with the girls (both had 4 or 5 breeding girls). The owner was at home most of the time and had enough space to separate. The intention was not to keep the boy for a long time, rather that he would mate that round of girls and then be neutered, and kittens kept from him to continue their lines. In this model a boy has a very short working life, just siring one round of kittens, maybe two, then becoming a pet.

In the UK bloodlines tend to work in geo-

graphical clusters: breeders go to the nearest stud boy for mating, but when the time comes to keep a kitten from that mating you can't take her back to her father so you're faced with potentially a very long journey to find a stud that isn't related to your lines, and a limited choice when you do. A long journey can put the girl firmly off heat too.

I didn't always have my own boys so I'm aware of how complicated it can be to organise travel to the stud you want to use, and I'm also aware of how reluctant I've always felt about selling one of my babies as a stud, knowing that for a few years they're going to have to live apart from family life.

A further option therefore is to buy in a boy from another breeder as a kitten, and run him alongside your girls until he mates them (he may be able to do this as young as 5-6 months old, depending on the rate of his development). I've done this now with two breeders. With the boy living indoors with the girls there is the dilemma of not being sure when they have mated so it can be complicated to judge due dates, but reasonably accurate timing can be based on keeping an eye out for pinking up. Once the girl is pregnant the boy can be neutered and either kept as a pet or rehomed. Obviously you have to get the timing right between the new kitten arriving and the queen's breeding cycle. By neutering as early as possible it is usually



possible to avoid spraying. If the boy does start to spray the only solution is a new home, where there are no smells or associations to remind him to do it, so a special kitten agreement that takes this into account is necessary.

This solution is ideal for breeders who live a long way from studs. If you have two or more queens to mate this can be an economical way of getting two matings, as it saves two sets of stud fees *and* two sets of blood tests, plus the travel, so usually this works out quite well.

However this does involve taking on another cat, his living costs and his welfare and well-being, particularly if he has to be rehomed (perhaps with one of his kittens). I'm certainly open to this way of getting bloodlines to people who are out of reasonable reach of unrelated stud cats. Breeders who don't want to sell a kitten as a conventional stud may also consider this as a way of helping remote breeders and passing on their lines.

In genetic terms our lines are limited to those where boys have been kept at stud, so that limits the gene pool. This solution might also allow us to extend the bloodlines via the male population and help to keep the gene pool as diverse as possible.

The disadvantage of this type of stud work is mainly that of tracking heredity. Because we tend to keep our boys at stud for several years we learn quite a lot about the boy's bloodline because he gets to sire a lot of kittens, crossing with a reasonable number of other lines. This means that if he carries an issue that might develop in later life such as



Ramintha of Rameses (Thai import)

heart disease, we have time to spot it before breeding on from his offspring. If a boy only sires a couple of litters with queens who are related to each other and then kittens are kept for breeding right away we don't really get a very good picture of his genetic legacy before the next generation goes on to breed.

We do our best to ensure all our lines are healthy but sometimes you just don't know: line A + line B might be fine, but line A + line C might throw up something you didn't know was there, and it might not develop for years. We do have DNA tests for many things, but these don't cover everything.

So having access to a stud is something that has many possible options, and I hope this one may help breeders who are more remote from established studs with some ideas, as well as potentially create some studs from lines where the breeder doesn't want to sell a kitten to live out in a stud run.



The **Tonkinese Cat Club Show** this year is at Worplesdon nr Guildford on **Sunday 22 September**
It is a 'Section 5' show so all section 5 breeds can be entered.

Tonkinese in love

These are all my pictures, but I'm sure I'm not the only one who has many lovely pictures like this. Please share some of yours! email them to me for the next issue at julia.cmcf@gmail.com



Small, on the left, was rehomed when she was 12 (her owner died) to live with a bereaved Burmese. They are besotted with each other and both incredibly happy.



Weights & Measures

Mike and Lizzi Smith

Watching our girls deliver and care for their kittens is a wonderful experience that has changed our lives forever. Despite all the preparations we make on their behalf—“just in case”—there’s often little to do except enjoy watching them grow up: that moment of absolute calm when all the kittens are feeding for the first time, when eyes start to peep open, early wobbly steps, gifts in the litter tray, the first purr, and so many more milestones along the way!

This article is about something that’s not so easy to see—how much kittens weigh, and why it’s very important to know. For owners, we wanted to share a little insight into one of the ways we care for kittens, and for those just starting out in breeding, some practical advice and what to look out for. Weighing our kittens is an “early warning system” in case there’s a problem, has helped us learn what to expect in different situations and increased our understanding of how kittens develop.

Give a queen plenty of food, a warm, dark and safe place away from the bustle of the household, and she’ll usually nurse her kittens without us having to do anything much at all. She’ll make sure they’re warm, lick their bottoms to make them poo, keep them clean, and make enough milk to see everyone double their weight in the first week—and then carry on feeding them until well after they have weaned. Despite a queen’s amazing abilities, it’s still a high-risk time for her kittens and with so little to see in the early stages, problems might only be discovered by knowing how much the kittens weigh.

The Basics of Weighing

We weigh the kittens at about the same time each morning and evening—approximately 12 hours apart—and record the weights. We also work out the “24-hour gain” each time—that’s the increase in weight from say 9 am to 9 am, or 9 pm to 9 pm. A full stomach or empty bladder can make quite a lot of difference to weight, so comparing the gains measured this way averages out variations over the day.

Kittens should gain weight every day, so any loss measured over 24 hours is a sign that something is probably not right. We’d expect the 24-hour gains for a healthy kitten to be no less than 10g up to a week old, and often quite a bit more depending on the number of kittens, birth weights, and how relaxed the queen is. The 12-hour gain (e.g. from

Chart 1—Litter of 7 kittens from birth to 6 weeks

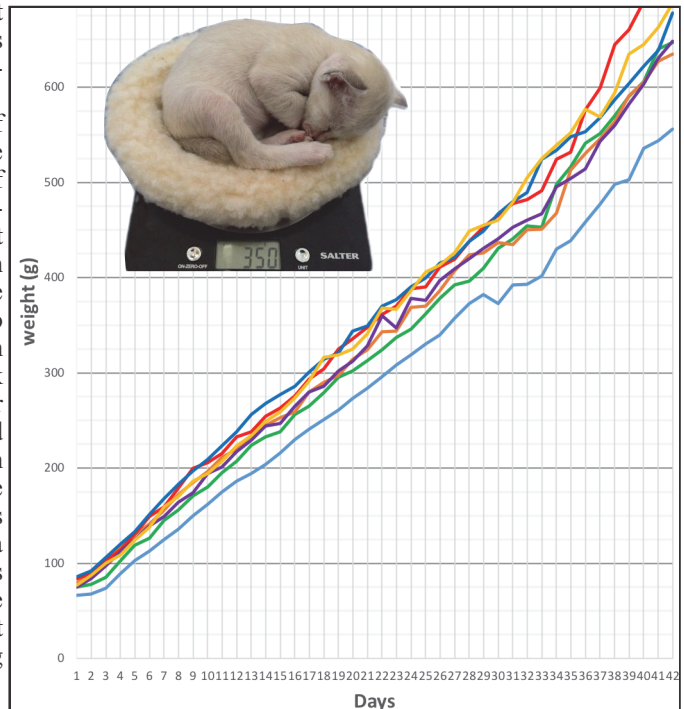
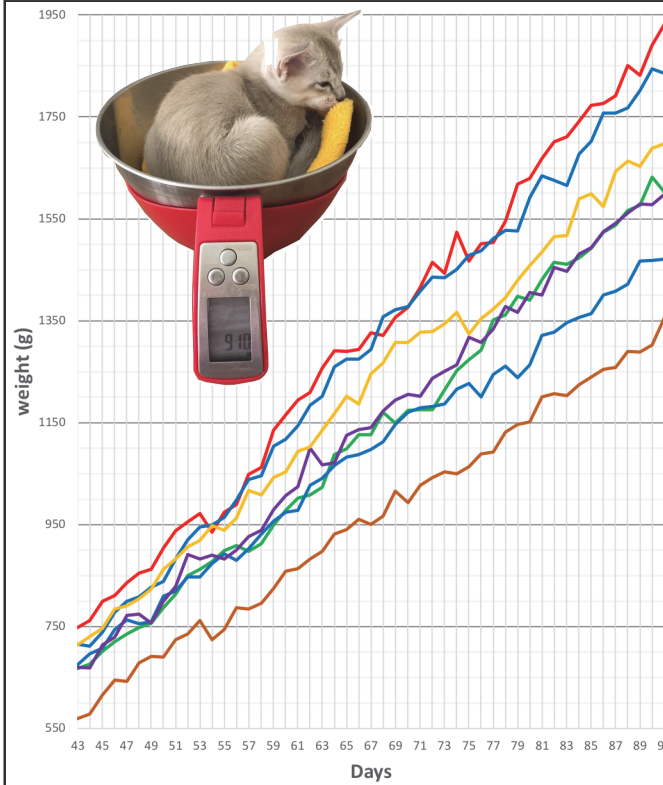


Chart 2—Litter of kittens from 6 to 13 weeks showing variations

help to identify problems with feeding and development caused by illness, or problems with feeding that will lead to illness or under-development. It lets us know whether a problem impacts just one kitten, or the whole litter, and is equally essential whether the queen is feeding her kittens, or they are being hand-reared for any reason.

In the first few weeks there's often little to see that could tell us something is wrong, and quick intervention is needed to have the best chance of saving a kitten. A good example of this is a cord infection, where the kitten will feed normally, but not put on weight due to the temperature burning up the gain. After weaning we might have a little more time as kittens are older and have more resources to deal with illness, but we want the opportunity to act as soon as possible in any case.

9am to 9pm) is also important—especially in the first couple of weeks—in case a kitten is losing weight rapidly and we need to step in to help. (see Chart 1)

After weaning weights will rise and fall each day, but we still expect a significant increase in weight over a few days and then week on week—typically 100g or more per week. From around 6 weeks we only weigh once a day to take this into account and carry on until the kittens leave. Others might only weigh once or twice each week in the last month, but we prefer to keep going to have the data. (see Chart 2)

Does Weighing Really Help?

Weighing is an early-warning system that can

Illness, feeding and problems with low gains or weight loss are closely related. A thorough view of health problems that might impact kittens is well beyond the scope of this article, but International Cat Care has an excellent guide here: <http://tinyurl.com/fadingkittens>.

Feeding Problems

A kitten that doesn't get enough milk won't put on enough weight to keep up with his littermates, and a weaker kitten will find it increasingly harder to feed, especially in a larger litter where there's more competition for the milk that is available. If a kitten doesn't feed enough it is weaker the next time it feeds, so again doesn't feed long enough and therefore declines steadily.

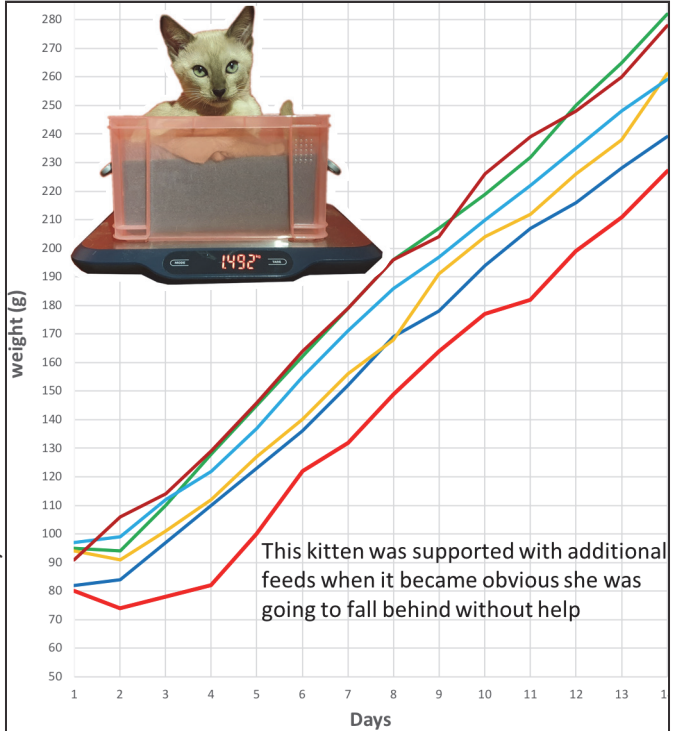
Newborn kittens that don't get enough milk will probably die—so weighing is essential to spot if a kitten is falling behind. Sometimes all we need to do is help by waking a kitten and letting it latch onto a teat when others aren't feeding, or very occasionally supplementary feeding might be needed. Kittens fed with formula milk are at high risk of becoming constipated or suffering from dehydration, so caution is required as it's possible to make matters considerably worse. (see Chart 3)

Newborn kittens need around 30ml of milk in 24 hours to gain just 8g—when you think about it, you soon realise that's rather a lot! If the queen is unable to produce enough milk—perhaps because of a difficult labour, illness (e.g. mastitis) or because she's unsettled—all the kittens may fail to gain enough weight. These issues may not be immediately obvious, so weighing is a helpful way to work out what might be going wrong. Being in tune with the queen and her needs is also essential—unless there's a *very* good reason not to, we always let her have her own way as she does know best!

In younger kittens, a 24-hour gain of less than 10g where the previous gain was only moderate could mean that the kitten isn't feeding due to colic, which is often the cause of "stalling" weights. A drop (0.1ml for kittens up to 10 days old) of liquid paraffin will usually help to recover the gains. Liquid paraffin can be fatal if it gets into the lungs, so it's dropped onto the tongue to make sure it's swallowed correctly.

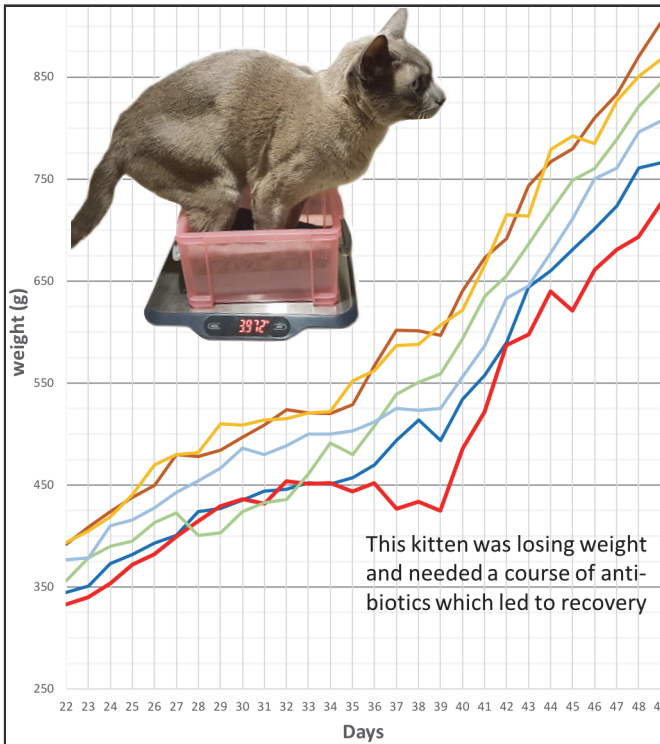
In our first litter, weighing meant we were able to spot a kitten who had an infec-

Chart 3—Supplemental feeding of newborn



tion. All the kittens seemed to stall for a few days before weaning and then they all picked up, except for the smallest who started to lose weight and was off-colour. The changes in her behaviour were very subtle—just a hint of being a little quieter; without the information from weighing we might not have identified the problem soon enough. She was examined by the vet: her temperature was up, so antibiotics were given. She recovered very quickly, gained over 250g in 5 days, and never looked back—if we had delayed until her behaviour was very obviously different, we might have lost her. (See Chart 4)

Any *continued* lack of gain or significant weight loss in kittens is a danger sign requiring help from the vet as soon as possible. If we only rely on how a kitten looks or feels, it could be too late to save it, but with this

Chart 4—one ill kitten who recovered

Marking Our Kittens

If kittens are the same coat pattern or colour it can be impossible to tell them apart at first, so we mark them to know which kitten we are weighing each time. We've found the most effective method is to use 1% solution of Gentian Violet (a non-stinging antiseptic)—rubbed on with a cotton wool ball. Our kittens usually start out with names like “Front Left”, “Back Right”, “Head” or “Bottom”—which is a great incentive to get on with choosing better names for them as soon as possible!

Gentian Violet is perfectly safe to use, it fades from the kittens quickly enough and we reapply it until we can tell the kittens apart all the time. We always explain why the kittens have purple limbs in case folks think we've bred some exotic new colour of Tonkinese!

early warning system, we're buying valuable time that could save a kitten's life.

Benefits of a Daily Routine

The routine of weighing provides a good opportunity to examine each kitten for anything that looks or feels wrong, especially important in the first three weeks when the kittens aren't very active. An appropriate amount of handling every day from birth lets the kittens get used to human interactions—it's the earliest possible way to start socialising them. We also establish a routine with the queen so she'll be used to what's going on, and we become intimately familiar with each kitten as it develops, noticing and recording changes as soon as they happen.



A Good Set of Scales

A good set of digital scales that measure in 1 gram increments is vital. They either come with their own bowl (if using kitchen scales), or a platform large enough to hold a container suitable for the kittens. Scales that are about the right physical size often handle weights up to 5kg which is more than we'd ever need for kittens—but usually these will be far too small to weigh adult cats!

Scales with a “hold” or averaging function are very useful. This means that the scales will be able to cope with the kitten moving around—they will work out the

weight and keep displaying it once the kitten has been moved off the scales. We've also found a backlit display to be invaluable as they are so much easier to read in low light.

We weigh newborn kittens in a little “really useful box” lined with fleece—we have to use a container with sides as even the tiniest baby will move about. When they are older, we use a larger box, and a larger set of scales with a platform big enough to deal with kittens up to 13 weeks old. One of our kittens was so used to the routine that he would wait his turn, jump into the box and sit patiently until he was weighed—if only they would all do that! If a kitten is too restless, we found that gently waving a hand a few inches away would often cause them to focus and sit still long enough.

Our kittens are weighed on the floor next to the birthing box or nest (until they are independent), so that mum can see what's going on and get used to the fact that her kittens are never far away. With practice we found we can have them out of the nest and back in a very short time. The scales sit on a heavy chopping board to make sure we get an accurate reading.

Keeping Records

Keeping a daily record book where we note down weights, gains and other details about each kitten and the progress of the litter is very useful, and we have these books on hand next to the birthing box. We also record events that happen beside the weights so that we could see their impact on their gains—it has been useful to look back and see what happened when a new queen was unsettled and kept moving the kittens, or the queen came into season again before weaning, the kittens had their first vaccinations, or the weather was extremely hot. It has also helped us notice what happens when the kittens have either been busy with visitors or been less active if we've had to go out for an afternoon.

We also put our kitten weights into a spreadsheet for each litter, which means that gains (and other calculations) are automatically worked out and we can easily draw graphs to get a picture of how each litter is progressing. We also use it to plan out key events—first and second vaccinations, worm-ing(s), visits of potential owners, dates for new homes and so on. Having these dates ready to hand each time we enter the weights has helped keep things on track.

The kittens are weighed for the very last time when their new families come to collect them, and we always record the details on the health record that we provide as part of our kitten packs.

Building confidence over time and getting to know our kittens!

Being relatively new to breeding, we've found that weighing was essential to help us understand the development of our first litter, and then to have a comparison for subsequent litters. It gave us the reassurance to know what was going well, and the ability to spot issues and correct them.

To start with, weighing did make us anxious as we would worry about every little wobble in the charts—so having our mentor available to give advice and review the numbers was reassuring. Over time it has become much easier to interpret the numbers and predict what's happening and with greater experience we know when to wait and see, or when to act quickly.

Further Information and Resources

This article is available online with more examples, spreadsheet templates, and sample data. Please visit www.choruscats.uk/breeder-info for more on this weighty topic!

Although written for those newer to breeding, we hope this has been useful for those with more experience and welcome any suggestions or additional information you feel we should include. Please get in touch—contact details can be found on our website.

Susan F Moreland MRCVS, GCCF Veterinary Officer
15th May 2019

**RECENT OUTBREAK OF TUBERCULOSIS IN CATS:
 LINK TO RAW FOOD.**

During the last year over 10 cases of bovine TB (ie Tuberculosis due to *Mycobacterium Bovis*) have been confirmed in cats and a number of new cases are currently being investigated. The first unusual feature linking these cases is that they all occurred in indoor cats, mainly in pedigree pets. TB in cats due to *M. bovis* usually occurs in free ranging cats in areas where *M bovis* is endemic in the wild rodent population and/or in cats with access to raw milk from TB infected cattle. The second feature common to all these cases was that they had been fed frozen **raw venison**.

Affected cats show a variety of symptoms. Reduced appetite, weight loss and lethargy are common. Other signs often relate to involvement of the gastrointestinal tract (vomiting and/or diarrhoea, swollen abdomen and enlarged mesenteric lymph nodes) or respiratory system (cough, rapid or laboured breathing). The disease may run an acute or chronic course. Some cases present with similar signs to FIP and have been misdiagnosed as such.

If you have been feeding frozen raw venison especially if any of your cats become unwell please seek veterinary advice immediately. Tell your vet that your cat has eaten frozen raw venison and that this food has been linked to recent cases of bovine TB in cats. It is very important you do this as TB is an

extremely rare disease in indoor cats and your vet may not consider it as a possible diagnosis. If your vet suspects TB and requires more information about diagnosis and treatment of this disease they should contact Danielle Gunn-Moore FRCVS, Professor of Feline Medicine at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies (University of Edinburgh) Hospital for Small Animals. Professor Gunn-Moore is an expert on Feline TB and is leading the research into this outbreak.

Unfortunately it has not yet been possible to isolate *M bovis* from venison products suspected to have been the cause of these cases. It is suggested that you make an Internet search against "venison cat food recall" and then check whether you have any venison cat food in your fridge or freezer and if so act accordingly. Further information about the current outbreak can be found in a press release from The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies (University of Edinburgh) Hospital for Small Animals on 13th May 2019 via the following link: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/vet/services/small-animals/information-about-cat-tb>

If you have any questions or concerns after reading this notice please contact me by email:
tobysdenbengals@hotmail.co.uk

(Why not clip this page out and give it to your vet so that they know about it? Ed.)

Allergies and testing

Julia CMcF

Not very long ago I bought a beautiful kitten from another breeder who I hoped would be a new breeding queen for me and would continue the other breeder's lines too.

When we got home I noticed her face was a bit red and raw on the thin-furred part of her face in front of her ears. The breeder said she had been rubbing at that a bit that morning. It wasn't very serious so I popped her down to the vet and got some ear-mite drops even though we couldn't see any mites, as that seemed the most likely cause.

Sadly over the next weeks her condition got steadily worse until I had to put her into a plastic lampshade collar to stop her rubbing at her head and making it bleed. We sent off skin samples to check for fungal infection, and when that established it was an allergy, looked at every possible allergen including washing powder and grain-based litter. By this time I had her on a food that as far as I could tell had no actual food in it to try and control the itching on her face. Putting her on steroids eventually helped, though this couldn't be a long-term solution. Obviously I couldn't breed from her, and we hoped spaying would help, but it didn't.

I had to keep her apart from my other cats because of her diet, and this was a stress. Although I asked my vet about sending away samples to determine the cause, he told me that in his experience even if they established a cause, by the time they tested again a different cause would show up.

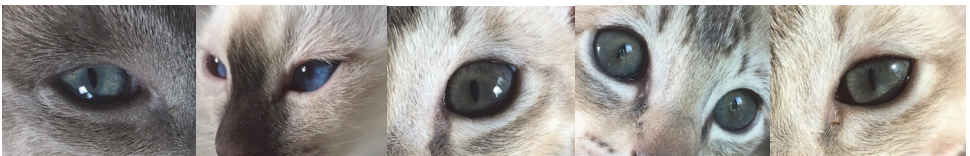
Long story short, I had to rehome this youngster because she had no decent life kept in a bubble away from my other cats and me for most of the time, but she went to a perfect home (as you will read below)

where they have got her sorted out and off the steroids. She is now happy and normal, and that is the best possible outcome.

The experience however meant that it piqued my interest when I spotted an article in a veterinary journal about sending hair and saliva samples off for testing to determine allergens. What I read partly made me laugh out loud, but was also very shocking. I thought I would summarise it for the newsletter, but if you want to read the original (and you have access to veterinary journals) the reference is K. Coyner and A. Schick: 'Hair and Saliva test fails to identify allergies in dogs' *Journal of Small Animal Practice* vol. 60 February 2019, p. 121 ff. I have to say that the title is the understatement of the year, since it exposed a massive scam.

The objective of the study described in the article was to determine whether a hair and saliva allergy test could reliably differentiate between a normal dog and an allergic dog, and whether the results were the same with repeated samples from the same animals.

(Here is the best bit) Ten fur and saliva samples were submitted by ten different vets from the same known allergic dog and ten more from the same normal non-allergic dog (20 samples in total from 10 different vets). Five *fake fur* samples clipped from a child's toy were also submitted with water in place of saliva to find out whether the test could differentiate between a real animal and a fake one. The synthetic fur samples were checked microscopically by an independent analyst to ensure they were fully synthetic. The company they submitted the samples to tested for 128 food and environmental allergens and returned a results chart.



The results were (to me anyway) astounding. Firstly the tests could not differentiate between a real dog and a fake one. Secondly **all** the samples came back indicating allergens (the synthetic dog too), but despite the duplicate samples from each dog, each result sheet was different, so the ‘test’ could not even accurately repeat its own results. Although the article didn’t say so, you couldn’t escape the conclusion that the lab threw the samples into the bin and just sent back a random set of findings. A total scam.

The allergic dog had been diagnosed using individual food challenges, so the researchers knew what this dog was allergic to. Remember that the other dog had no allergies. And let’s not forget the synthetic dog.

Proportions of good, neutral and bad results from each sample did not differ. All the samples came back with a ‘bad’ response for cottage cheese, dairy, shrimp, tuna, whey and yogurt. None of the ‘dogs’ were allergic to brown rice. Yaay!

The researcher’s summary speaks for itself: “Our study demonstrates that hair and saliva testing fails not only to identify allergic dermatitis in dogs, but fails to differentiate between animal and non-animal samples, providing essentially identical results, regardless of the origin of the sample. Furthermore, particular allergens appear to be

over-represented as “Bad” across all samples, while others are over-represented as “Good” across all samples. Our findings are similar to those of previous studies in humans. ... Interestingly, the company evaluated in this study also recommended supplements for pet owners to purchase based on testing results.”

The researchers were intending to broaden the study beyond the samples they sent, but the lab (in the USA) shut down. This is perhaps reassuring, but less so is the fact that there are still many labs offering this type of test for both humans and animals, playing on the sometimes desperate need of pet owners to find an answer to problems with their pets.

The most common allergens in cats are chicken (the base for almost all commercial foods) and grains. However many commercial foods use dyes, preservatives and other chemicals that can cause allergic reactions, and once set off an escalating chain-reaction can occur, with a cat becoming progressively allergic to any additive.

It’s good to see yet another health scam has been exposed, but this is just one of many out there. It’s worth keeping this in mind when we find ourselves searching the internet for the solution to a problem when it seems our vet cannot help.

Snagged by Tonkinese

Guy and Sue

We have been most fortunate to have been adopted by Tonkinese cats for the past twenty years. Rodney, the first, had only one snag. He was born flat chested, but as one of us was a vet we agreed to take him on. He rapidly became normal and delighted us for seventeen years.

When he died, although bereft at our loss we decided to wait before replacing him. Guess what! Less than a month later we Googled Tonkinese Rescue and were put in

contact with Julia who said she had a four year old boy needing a good home as he was no longer getting on with the rest of her household. Only one snag! He had a serious heart condition which could be fatal at any moment. When we mentioned that one of us was a retired Vet, she said—after vetting us— that we would be the ideal people for Whisky Mac to adopt. We took him home to rural Herefordshire, and kept him in for two weeks.



Miquee



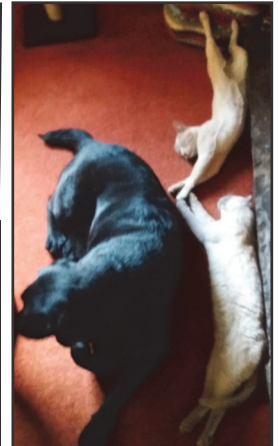
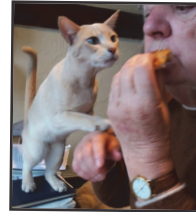
One day we went shopping, leaving Miquee as we now called him indoors. Unfortunately an upstairs window was open and on our return ... no cat. We hunted high and low all day and well into the night. Still no cat. What would we tell Julia next day? Dawn broke and we got up to resume the search. There was Miquee in the conservatory, having found the cat flap, demanding his breakfast. What a relief!

He had already achieved Champion status and an Overall Best in Show as an entire tom, and we were persuaded to show him as a neuter: both times we entered him he came away with a ticket. Then it happened. He was asleep with George the Labrador—his best mate—when he woke up, collapsed, and that was the end. Very sudden: he never had time to suffer. We felt most fortunate to have had his company for over a year; he was a beautiful cat (as they all are).

Guess what! History repeated itself, as Julia called us about a retiring stud boy called Binky who had just been neutered and needed a home. Only one snag! He was inseparable from his niece Pearl, and the two really should stay together. This sounded most reasonable, but the snag was that she had a dietary intolerance which caused terrible eczema of the chin and face. The only thing that kept it under control was a specialist diet and high dose steroids. BUT we were just the people to take Pearl on! Two days later we met in the car park of the Air Balloon pub in Gloucestershire, and transferred the cats and took them home to their new abode. To cut a long story short, they both rapidly

took over the household; made best friends with our now two Labradors George and Ellie, and we are delighted to say that after a year, Pearl has grown out of her allergy, and is now on normal food and needs no medication. They have both become quite feral, staying out at night if they can, and both supplement their diets with voles, mice and rabbits. Binky has also caught a weasel and become adept at bringing in moles and the odd squirrel. And we thought that Tonkinese cats were sophisticated.

We wouldn't be without them, and it's thanks to Julia that we are in the enviable position we are in.



Pearl and Binky

Gallery

Surely you want to see your beautiful cats here? Don't delay, send your pictures today!!
julia.cmcf@gmail.com



Rameses Kitten starburst

The Gabszewicz's Mishka and Teddy



Many congratulations to Christina Gordon on her first litter of beautiful babies



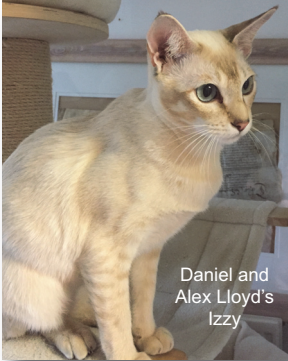
←How many brown cats can you see here?



Annette Taylor's beautiful Baci and Mimi



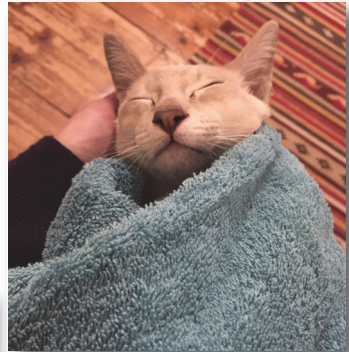
Arnie, (above) living in Edinburgh with Jacqui Cooper; and (below) wrapped in a towel after a little adventure up the chimney



Daniel and Alex Lloyd's Izzy



Lisa Knill's Minstrel



Marion and Adrian Coles' litter brothers Biscuit and Bailey



Hazel Hunter's last two litters of kittens



More difficulties photographing brown Tonkinese

TBC Recommendations For Breeders

In addition to the GCCF Code of Ethics the TBC strongly recommends that the following points are noted by owners of queens and studs.

- 1 If breeding from a Tonkinese on the REFERENCE register, ensure that it complies with the current Tonkinese Registration Policy - some cats are on the REFERENCE register because they have ancestors that are not permitted in the Tonkinese breed programme (eg. Orientals or cats of unregistered or unknown parentage).
- 2 A stud owner is not obliged to accept a queen to stud
- 3 Studs must be on the active register with the GCCF and must have their Certificate of Entirety (COE), micro-chip number & DNA test information lodged with the GCCF prior to the registration of their first litter. Stud owners should be able to show a copy of this information to the queen's owner.
- 4 Studs, and visiting queens, should be vaccinated against Feline Enteritis and Cat 'Flu (but not within 14 days before the mating). Homeopathic vaccinations are not acceptable. Vaccination certificates should be available for inspection.
- 5 The queen's owner has a responsibility to make arrangements, including the inspection of stud premises, well in advance of taking the queen to stud.
- 6 **Studs must be regularly tested for FeLV and FIV, even if they are inoculated against FeLV.** It is recommended that they are tested at least once per year and the documentation should be shown to the owners of visiting queens.
- 7 The stud premises should be available for inspection, by appointment, by the queen's owner prior to the queen being brought to stud.
- 8 The stud owner must make clear any conditions relating to the kittens, or repeat matings, **before** the queen is left with the stud.
- 9 The stud owner **must** supply the following for the queen's owner : a). A mating certificate that complies with GCCF Section 1 Rule 3d.. b) A full pedigree of the stud showing at least three generations with full registration numbers. c) A stud fee receipt.
- 10 **Queens must be on the active register with the GCCF.**
- 11 It is recommended that queens are tested for FeLV and FIV within 24 hours before visiting the stud, unless from a fully tested household, and the documentation should be shown to the stud's owner.
- 12 The queen's owner should be aware that the stud fee is for the services of the stud and is not based upon results - it should be offered at the time the queen is left with the stud.
13. Kittens must not be sold less than 7 days after completion of a full course of vaccinations. The breeder must supply each kitten owner with a valid vaccination certificate showing that the full course has been completed for enteritis and cat 'flu; a properly-completed pedigree certificate that includes at least three generations with full registration numbers; the registration card for the kitten.
14. It is now mandatory for GCCF registered Tonkinese studs to be DNA tested as per the current list in the Tonkinese Registration Policy (see items marked * below). It is also strongly recommended that queens be tested for the same, and both males and females be tested for all DNA tests relevant to Tonkinese health.

© 2019 Tonkinese Breed Club

Current list of available DNA tests applicable to the Tonkinese breed:

Burmese GM2 Gangliosidosis
Burmese Head Defect*
Burmese Hypokalaemia*
Progressive Retinal Atrophy (rdAc)*
Pyruvate Kinase Deficiency (PKDef)*