

AT THE SOMALI AGM ON SUNDAY 13TH MAY, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AND PROPOSAL WAS PUT TO THE MEMBERS PRESENT. IT WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY. THE BREED ADVISORY COMMITTEE IS NOW CIRCULATING DETAILS TO ALL OUR MEMBERS FOR THEIR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS. WE HAVE THE MEANS TO ERADICATE PK DEFICIENCY FROM SOMALIS; WE CANNOT WASTE TIME DURING WHICH MORE CARRIERS OR AFFECTED KITTENS MAY BE BORN; WE ASK YOU THEREFORE TO CONSIDER THIS SCHEME AND LET THE BAC KNOW OF ANY PROBLEMS OR QUESTIONS IN TIME FOR OUR NEXT MEETING ON 4TH AUGUST 2007.

PK DEFICIENCY - THE WAY FORWARD!

THE SOMALI BREED ADVISORY COMMITTEE IS DETERMINED TO ERADICATE THIS DISEASE FROM OUR BREED - WE COULD ACHIEVE THIS IN AROUND FIVE YEARS WITH EVERYONE'S HELP AND COMMITMENT TO THE HEALTH, WELFARE AND WELL-BEING OF SOMALIS.

Pyruvate Kinase (PK) deficiency is an inherited disease occasionally encountered in Abyssinian and Somali cats and has also been reported in other domestic shorthairs. PK is an enzyme found within red blood cells, which enables them to produce energy to survive. If this enzyme is lacking, the lifespan of the red blood cells is significantly reduced, resulting in anaemia. This means a miserable life for the poor Somali and continual anguish for its owners. We know the disease is inherited as an autosomal recessive trait, so a cat can be carrying the defective gene without having any symptoms of the disease at all. Affected cats arise when two carriers are mated together. There are, therefore, three statuses for cats: Normal (Clear), Carrier and Affected. From the 140+ Somalis tested through Andrea Harvey at Bristol, it appears that around 6% were Affected, 40% Carriers and 54% Normal (Clear).

Fortunately a reliable test exists. This comprises a DNA test that is performed either with buccal (cheek) swabs or a blood sample. Only one laboratory, the Josephine Deubler Genetic Disease Testing Laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania in the US is able to do this test but it is a sure method of controlling and eventually eradicating the disease from the breed.

Further details about the disease and its control can be obtained from the Somali Cat Club website www.somalicatclub.com or from Andrea Harvey at the Feline Centre, University of Bristol Veterinary School, telephone 0117 928 9558, fax 0117 928 9559 or email: a.m.harvey@bristol.ac.uk. Andrea would be very willing to give information to any of your vets who are not sure about the disease or the procedure for testing the status of your Somali. I would also recommend you take a copy of this information and the relevant forms to your Vet so he/she has all the details to hand.

The first step is for EVERYONE to have his or her Somalis that are to be bred from micro chipped and tested. (*This was approved unanimously at the meeting*). It is vital for you to be aware of your breeding cat's status. A PK DNA Test Submission Form can be downloaded from the Internet. I had extreme difficulty typing the long address into my computer and then reaching the form! The easiest method is to "google" PK Deficiency, then choose "University of Pennsylvania: School of Veterinary Medicine". That will take you to the correct page and it is easy to click on the link to the form. It would be important for the name and address of the "Contact Information" to be that of your vet and to tick the box on the left stating Veterinarian. Where you fill in the "Animal Information", the cat's full registered name comes first and then the "call name" is the pet name or the name on your vet's records. After the Registration Number, put GCCF into the box stating "Other" (AKC is the American Kennel Club). The reason for testing would be for General Screening and also for Breeding and perhaps Showing unless you suspect your cat may be affected by the disease. The cost of the test is currently \$75 and there will also be some additional cost for your vet to take the test, administration fees etc. GCCF will also require you to complete the Somali BAC's form to relate the cat tested with the micro chip number and copies of both would have to be forwarded to GCCF for the cat to be registered correctly.

It is not recommended that affected cats are bred from. Should you find your Somali is affected, he/she should be neutered and not used for breeding. *(This was approved unanimously at the meeting).* We are responsible for the breed and so should take steps to ensure there are no more affected cats born. It is important that Somali breeders register every kitten bred and not just "declare" them. Any kitten not required for breeding should be placed on the Non-Active Register. If a kitten is just "declared" the new owner could register it later and breed from it. Some breeders feel it is an additional expense to register "pet" kittens, but it is a relatively small sum and does give peace of mind. The price of the registration could be incorporated into the cost of the kitten. Similarly the cost of DNA testing and micro chipping etc could be incorporated into the price of a kitten sold for breeding.

In order to preserve particular lines or colours, carriers may be mated to tested, certificated, normal (clear) cats, selecting tested, clear progeny to continue the line. Indeed, it will be important to continue to breed from carriers in order to maintain a healthy gene pool, but it is imperative that the carrier is only mated to a clear cat. *(This was approved unanimously at the meeting and confirmed by Andrea Harvey).* A carrier mated to a carrier will produce affected kittens, so is not a recommended mating under any circumstances. However, if both parents are clear, then all of their progeny will be clear. We need to work at this process now and then our legacy to the future will be that we eradicated PK Deficiency from the Somali breed. It is highly recommended that anyone importing a cat should require it to be micro chipped and a DNA test performed at the University of Pennsylvania certifying it is normal (clear) for PK Deficiency before doing so.

WHY SHOULD A CAT BE MICRO CHIPPED?

This is required as positive identification of that cat with the sample taken. Similarly, it would be necessary for the sample to be taken and sent to Pennsylvania by a Veterinary Surgeon rather than the cat's owner. If someone has had a cat tested previously, either with a swab taken by the owner/breeder, or without the cat being identified by micro chip, it would be necessary to retest as described above for the Somali BAC Veterinary Certificate to be issued. The cost for testing is around £60 in total, but that is a small price to pay for the certified knowledge of your cat's status, and it is a necessity if your cat is to be placed on the Active Register should this scheme proceed. The BAC has formulated its own form to accompany the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine Form to validate the test and provide a suitable Veterinary Certificate for the GCCF.

SO WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD?

The way forward would be to set up a Genetic Register within the Somali Registration Policy with GCCF. Registration on the Genetic Register does not bar cats from being bred from nor shown, but it does indicate a PK deficiency status. Micro chipped cats, proven clear (normal) by Veterinary Certificate, would be placed on the Active Register, at the breeder's request. Cats that are not micro chipped for identification, cats not tested by a Veterinary Surgeon or with carrier status for PK Deficiency would be placed on the Non-Active or Genetic Register. All cats with affected status should be neutered and placed upon the Non-Active Register. The Somali Breed Advisory Committee would send its proposal to the Governing Council for approval and the new registration system would then be set up. It is a system used by other breeds with health problems and does underline our care for the welfare and well-being of the breed. We would, of course, circulate our plans to other BAC's that have Somalis in their list of approved outcrosses to make them aware of testing arrangements and requirements.

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE SOMALI BAC?

The Somali Breed Advisory Committee (BAC) is the administration body that is responsible for the Somali breed within the GCCF. It is part of our remit in the Philosophy and Principles of the GCCF Judge Appointment Scheme (3a) that "A BAC exists to work in the interests of the cats of its Breed List by monitoring the training and performance of the Judges on its list and candidates within its scheme, and by reviewing its Standard of Points and Registration Policy and amending them if and when

required, with due consideration to the health and future of the breed". The committee of the Somali Cat Club forms the BAC and it is the responsibility of each representative to make themselves aware of matters pertaining to the breed. We have an independent Chairman, Mr Stephen Crow (well known Burmese/Asian breeder, judge in several sections and member of the Executive Committee). The Somali BAC is determined to eradicate PK Deficiency from the breed. We have also been in contact with FIFe in the UK. They are extremely interested in our plans and would be prepared to take them to their own Breed Councils to set up a similar system. The integrity of the FIFe Health and Welfare policies are known and respected world-wide.

The information concerning the Registers below would be added to the Somali Registration Policy:

PYRUVATE KINASE (PK) DEFICIENCY TESTING SCHEME

A. ACTIVE REGISTER

Somalis may be registered on the Active Register, at the breeder's request, only if:

1. They themselves have been genetically tested as normal (clear) for PK deficiency. A Veterinary Certificate of the test results is required.
2. Both parents have been tested normal (clear) as in A. 1
3. They are from parents deemed normal (clear) because of the results from the testing (as in A.1) of cats on every pedigree line in previous generations. Pedigree line in this case refers to both parents, or 4 grandparents, 8 great-grandparents, 16 great-great-grandparents and so on, or any combination of the same which is inclusive of both the sire's and dam's ancestors.

B. GENETIC REGISTER

1. Somalis which have been genetically tested as carriers of PK deficiency, shall be registered on the Genetic Register, or on the Non-Active Register if so requested by the breeder. Any such cats, which are already registered on the Active Register, shall be moved to the Genetic Register.
2. Somalis, which are not eligible for registration on the Active Register, shall be registered on the Genetic Register, or the Non-Active Register if so requested by the breeder.
3. Offspring of cats registered on the Genetic Register may only be registered on the Active Register if they have themselves been genetically tested as normal (clear) for PK Deficiency.
4. All other offspring of cats registered on the Genetic Register shall be registered on the Genetic Register, or on the Non-Active Register if so requested by the breeder.

NB Cats must be micro chipped for identification purposes and swab or blood tested by a Vet for the Veterinary Certificate for that cat to be valid for the Active Register. The Certificate may be downloaded from the Somali CC website www.somalicatclub.com or is obtainable from the Somali BAC Secretary.

Anne Gregory,
Hon. Secretary Somali Breed Advisory Committee
52 Hempstead Road
Hempstead
Gillingham
Kent
ME7 3RF

Telephone: 01634 361645
Email: annesmail@blueyonder.co.uk