

PAWS FOR EFFECT



*The PolyTrak  
Newsletter  
April 2007*

**Volume 1 - Number 4**

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*Maine Coon Polydactyl*



*International Database*

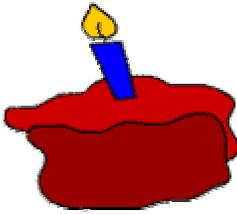


# Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

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## Anniversary Edition

### IT'S OUR BIRTHDAY!



Just a few days ago on March 28<sup>th</sup>, PolyTrak celebrated one year online. We have been crunching numbers, and logging cats/kittens for a year now. It may not seem like much, but behind the scenes has been a flurry of activity for well over a year. It is just the past year though that we have been able to actually publicize the information on a website for all to see and learn.

The idea for a database service to collect information about Polydactyl Maine Coon litters was, in reality, born over 2-1/2 years ago. Many of the breeders and fanciers of the day were interested in dispelling, if possible, many of the rumours that have propagated down through the years about Maine Coons with different paws. It was discussed at the time, but it was not until The TICA Annual show in Syracuse, New York, USA during September of 2005 that the idea began to gain momentum.

Dr. Solveig Pflueger met with Polydactyl Maine Coon people...

Dr. Solveig Pflueger of the TICA genetics committee met with Polydactyl Maine Coon breeders at the show and talked of the steps necessary to gain acceptance of the Poly in the show rings of TICA around the world.

There was also a discussion at the time of a group collecting data about Polydactylism and various types of digit configurations that were being expressed in the Maine Coon population. Now the mission had become 3-fold. The information could be used to study the genetics of Polydactylism; the data could be used as an educational tool to learn and understand more about the Pd Gene; and it could be used as a historical reference so that poly lines could be logged and traced back in the future for breeding and showing purposes.

A new group called Maine Coon Polydactyl International (MCPI) was forming at the time in the wake of a former group (MC Polys). It was the hope in 2005 that this new group would be able to set up and maintain a database of this nature. In March of 2006, when this new group was unable to take on the project, the four of us put our heads together and came up with the concept of PolyTrak. A lot of data had already been collected at that point and we needed a way to share this information and for a means to gather new information.

We needed a website that would allow us the space to publicize our data and information. Since none could be found we were back to "square 1" with no place to list the info. Fortunately a benefactor donated the expenses of a domain name (polytrak.net) and a year's worth of hosting fees along with 5 gigabytes of data storage space. By the way that same benefactor has graciously renewed this commitment for another year. The four of us are volunteers, but a project of this magnitude is not without expenses. We are very grateful for this contribution. On March 4<sup>th</sup> the PolyTrak site was established. There was nothing but a "under construction" sign for some time. But on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March we were ready and the whole idea and a couple of years of talking and planning became a reality. We have not looked back since, nor had any second thoughts about our commitment. WE ARE HERE TO STAY!

We also are very appreciative of the time and efforts of the Maine Coon polydactyl breeders, fanciers and regular cat lovers from a plethora of Countries around the world that have contributed so much to make PolyTrak what it is today. THANK YOU ALL!

**THANK YOU!**



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### DATA SENT TO POLYTRAK

Part 3 by Vonne Bode

So you've filled out the submission form online and clicked the "submit" button...and then what? Well then the team of elves use their magic and make sure the info will be displayed in the right table on the website in a second. 😊 Unfortunately it doesn't work this way in the real world. So here's how it really goes. 😊 Once you hit the "submit" button, a simple text file of the form with this data, is sent to us. That's...to the person(s) responsible for the specific area. Since the kitten/litter tracking is my main area, I'll describe the steps for this area here. When I receive the submitted info, I go through the form to see if any questions have been left unanswered, have incomplete answers or if any typos are made. We have to think of things like spelling the name of the cat wrong, submitting a colour as "silver tabby" or putting down the amount of toes but leaving out the description. In 70% of the cases these are the type of errors that need correction.

~So breeders~ make sure you write down the name and colour of your cat(s) correct. And before hitting the "submit" button, make sure you've answered ALL the required questions. If there's a reason why you didn't answer a specific question, make a note of this in the remark section. Your data can be displayed in the Polytrak database sooner this way. When the form contains errors as just described, I and Ken discuss it first. Then Ken puts the data as submitted in a Word version of the submission form and sends this to the breeder. Depending on the errors, he'll put question marks or suggestions behind these questions and ask the breeder to go through the form. Most of the time

we get the form back with the corrected data. Sometimes the submitter has made a note in the remark section, making clear he/she isn't sure about the digit configuration. Or we see some odd descriptions that don't match the given amount of digits. In these cases Ken and I discuss the possibilities and one of us contacts the breeder by e-mail. We ask what the problem is and to describe the paws as thoroughly as possible. This often gives us a pretty good insight in how most breeders look at the digits and translate this to the digit definitions. With some extra explanation on the differences in digits and some pictures of the cat's paws, we, most of the time, can figure out the configuration on the cat with the breeder. And in the end both parties have learned from this. Another thing that's sometimes missing is a link to the pedigree of the cat/kitten in Pawpeds. This is because not everybody is sure how to do a test mating when the parents are not in the database. So we contact the breeder to provide us with more pedigree info and make the mating ourselves with the info on the grand or great grand parents.

When we've all the missing info completed, Ken makes an Excel sheet of each form. This contains all the info on the cat/kitten, even the info that's not viewable to the public. These forms also contain the Polytrak register numbers for the individual cat/kitten and litter number. Copies of these forms are sent to me as back up also. Again I check the forms for typos and other errors, if there are more changes, I'll let Ken know.

The info on the kittens I copy and paste to my special Excel file on kitten toe configurations that I use for statistics and analysis. The Excel file sent by Ken goes in my folder for this specific breeder. Ken has a master Excel file of all the submitted data so far and a website file with all the data split up in tables. The breeder will receive a final Polytrak pdf file with the data after the corrections are made. This file is for the breeder's own administration. Then Ken will start with putting the data on the website. And I'll go searching for pictures of the submitted cat/kitten(s). These are resized and



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adjusted before I upload them to the website. So if all went well, you'll be able to view the data on your cat(s)/kitten(s) including their picture on the website shortly. And hopefully you'll take the time to have a look at the data of all the other cats in the database in the future too.

*Way down deep, we're all motivated by the same urges. Cats have the courage to live by them.*

*Jim Davis*

### DID YOU KNOW?

- By Deb Brown

It is well known in the Maine Coon world that when the dedicated group of breeders wanted to get the Maine Coon recognized as a registered breed, all Maine Coon cats, poly or non-poly were considered Maine Coons. This was the breed and the polydactyl trait was a part of the breed. Polydactyl Maine Coons are mentioned in historical literature prior to the induction of the Maine Coon into the cat fancy.

It is well known in the Maine Coon world that MCBFA recognized the Polydactyl Maine Coon as a Maine Coon.

It is well known that the origins of the Maine Coon were the eastern seaboard of the United States and history and legend document some of the tales of the Maine Coon Polydactyl. These stories are found on Maine Coon breeder websites all over the world.

It is well known in the Maine Coon world that the "mitten paw" or "snowshoe paw" Maine Coon, referred to in literature, were the early Maine Coon ancestors of the cats we see today.

It is well known in the Maine Coon world that Maine Coon Polydactyls were welcomed and included in the Foundation of the Maine Coon breed. Many pedigrees can be traced back to these Maine Coon Polydactyls.

It is well known that there are no health issues associated with the PD gene expressed as the Maine Coon Polydactyl.

It is well known in the Cat Fancy world that the Genetics Committee of TICA approved polydactyly and therefore welcomed the Pixie Bob cats as a New Breed with an old trait.

It is well known that TICA and CCA recognized the Pixie Bob cat, with the standard being no more than 7 toes, and promoted it to show status to receive championship points and to be shown as a pedigree cat.

It is well known that there have been Maine Coon Polydactyls, with not so predominant digits, shown in championship classes and have placed very well in the standings.

FACT:

The Maine Coon Polydactyl is a Maine Coon. So why are they not formally recognized as Maine Coon cats in the show ring?

QUESTIONS:

Do you know if a breed trait can be denied champions status only due to personal dislikes and discrimination without any sound health or scientific basis?

Do you know of any health issues or scientific basis the Maine Coon Polydactyl should not be considered a Maine Coon and allowed show status?

Would you like to help us promote the Maine Coon Polydactyl with TICA?

Let us know! Our Polys would love to have your support! Email: [polypower@polytrak.net](mailto:polypower@polytrak.net)



*"We have a theory that cats are planning to take over the world, just try to look them straight in the eye...yup, they're hiding something!"*

- Dog Fancy -



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### CALIFORNIA YOUNG LADY ADVANCES

By Kitty Chandler

An update on Shannon: She placed **FIRST** in a regional competition in The San Diego California area this past Wednesday. Placements for the participants were announced Friday morning. This means that she is now eligible to enter the California State competition.

You will remember Shannon from the February Issue of Paws for Effect. She is the



“Scientist-hopeful” that has been winning Science Fair competitions recently in the southern California area with her project and study

of: “Are polydactyl cats at risk for medical problems?”

This news was forwarded to us just as we were assembling this month’s *“Paws for Effect”* so we do not have a lot of details yet. But we will keep you up-to-date with information as we receive it. We do know that she expanded her poly information and that readers of this newsletter provided information to her. Thank you for your help and support.



### BUILD IT – AND THEY WILL COME! - By Ken Bussard

Dave Thomas of Wendy’s Corporation used to advertise with the slogan: “Build it and they will come!” He, of course, was referring to a better hamburger. The same thing has happened with PolyTrak and with the Maine Coon polydactyl movement throughout the world. Almost weekly we are hearing of a new breeder or supporter of the poly movement. We cannot, in any way quantify this movement, but we are certain that it is happening. In fact we are planning an article to this effect in the near future. But for now, one of the indirect indicators of this renewed interest and support in the poly movement are some of the statistics that we are noticing about visitors to our website.

At present we have 42 breeders listed in our Cattery section and several fanciers. Most of these breeders and fanciers have kittens or poly cats listed in our database. These are the “core” people, we feel, of the Maine Coon poly movement. These are the Catteries that are actively breeding polys and supporting the poly movement around the world. If it were not for people like this, the Maine Coon polydactyl could become a thing of the past – relegated to a dusty picture in a book somewhere. There are, for certain, others who are breeding and supporting this cause, but for the most part, this is the movement. If left to the Cat Associations of the World, the naturally occurring MC Poly would eventually be culled from the breed.

Over the past year over 4650 different visitors have come to PolyTrak from 44 different countries. In my opinion this shows a great interest and curiosity that goes far beyond the breeding and show world. These are people that would like to know more about Maine Coon polydactyls. A lot of our different visitors come by referral from the Wikipedia Encyclopedia site. In fact about 200 hits a month are referred from this source, as people want to learn more about the polys. Recently I went through our records and came up with a list of 44 countries



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around the world that have visited since we began in March of 2006. To the best of my knowledge some of these countries do not have breeders of polys. One could only assume that any Maine Coon polys that reside in these countries would have arrived by virtue of an import from somewhere else. Here is the list that we compiled:

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  - Australia         |  - Japan             |
|  - Austria           |  - Kuwait            |
|  - Belgium           |  - Morocco           |
|  - Brazil            |  - The Netherlands   |
|  - Brunei Darussalam |  - New Zealand       |
|  - Canada            |  - Norway            |
|  - China             |  - Poland            |
|  - Croatia           |  - Romania           |
|  - Czech Republic   |  - Russian Fed.     |
|  - Denmark         |  - Saudi Arabia    |
|  - European Union  |  - Singapore       |
|  - Finland         |  - Slovak Republic |
|  - France          |  - Slovenia        |
|  - Germany         |  - South Africa    |
|  - Great Britain   |  - South Korea     |
|  - Greece          |  - Spain           |
|  - Hong Kong       |  - Sweden          |
|  - India           |  - Switzerland     |
|  - Iran            |  - Taiwan          |
|  - Ireland         |  - Turkey          |
|  - Israel          |  - United States   |
|  - Italy           |  - Yugoslavia      |

## POLY OR Pd GENE QUIZ

Maine Coon polydactyl breeders often have a good idea of how many of their litter will be polydactyl based on genetic rules. However Mother Nature quite often forgets to read the rules. If you flip a coin you have a 1 in 2, or 50%, chance of having the coin landing “heads” up. It is the same percentage for the coin landing “tails” up. So if you flip a coin and it lands “head up” will it land “tails” up the next time you flip it? Answer: Maybe. This is because the odds never change. The second

time you flip the coin, you still have only a 1 in 2 chance of it landing a certain way. The same principal applies to a litter of polys expressing an autosomal dominant gene, such as the Pd gene.

If you would like to read more about how these rules affect polydactyly in Maine Coons you can get into the scientific explanation at this address on the web: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punnett\\_square](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punnett_square) or you can just take a guess and see if you can answer these questions: (The answers will be posted in Mid April in the Newsletter Section of the PolyTrak Website)

PolyTrak has the following kinds of matings with a Sire and Dam. See if you can predict the statistical percentage of polys in a given litter.

Heterozygous Male with Non Poly Female?  
NonPoly Male with Heterozygous Female?  
Heterozygous Male with Heterozygous Female?  
Homozygous Male with Non Poly Female?  
Non Poly Male with Heterozygous Female?  
BONUS QUESTION:  
Homozygous Male with Heterozygous Female?  
(Note: PolyTrak does not have parental mating entries of this combination yet.)

Need Help? You may visit this link and learn more about this and take advantage of a Punnett Square calculator that will figure the percentages for you. When using the calculator use “Aa” for Heterozygous Poly, “AA” for Heterozygous Poly and “aa” for Non Poly. <http://www.changbioscience.com/genetics/punnett.html>



Well that is it for another month. We will take off our editor’s hats, get out the litter scoops and go back to work. We will see you next month with an all-new issue. In the meantime we welcome your comments and suggestions.

BYE FOR NOW!

