

BURMESE

By DONALD M. CAME

(Concluding)

From the descriptions already given, it may be easy to conclude a close relationship between the Burmese and the Siamese and all the evidence seems to support that conclusion. Genetically speaking, the Burmese appears to be a melanistic color variation of the Siamese, the Burmese gene being the next higher identifiable allele in the albino series to that of the Siamese and next below that of the Silver or Smoke. (*Genetics of the Burmese Cat*) — Thompson, Cobb, Keeler & Dmytryk, *Journal of Heredity*, Vol. 34, Page 119, April 1943).

These two classes of cats breed together readily producing the hybrids noted before. The probable results of breeding of hybrids together will be in the ratio of 1 true Burmese, 2 hybrids and 1 true Siamese. This expectancy has been well demonstrated by breeding experiments which involved 4 female hybrids and 1 male hybrid, and in some cases more than one litter per female. The results obtained were 8 true Burmese, 18 hybrids, and 8 true Siamese, results well within the mathematical laws of probability.

As to the origin of the Burmese, there is not sufficient evidence to support too definite a conclusion. Existing as mere color variations one of the other, one is justified in concluding a common ancestry to the Burmese and Siamese. As to just what that ancestry is has been the subject of much discussion, but certain facts do stand out. In spite of dogmatic and unsupported statements which have appeared in recent popular books on the cat, there seem to be no reasons whatsoever for believing that either of these cats can be properly described as *Felis Catus*, the blotched type of tabby cat widely found domesticated in Europe and erroneously described by Linnaeus as the European Wild Cat. Neither does there seem to be any reason grounded in fact for assuming *Felis sylvestrus*, the European Wild Cat, to be the ancestor of these cats.

Lydekker in his "*Mostly Mammals*" (1903) under the heading "*Pedigree of the Cat*" suggests *Felis temmincki*, the red or dark brown Golden or Bay Cat indigenous to Burma and Siam as the ancestor of the Siamese, a theory not supported by the differences disclosed on examination of the anatomy of the two animals.

It is known that *Felis ocreata*, the Egyptian cat or African wild cat, a striped tabby, ancestor, in company with *F. sylvestrus*, of many of our domesticated cats, spread into Asia and that it bears close structural resemblance to domesticated cats found in India and to the Siamese and Burmese. Inasmuch as the coloring of a species may vary with the climate and surroundings and

knowing that the Burmese and Siamese represent albinistic mutations in general ground color, there seems no sound reason for believing these two cats to be anything but domesticated varieties of *F. ocreata* with the possibility that of the two the Burmese was the immediate progenitor of the Siamese. For detailed presentation of the case in favor of *F. ocreata* vs. *F. catus* and other species, reference is made to R. I. Pocock, "*On English Domestic Cats*," proceedings of Zoological Soc of London 1907 Vol. 1, pp 143-168, and R. I. Pocock "*On Tabby Cats*," *Mendel Journal* No. 2, p. 53, Feb. 1911.

In the cat fancy the Burmese occupies a rather anomalous position. The Cat Fanciers' Federation, in keeping with sound genetic laws, grants full recognition to all true breeding Burmese, with register entry only for hybrids. The American Cat Association accepts them under the separate heading of Burmese but considers them more or less as a color variation of the Siamese class, thus lumping together both true breeding and hybrid, while the Cat Fanciers' As-

sociation claims to recognize only Burmese "of pure breed" but in fact has, on occasions, accepted hybrids for its Foundation Record.

The only Burmese specialty club active in the United States is the Burmese Cat Society. (Mrs. Frances N. Peterson, Secretary, 114 Sudbury Street, Boston 14, Mass.), now affiliated with the Cat Fanciers' Federation. This society is currently attempting the compilation of a genetically detailed register of all breeding Burmese and Burmese hybrids now in the United States, and solicits from any reader any information which can be given as to any such individual cat.

(The End)

erroneous conception, judge, (and I am not one who isn't), determining "Bests" for color, and the good breeders of these two classes are never of this I can recall where a short haired cat in Show."

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