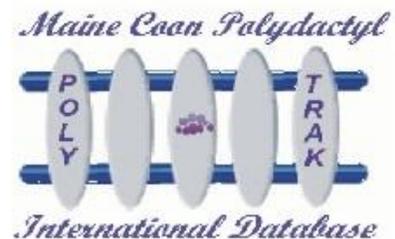


PAWS FOR EFFECT



The PolyTrak Newsletter September 2007

Volume 1 - Number 9
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WELCOME

It is September already. It is back to school and back to work for many. This is the time of the year we envy our friends in the Southern Hemisphere...it is almost Spring there. Well it is back to work at PolyTrak also. It is also back to work (although we get the impression there was never a summer break there either) for the Polystandards people as they move forward with plans for acceptance of the polydactyl Maine Coon in the show ring. And, we are sure it is probably back to work in your homes and Catteries as well. Summer is too short!!! So grab a beverage and your reading glasses, head for the patio and enjoy this month's issue of *Paws for Effect*. (Note: You will have to print it first, unless you have a notebook computer or a very long cord. LOL).



IS POLYTRAK SCIENTIFIC?

by Ken Bussard

This is a question that came up recently in a breeder and fancier group. There are some (although personally I feel it is not a very large number) that feel the Maine Coon poly should not be accepted into the Show Ring. In fact, if the straw poll that appeared in last month's *Paws for Effect* is any indication, then this number of "nay-Sayers" is in the 10-15% area. As mentioned in that article, a poll of Maine Coon breeders at a recent cat show was not

scientific and could contain a large margin of error when compared to the worldwide group of Maine Coon breeders as a whole. But is it accurate? Is it scientific? Yes it is very accurate, as it contains the exact comments and votes of 13 people. I am sure they did not lie in their responses, and I am equally sure there was no "fudging" of the numbers when given to PolyTrak for publication. So in that sense, it is ACCURATE!

Is it scientific? I am not sure how you define "scientific" as it pertains to a straw poll of people's opinions or how you would apply that same definition to the data publicized and contained in PolyTrak's database. This theme of information being "unscientific" was mentioned more than once during these recent discussions. Personally I am at a loss in trying to figure out how the concept of logged data from breeders and fanciers of polydactyl Maine Coons can be either scientific or unscientific. But if you want to go with the dictionary definition of scientific, then we were happy to learn that PolyTrak data and observations of the breeders and fanciers qualifies as "scientific!" It is information that has been gathered from breeders and fanciers around the world. The information was then submitted to PolyTrak and inputted (entered) into our website. "Lay" people did all this, so in that sense it is not scientific as were the comments by these "lay" people. These are observations by people and compiled by other people (our staff). Is it accurate? Sure it is! Are breeders making up the numbers? Not very likely! Is PolyTrak bending the numbers or facts? Certainly NOT! In reality, even what some would define as a scientific study, is nothing more than observations of something that is happening. (*See PolyTrak Fact Definition below*) The "Science" comes in drawing conclusions from these observations.

I can look at PolyTrak data and tell you factually that 58% of the kittens born, in our logged data, are polydactyl. That is fact, and IMHO, would meet the definition of scientific



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as defined by most. I could go on further to tell you that 58% of the kittens are poly because they were born on Tuesdays and Fridays. Now you have an unscientific (and wrong) opinion of a non-scientific person. You could certainly get a better answer of why it happens from a "Scientist". In reality this is one of the core purposes of PolyTrak---To provide this data to the Scientific Community for study, analysis and interpretation. In that light, one should be careful and consider the "source" or author when reading many of the published and unpublished articles available out there on polydactylism. Scientists do not write most of these articles even though a lot of big words are often dangled in front of you. Look at the data in PolyTrak and trust the source and accuracy of the numbers. What conclusions you draw from other people's opinions should be taken in that light. Most of these are well written, but do they know what they are talking about?

A lot goes on behind the scenes at PolyTrak, checking and rechecking things. I am sure we are a bit of a bother to some of the data submitters from time to time. We quite often email back to the submitters with a question or asking to confirm a particular digit configuration. We really appreciate the patience you have shown in working with us. It is not that we doubt your submission. Many times it is a new expression of the Pd gene that we are seeing, or an unusual one that is not seen very often. PolyTrak strives for accuracy for the very reasons we are discussing here. PolyTrak might make a typo from time to time and the submitters might miss a digit on rare occasions...but by and large the data you see on PolyTrak and reported in this Newsletter is very accurate.

Since much of this kind of data has never been collected before and since the volume of our data exceeds most previous studies, there is really not much to compare it with. Therefore I am a bit "taken aback" at times when I see or read the comments that

PolyTrak is "unscientific" or "unsubstantiated". We at PolyTrak stand by our information and can assure you that we take every effort to confirm its accuracy and lack of bias.

Another point PolyTrak would like to emphasize from the recent group discussions is "micro data sampling". Data is data! It does not lie, nor does it draw a conclusion. If you flip a coin, one has a 50% chance of it landing "heads" up and likewise a 50% chance of it landing "tails" up. If I tossed a coin in the air two times and it landed "heads" up twice...then could I draw a conclusion that if you flip a coin in the air, will it always land "heads" up? NO!!! If I flipped that same coin in the air a thousand times, then chances are it will land "heads up" close to 500 hundred times. That is the law of averages. But in the "micro data sampling" of tossing the coin twice, I concluded that it would always be "heads up". Why? This is because I did not have enough data to accurately reflect the predicated result.

The same situation happened recently in regards to stillborn kittens recorded in the PolyTrak database. Someone looked at two small litters of kittens and concluded that the "poly" kittens were stillborn and the non-polys were born alive. The conclusion drawn was that polydactyls are more prone to being stillborn. Nothing could be further from the truth, but was it another inaccurate rumour born? I randomly looked at another litter and found just the opposite. The polys were born alive and two non-polys were unfortunately stillborn. Now again we are guilty of "micro data sampling". None of us can draw any kind of factual or predictable conclusion from these samples. It is a fact that Mother Nature tragically produces still-borns in any population of any breed of any animal. Although I certainly don't have the numbers to back up any predictions, I would certainly offer a prediction that you would find roughly the same percentage of stillborns in both polys and non-poly Maine Coons and that the figures probably would be closer to being



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the same for each, if the sample were large enough. It is my opinion that the Pd gene neither adds to nor subtracts from the probability of a stillborn.

As PolyTrak records data on Maine Coon polydactyls, many of the rumours and tales of bad things happening because of polydactylism (in this case the Pd gene form of polydactylism) are slowly but surely being found factually incorrect. As more and more of these inaccuracies are brought to light, some of the true anti-poly" people are finding it harder and harder to find a reason to "hang their hat on". But do "they" truly need a factual reason to not want the poly Maine Coon elevated to equal status? No they don't. There is one irrefutable reason...and that is personal opinion. The world is made of diverse opinions and thoughts. Each is entitled to their own opinion. What I like may not be what you like...but we are both entitled to our opinions and the freedom to express them as long as it causes no harm. So whatever side of the fence you are on, I invite you visit PolyTrak and see for yourself what is there, scientific or unscientific, substantiated or unsubstantiated, complete or incomplete, or whatever definition you would like to apply. Go with an open mind and a willingness to study and learn. From there draw your own conclusions and form your own opinions either way. But be honest enough to say they are your own opinions and not the result of skewed data or misinformation!

POLYTRAK FACT

Webster's Definition of SCIENTIFIC

Pronunciation: "sI-&n-'ti-fik

Function: adjective

Etymology: Medieval Latin scientificus producing knowledge, from Latin scient-, sciens + -i- + -ficus -fic: of, relating to, or exhibiting the methods or principles of science

1 the state of knowing: knowledge as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding

2 a: a department of systematized knowledge as an object of study <the science of theology>

b: something (as a sport or technique) that may be studied or learned like systematized knowledge <have it down to a science>

3 a: knowledge or a system of knowledge covering general truths or the operation of general laws especially as obtained and tested through scientific method

b: such knowledge or such a system of knowledge concerned with the physical world and its phenomena : NATURAL SCIENCE

4: a system or method reconciling practical ends with scientific laws <cooking is both a science and an art>

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

Purring is an automatic safety valve device for dealing with happiness overflow.

- Anonymous

One of the rumours that used to float around about the Maine Coon was that maybe in the early days, it mated with a raccoon, thus giving the MC a large bushy ringed tail. Well we thought that rumour was just a tail (err tale). But maybe there is some raccoon in Winnie Scheffman's Buddha. After all I think raccoon's are genetically programmed to raid garbage cans. 😊 We received this light-hearted email from Winnie:

I was sitting not more than 1 meter away from this scene and was totally ignored by my sweet but oh so naughty poly boy Buddha. I heard him several times before opening the waist bin, but never caught him in the act. Luckily I had my camera nearby. Can you believe this?!

Poly Powerrrrrrrrrrrrrr! Regards, Winnie



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THE UNSTOPPABLE FORCE! (POLYSTANDARDS GAINING MOMENTUM)

The PolyStandards people continued their work toward the acceptance of the polydactyl Maine Coon in the Show Rings of TICA this month. On August 19th, nearly half of the group of 18 met in a worldwide live conference to discuss a timeframe and needed documentation to push forward for submission to TICA. Tasks were broken down into smaller sections and assignments made for all to work on the various areas that need to be completed.

Two of the things discussed were an information packet to provide to breeders and fanciers prior to any voting. The second item was to create a Question and Answer or "FAQ" document regarding answers to commonly asked questions by people that may not be familiar with the polydactyl Maine Coon. Much of this information will be included in the information packet, but it is also needed as part of the "rationale" or reason why the Maine Coon poly should be accepted. The group would like to solicit input from all fanciers and breeders that are working with the MC poly. The first item deals with Catteries working with the Maine Coon poly. It seeks information and experiences in poly breeding. A form is being developed for mailing that asks the following questions:

Name:
Country:

Cattery:
Years Breeding:

Permission to use this information publicly concerning advancement to show status of the Maine Coon polydactyl: Yes/No

Concerns for new breeders introducing MC Polydactyl:

Caution required with kittens:

Any cautions or concerns:

Noticeable litter differences poly/non-poly (health, mortality etc.):

Experiences

Comments:

SUCCESS!

WE WIN!



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If you do not receive a form or if you would like to send in your comments sooner, you may email polystandards@polytrak.net. This is an email address set up by PolyTrak and all responses are automatically forwarded unopened to the polystandards people. They would like a response from all Maine Coon Breeders working with polydactyls anywhere in the world, regardless of Association membership. They want ALL comments and sides of the questions.

The second project is a Question and Answer or "FAQ" Document. This will be a document to help understand polydactylism in the Maine Coon Breed. It has been noticed that many times some breeders and fanciers are not familiar with polydactylism and are basing their opinions on some of the incorrect stories that have been passed on through the years. We all hear these stories on a regular basis. The polystandard group would like to provide short and simple answers to many of these questions that are asked. An example would be a statement like, "I would not breed polys because you would keep getting more and more toes in each generation". The answer would be simply, "Veterinarians and scientists have stated that it is not possible to have more than 9 or 10 toes, simply because they would not fit on the limb bud. In addition it has been documented that nearly 99% of the polydactyl population of Maine Coons listed in PolyTrak contain 7 or less digits. Number of poly generations, poly x poly breeding, number or configuration of parents or any known factor to date does not control this limit. It appears to be random and is not controllable by breeding practices."

You have probably heard these kinds of questions for some time now. The PolyStandards group would like your assistance in adding to this FAQ. If you have a question that you may have or have heard from someone else, email polystandards@polytrak.net with your question...and even better if you have a

short truthful answer, include that also. PolyStandards will eventually compile all of this to the information packet.

Cats do not have to be shown how to have a good time, for they are unfailing ingenious in that respect. - James Mason

“PAPA”HEMINGWAY POLYS

Although not pedigree Maine Coons, when one thinks of the "Poly" many are familiar with the "Hemingway Cat". Sometimes known as the "greatest American author", Hemingway lived in the Florida Keys of the United States. His love for cats, in particular the polydactyl cat is well known and may have served as inspiration for his writings. Hemingway passed away in 1961. His wife and sons sold the mansion and grounds in 1963 for the establishment of a lasting Memorial and Museum of this great author. The poly population lives on today on the grounds and is now a popular tourist attraction and Museum. It is now registered as a United States National Historic Landmark and opened to public tours in 1964.

Recently Deb Brown of the PolyTrak Staff was fortunate to be the recipient of an old pamphlet that was handed out to visitors. After sitting for decades in an old storage box, it is estimated to be from 1968 or 1969, just a few years after the establishment of the Historic Landmark and only 7 or 8 years following the author's passing. This, we imagine, is a rather rare well-preserved pamphlet that we thought you would enjoy. This pamphlet was produced about the same time that the Maine Coon (including the polys - but not for showing) was being considered for acceptance into the registries of Cat Associations. It was also a time when prices were just a little cheaper. 😊 You will note the admission price of 50 cents for children and a dollar for adults (less than 1 Euro) reflects an era that is long gone.



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Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum

A Registered National
Historic Landmark

This Site Possesses Exceptional Value
In Commemorating or Illustrating
The History of The United States



Open Daily 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.
907 Whitehead Street Key West, Florida
Admission \$1.00 Children 50¢

A leisurely tour of the home and gardens of the late Nobel Prize Winner, Ernest Hemingway. The home was built in Spanish Colonial Style of native rock hewn from the grounds with furnishings, rugs, tile, chandeliers brought by the Hemingways from Spain, Africa and Cuba. Luxuriant, exotic plants and trees are from all over the world. It was here that Mr. Hemingway wrote For Whom the Bell Tolls, Green Hills of Africa, A Farewell to Arms, The Fifth Column, The Snows of Kilimanjaro, and The Macomber Affair. Mr. Hemingway was the first important writer to discover and make Key West his home. He owned the home from 1931 to 1961.

Covers One Acre Including Pool And Guest House
Bring Your Camera

For further information contact Bernice Dickson, 907 Whitehead St.

Among Books Written In Key West Are:



A FAREWELL TO ARMS
DEATH IN THE AFTERNOON
GREEN HILLS OF AFRICA
TO HAVE & TO HAVE NOT
THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO
THE MACCOMBER AFFAIR
THE FIFTH COLUMN
FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

Hemingway Wrote Here

In this spacious mansion, Hemingway, considered by many critics to be the greatest American author of all time and certainly one of the most popular, lived with his second wife Pauline and their two sons. Here he penned most of his greatest novels and short stories. He rose early - walked via a catwalk to his study in the loft of his poolhouse. "If it's (his writing) going well, usually work longer," Hemingway once told an interviewer. "If the words are coming hard I often quit before noon.

Hemingway met writer Martha Gellhorn when she came to Key West to interview him. After his divorce, they were married. Pauline and their two sons lived on in their Key West home.

Open To Public In 1964

When Hemingway died in July 1961, his two sons and last wife sold the mansion on Whitehead Street to local residents.

After living there for two years and having so many people want to see Hemingway's home, they decided to establish the home as a lasting memorial to the writer.

Many of the trees and shrubs on the grounds were planted by Hemingway. His was the first swimming pool built in Key West. Built in the late 30's, it is fed by two salt water wells. 180 feet deep and drained by a dry well 80 feet deep. Having cost \$20,000 he took a penny from his pocket and pressed it into the wet cement of the surrounding patio. "Here take the last penny I've got" he said jokingly. The penny is still there.

Hemingway Mementos

Visitors can browse as long as they like, through the museum and inspect the furniture, rugs, chandeliers, tile and other mementos the Hemingways collected from Spain, Africa, France, Cuba and other parts of the world they visited.

One living memorial to the late author has been preserved. Many cats and kittens still make their home there... descendants of the nearly 50 cats who lived there when "Papa" Hemingway - author, Nobel Prize Winner, bullfighter, aficionado, big game hunter, deep-sea fisherman, world adventurer...and cat lover called 907 Whitehead Street home.

*A cat has absolute emotional honesty:
human beings, for one reason or
another, may hide their feelings, but a
cat does not. - Ernest Hemingway*

*"One cat just leads to another." -
Ernest Hemingway*



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POLYTRAK FACTS

PolyTrak Litter-Tracking Statistics

NUMBER OF KITTENS LISTED	368	
TOTAL MALES	186	54.2%
TOTAL FEMALES	157	45.8%
NOT COUNTED	25	---
TOTAL POLYS	202	57.5%
TOTAL NON POLYS	149	42.5%
NOT COUNTED	17	----
NUMBER OF DAMS USED FOR POLY LITTER BREEDING	65	---
TOTAL POLYS	30	46.2%
TOTAL NON POLYS	35	53.8%
NUMBER OF SIRES USED FOR POLY LITTER BREEDING	44	---
TOTAL POLYS	21	47.8%
TOTAL NON POLYS	23	52.2%
PARENTAL BREEDING COMBINATIONS THAT PRODUCED 368 KITTENS	368	---
POLY SIRE – NON POLY DAM	195	53.0%
NON POLY SIRE – POLY DAM	157	42.7%
POLY SIRE – POLY DAM	13	3.5%
HOMOZYGOUS POLY SIRE – NON POLY DAM	3	0.8%



Well that is it for now. We hope you enjoyed this informative issue and we look forward to seeing you next month in *Paws for Effect*. Enjoy the rest your summer and give your cat a hug from the Staff at PolyTrak!

Bye For Now!

