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THE MONTHLY
MAGAZINE FOR
CAT PEOPLE



by Jane S. Martinke

THOSE NEITHER-NORS—

THEY JUST KEEP ROLLIN' ALONG

LET US GET ON with it. This month we are taking a closer look at more of the neither-nors of the short-hair breeds, for not all the problems are found in the Siamese which we discussed last month. We will begin here with the Abyssinians since they have the honor of heading the list of shorthairs alphabetically as the Siamese do numerically.

A RUDDY SHAME

Probably the principal neither-nor

problem in Abys could be said to lie with those Ruddies whose coats are dark at the roots, contrary to the standard for the color which says: "Coat ruddy brown, ticked with various shades of darker brown or black; the extreme outer tip to be the darkest, with orange-brown undercoat, ruddy to the skin. Darker shading along spine allowed if fully ticked. Tail tipped with black and without rings. The undersides and forelegs (inside) to be a tint to harmonize with the main color. Preference given to UNMARKED orange-brown (burnt-sienna) color."

Obviously a cat whose coat does not have sufficient ticking has a serious fault. So does the cat who has noticeable bars on the insides of the legs, a common fault, and barring on the outside of the legs is an even more grievous fault. Rings on the tail are also a weakness, as is coldness or gray tone in the coat color, and all of these faults require penalization. The standard for Abys specifies that off-color paw pads are to be penalized, unlike the Siamese standard which leaves to guesswork and personal opinion or prejudice the degree of severity of this fault.

Awards are to be withheld, of course, from cats with a white locket or white anywhere other than nostril, chin and upper throat area, for dark unbroken necklaces or for gray-black hair with no ruddy undercoat.

However, the fault we are discussing is not fully described either in the ones to be penalized or the ones for which awards must be withheld. We are concerned here with the cats whose coat over considerable portions of the body is either deep chocolate-brown or brownish black or even black itself at the roots, even though the undersides of the cat may have the proper burnt-sienna coloration called for in the standard. When this condition is confined to places where the hair is naturally short such as the top of the skull or a small area at the shoulder-blades, no great attention need be paid to it. Actually, this is merely a question of the coat's having full ticking of alternate dark and light bands without sufficient length of the hair to show the ground color below the last band of ticking. However, when the ticking is on the portions where the hairs are the full normal length and there is only dark coloration showing below the ticking without any ruddiness of ground color and this is found on the back, sides and flanks it is a deviation of great importance, for such a cat is not a ruddy brown cat with ticking at the tips of the fur. To put it in the most simplistic terms, this is virtually a cat whose basic ruddy color is interspersed with black patching or vice versa, akin

to the Tortoiseshell type of patching, yet it is not readily discernible when the coat is fully ticked and its presence must be determined by examining the coat closely on all areas of the body, not just one quick glance at one location. This is a serious fault, not only because it is a definite variation from the standard, a beauty-marring disparity, but also because it is a fault which becomes progressively more severe with succeeding generations and, once it has programmed itself into the genes, it becomes almost in-eradicable from the bloodline involved. The judge should be extremely wary of permitting awards to be given to such cats through failure to observe and examine the coat in its entirety, for he is concerned with the individual cat's variations from the standard for its breed and color and this is a distinct and unsightly deviation. The breeder-exhibitor should avoid it like the plague for, like the plague, it can destroy everything it touches, in this case the integrity of a bloodline for future generations.

"I'LL BE SEEING YOU, RED?"

At one time the standards for Red Abyssinians required that awards be withheld for black hairs anywhere on the cat. The standard now calls simply for "warm glowing red, distinctly ticked with chocolate-brown. Deeper shades of red preferred. However, good ticking not to be sacrificed merely for depth of color. Ears and tail tipped with chocolate-brown." The penalization and withholding of awards are the same as for the Ruddies.

There is one serious omission in the color description for both Ruddies and Reds. As with any tabby, whether mackerel, classic, blotched, spotted or ticked in pattern, the back of the hind leg up to the knee will be solid color, the darkest color on the cat and, ideally, the same shade as the tip of the tail.

So conjure up in your mind's eye an Abyssinian cat of a tone so warm and glowing that it would seem to come under the color description for Red, a cat who is fully ticked, but who has black on the tail tip and backs of the hind legs to the knee. Immediately the question will arise in your mind—is this a Red Aby with a serious color fault in that black has been substituted for the chocolate-brown of the standard or is it a Ruddy with an uncommonly high degree of intensity and brilliance of the ruddiness? Where does the dividing line between these colors really lie?

The *Random House Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* defines the adjective "ruddy" as (1) of or having a fresh healthy red color: a

ruddy complexion. (2) red or reddish. (3) *British slang*, bloody; damned; a ruddy fool.

Consider this carefully and one wonders if we ourselves might not conform to the third definition. Are we, in fact, "ruddy fools?"

How, in the name of all that is logical, did we come, first to adopt, and then when a second color of Abyss was accepted for championship competition, to retain a nomenclature which indicates that the color is "red or reddish," namely "ruddy," although it is parenthetically described in the standard description of the solid color on the underside of the cat as "burnt-sienna?"

The dictionary indicates that "sienna" is a yellowish brown and that "burnt sienna" is a reddish brown. Here the definitive word is "brown," not "red" and red enters the picture only as an indication that the intended color is a brown on the reddish side rather than a yellowish brown or a chocolate brown or a charcoal brown or any other shade of brown. Yet the descriptive word chosen for the original color of Abyssinian was "ruddy" which means "red or reddish." Then we proceeded to compound the error by using the term "red" which is, for all intents and purposes, synonymous with "ruddy" for the second color accepted for this breed.

Even if we are to presume that we understand precisely what was in the minds of the writers of the standard for the original Ruddies, which would require ESP beyond the scope of the mundane mind most of us possess, where does this "ruddy" (red or reddish) end and "red" begin? Most doctors prescribe aspirin for headaches we are told constantly by the ubiquitous TV commercials. I hope you have some handy.

And exactly what does "warm, glowing red" imply? A warm red might, presumably, be thought to be any red in which yellow predominates rather than blue, such as henna, flame, orange-red, brick — well, why cite more. You get the picture. Some people feel that deep apricot, even, is a suitable description for some types of Red Aby, yet most people, pushed to it, would be likely to feel that apricot is a reddish yellow rather than a yellowish red.

No matter. At the moment we are "stuck" with the descriptions "Ruddy" and "Red" with all the problems inherent in differentiating between two colors whose descriptive names are synonymous and in some way we must cope with this until, hopefully, more precise descriptions are furnished in a revised standard. Our real basis until then for determining which color is

which would seem to be the color of the ticking, ear tips, tail tips and back of legs—are they chocolate-brown or black?

When, then, we find a cat which is far too brilliant a red to be placed in the Ruddy class when we have a Red class, and this cat has black tipping, ticking, etc., we have a cat which, even under these anomalous conditions, is certainly a "neither-nor" although no actual prohibition against such coloration is included under either "penalize" or "withhold awards."

One can understand the reluctance of the Abyssinian breeders accustomed for many years to the designation "Ruddy" to sacrifice it or substitute another color description when the so-called "Reds" were accepted. However, there would certainly have been less confusion in the minds of those attempting to analyze the standards if the Reds had been given a different name, possibly "henna" which would be accurate and can vary in depth of tone and intensity. Both from what I have seen and what I have read, I think it distinctly possible that there is still another color of Abyssinian which could realistically be termed "Apricot" and which may, some day find its way into the championship classes when it is more numerous and more widely seen. One hopes that this possibility of the future will not be ignored or overlooked if and when those responsible for standards take action to resolve the conflict and synonymy of the two present color descriptions.

THE IRANIAN SHORTHAIK

We need scarcely dwell here on the "neither-nor land" which lies somewhere between the American Shorthair which is the true Domestic cat refined and perfected and the Exotic Shorthair which, in appearance, should be a Shorthair Persian. It is all too possible for a so-called American Shorthair to show too much evidence of Persian background one way or another to be acceptable as a true natural breed, which we consider the American shorthair to be, yet which is simply not cobby enough, short-nosed enough, short-eared enough, round-headed enough to be a genuine Exotic Shorthair except technically. Any adulteration of the American Shorthair breed takes the resulting specimen out of that class. Such a cat may, by reason of its parentage, qualify for registration as an Exotic Shorthair, just as the early crosses made for the eventual achievement of Himalayans looked in the first generation like black American Shorthairs and, in later generations, when color had been stabilized, like the present Balinese, met the re-

quirements for Himalayan registration but not for Himalayan competition since they did not meet the standard. Such cats who are technically Exotic Shorthairs for registration purposes are simply hybrid in appearance, do not meet the standard for any breed and, although they can be valuable in a breeding program, do not belong in the Exotic Shorthair classes in the shows. Some breeders, who genuinely are a little hazy about just what the ideal Exotic Shorthair is, put these hybrid Household Pet type cats in the shows in all good faith and are shocked when told by a knowledgeable judge that they do not conform to the standard. Sometimes one even discovers that they are proceeding on hearsay instead of bothering to read and analyze the standard for the breed that they are claiming as their special field of interest. Others, more sophisticated in their knowledge of what the Exotic Shorthair should be, nevertheless try to cash in on the scarcity of competition and the hope that the presiding judge may be somewhat lacking in experience in judging this breed for lack of opportunity to see many good entries in it as yet.

I have several comments to make on this. It may be true that some judges, fewer each month, have not yet had the opportunity to see and handle Exotic Shorthairs of outstanding quality. However, I have found that, without exception, once such a judge has had the chance to see and handle a good one, even just one specimen, mind you, he is never again in any doubt whatever about what constitutes an acceptable Exotic. This is a breed which speaks for itself when a good one appears and there are more and more of them coming into the shows and taking their places in the top finals. The judges who might be uncertain in their minds, therefore, are rapidly disappearing and will soon be non-existent.

THERE'S A HAIR-LENGTH RULE

The second comment, and I cannot put it too strongly, is that the Exotic Shorthair cat is a *SHORTHAIK*, not something halfway between a shorthair and a longhair. The standard in every respect but two, follows the Persian standard. One exception is that it does not call under "Nose" for a "break." This omission from the standard was deliberate and intentional. This does not mean necessarily that there should not be a break. After all, the Persian standard itself included the stipulation for a break only very recently. It was omitted from the Exotic Shorthair standard in the hope of protecting this new breed against the excesses and follies which have occurred in the breeding of Persians over the years, resulting in

(Continued on page 32)



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MARTINKE

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deformed noses and cheekbones, twisted and blocked tearducts and malocclusions. The Exotic Shorthair starts as a healthy and wholesome breed. It is to be hoped that it will remain so as it will if permitted by those working with the breed. In no way is it intended under this standard that the Exotic head and face should not be extreme. The nose is to be "short, snub and broad." Ideally it should be *very* short, *very* snub and *very* broad to the furthest degree which is consistent with health, stamina and sound bone formation—and no further.

The second difference from the Persian standard is the coat length. Note I said "length." The texture of a Persian coat is described as "long and thick, standing off from the body. Of fine texture, glossy and full of life. Long all over the body, including the shoulders. The ruff immense and continuing in a deep frill between the front legs. Ear and paw tufts long. Brush very full." The Exotic Shorthair coat description is "medium in length, soft in texture." Note that the length description is the same as that for Abyssinian, Havana Brown and Japanese Bobtail. Only the texture and type of coat differs. Certainly this description, then, could not possibly be interpreted as meaning something between shorthair and longhair, as so many people seem to want to believe.

Because of the Persian texture the Exotic Shorthair coat will be very thick and will stand off from the body which will give the cat a roly-poly effect when combined with its short, heavy bone structure and cobby build. The tail will naturally appear quite thick. But make no mistake, the longest coat that would be tolerable on the Exotic Shorthair tail would be that which can continue to stand out straight from the tail bone. When the fur reaches a length where it begins to do what might be termed "flow" down the tail, this be-

comes a longhair cat and a longhair cat cannot be described as a shorthair cat or shown in the shorthair portion of the shows. The Exotic Shorthair cat is a shorthair cat and competes quite properly in the shorthair portions of the shows.

Thus a cat which lies somewhere between a Persian and an American Shorthair in length of coat may technically from its parentage be eligible for registration as an Exotic Shorthair, but it is not worthy of a win in the Exotic Shorthair class. For my own part, and I have been intimately concerned with this particular breed from its inception, I would feel that I could be less severe in penalizing a too-short coat, provided the texture is correct and the body and head type acceptable, than a too-long one, for this is, I repeat, a *shorthair* cat. I could not personally square with my conscience the giving of an award to an Exotic Shorthair entry with a long coat any more than I could forgive myself for giving an award to a Siamese whose coat is too Balinese.

The "halfway" cat is a neither-nor, Exotic Shorthair by courtesy and registration only. It is not an Exotic Shorthair cat by the standard which is the only criterion for the judge in the ring. Eligibility for entry in the shows is a matter of concern for the exhibitor, the show management and the office of the association under whose rules a show is held, but for the judge *only* the show standard merits consideration. It matters not that the unworthy entry he is examining is eligible for registration as the breed under which it is entered. It does not meet the standard for that breed and so it does not deserve a win. It is as simple as that.

Once again I had hoped to finish the discussion of neither-nors this month, but the deeper I get into the subject the more I find which needs to be thought about. Now, having committed the unpardonable sin of ending a sentence with a preposition, I will take my leave of you for another month and probably more neither-nors.



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