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Sphinx Male - Riyadh Bawa

**THIS MONTH** I'd like you to join me in the discussion of two fascinatingly different breeds of cat which have only recently begun to receive public attention—the "hairless" Sphinx and the "brushlike" American Wirehair.

Nature produces many, many alterations in genes causing physical anomalies in cats. These changes are somewhat loosely and unscientifically termed "mutations." For the purposes of discussing spontaneous alterations in the characteristics of cats in one form or another it is, nevertheless, a useful word and one which I shall use for the sake of convenience in the full knowledge that its use is in the nature of a colloquialism. I hope that the purists among us will grin and bear it.

Nature is a wise old jade and in her constant watchful effort to ensure that no gene alterations which might

be harmful can become established, she sees to it that a lethal factor accompanies them which will destroy the individuals bearing these undesirable characteristics and thus prevent their perpetuation. Once in an aeon of blue moons only, such an altered gene will prove to be of a nature which will permit its survival and transmission to succeeding generations until it either becomes an integral part of the species or creates a new breed within the species. The odds against the appearance of an altered gene which not only carries no lethal factor, but which is also desirable enough that it *should* be carried on, are astronomical. Again and again we are told of something new only to find that the characteristics which seemed beneficial or desirable for one reason or another go hand in hand with ones which could be harmful. In such cases prudence demands that measures be taken to prevent the likelihood of their recurrence.

Even with desirable mutations, the natural conditions must be such that isolation, or some other factor which will cause inbreeding, can set the new characteristic or it must be seen and recognized by someone capable of appreciating the potentialities and at the same time possessing sufficient genetic know-how to proceed along the proper lines if it is to survive. There is no way of telling how many such altered genes make their appearance but go unrecognized and so

disappear from the scene. Only time and hard work can allow us to ascertain whether a new characteristic can or should be preserved and then whether it has sufficient appeal to enough people to make it worth the effort.

The Rex cat is an example of such a change in the genes. Several different mutations have appeared with curly coats and each is accompanied by a noticeable change in the shape of the skeletal structure as well. So far none of these mutations seem to have any undesirable side effects and the Rex breed is fast making a place for itself among cat lovers.

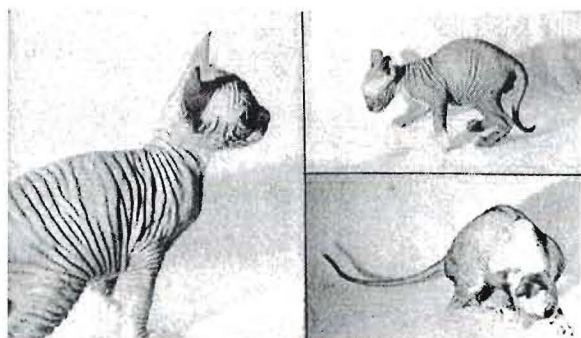
On the other hand, very occasionally when chance and/or man's own efforts combine to produce a cat with individual characteristics different

Wirehaired American Kit  
Born May 28, 1969 (Beck)

from those of other domestic felines, the change may be accompanied by lethal factors and structural problems, yet it will survive. Nature, perhaps as a practical joke or to show man how unwise it is to tamper with her laws, will turn a blind eye and allow a new breed to be established which will contain both the good and the bad. Such a cat is the Manx. Although it is well-established and well-loved, its breeders have a constant struggle to keep it going in the face of lethal genes and the structural defect which causes reproductive and other difficulties.

From time to time and in different locations, cats who are completely

by **Jane S Martinke**

Three Snaps of  
Bawa Sphinxes



hairless have made their appearance, but either they have carried lethal genes which forced their disappearance or no knowledgeable work was ever done with them to ensure their continuation. In many cases they have simply been accepted as oddities, a local nine-day's wonder, but no steps have been taken to breed from them systematically.

For instance, there were cats known as Moonstones at one time who were almost totally hairless, so much so that they not only tended to have an exudation from the skin akin to sweat, but it also contained pigmentation, we are told, which was somewhat of a nuisance. If any of these cats are still in existence, they have not chanced to come to my at-

the broad chest and slightly bowed front legs of the bulldog.

They come in both solid color, "blue" which appears almost like a charcoal gray, and bi-colors, which are expected to be symmetrical in markings. We are told that some thought is being given to attempting to breed a solid white Sphynx as well.

One of its particular oddities which is very appealing is the deeply



Two of Rita Tenhove's  
Dutchie's Cattery Sphynxes  
with two normally  
coated shorhair kits

the great good fortune to be in the hands of those who have placed great stress on complete health and vigor and who do not wish to have any specimen exhibiting less than superb health used in the breeding program. This intelligent approach should produce a breed free from built-in defects and weaknesses, provided that, as it becomes better known and more popular, future breeders will exercise the same sense of responsibility.

When this type of cat first appeared, it aroused great hope that it might be the answer to the problem of those who love cats, but are allergic to them. To a limited extent this may still prove to be true, but sober second thought has indicated that much more research needs to be done on this before jumping to conclusions. The type of allergy involved and its severity would have a strong

## STRANGERS IN OUR MIDST

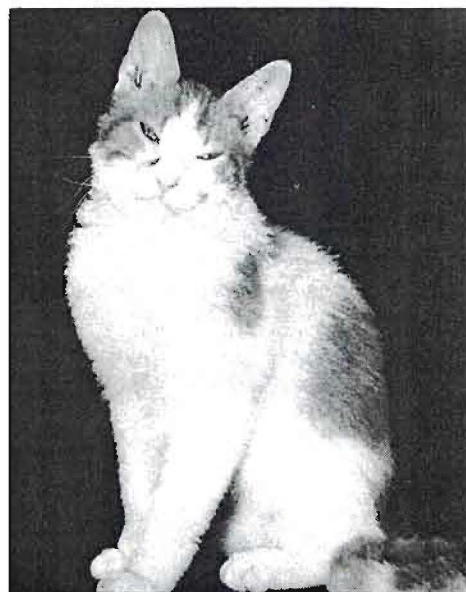
tention. There have been others as well, but none became the basis of a new strain.

A few years ago another manifestation of the hairless cat made its appearance in Canada. It was fortunate in coming to the attention of someers. We have been furnished with two separate proposed standards which are not in full accordance with each other, so I will content myself with a general description. Although this cat is described as being "hairless," this is somewhat misleading, for it is covered by a very fine soft fuzz somewhat like peach down. In one standard it is described as being snake-headed. The other, while not using this specific term, describes a shape which would not be incompatible with this. The heads of the ones I have seen personally looked to me rather like those of Toy Boston Bull Terriers. In addition, they appear to have

wrinkled head of the adult cat. Kittens are described as looking as though they are lost in a sweater far too large, so that the folds hang about the wrists and ankles and fan out from inside the back legs across the lower back. By the time the cat is fully mature it has filled out until the skin has become taut everywhere except the head which retains the deep wrinkles.

Unlike most cats, this breed sweats and there appears to be some exudation of pigment in the sweat but, because of the soft fuzz covering it, this is not the problem in the Sphynx that it appears to have been with the Moonstones in their day.

From the very first this breed had



Hi-Fi's Amy of Katzenreich  
American Wirehair  
William S. Beck III

## TWO NEWS Starts page 12

influence on this. Also, an allergy to cats may not necessarily be limited to the hair alone, but may extend to the danger as well. Before anyone with an allergy, particularly a child, is exposed to the disappointment of learning to love one of these cats only to find that, despite its lack of hair, it exacerbates the allergic symptoms, some cautious testing should be undertaken. In some cases the experiment may be successful—it already has been with some individuals—and a delightful relationship with a charming cat could prove to be possible even for an allergic individual, but we strongly suggest making haste slowly in ascertaining whether this would be feasible and enlisting medical help and advice before making the commitment to try to live with the cat.

Now let us turn to the newest mutation on the scene, this one fully clothed but with a highly individual fashion. Like the Rex and the Sphynx it too has appeared from normal Domestic Short-hairs and it has been named American Wirehair which is an apt description. The original mutant was discovered by Mrs. William F. O'Shea, a breeder of German Rex, in the summer of 1966 when the owner of Council Rock Farm in New York called her to investigate a unique cat which had turned up among their normal farm cats. Mrs. O'Shea then purchased this cat, "Council Rock Farm Adam of Hi-Fi", a red and white male, and she also acquired a normal-coated litter sister, a brown tabby with white. These two cats offered the possibility of stabilizing and continuing this attractive type of cat, so different from anything previously known.

The coat, which closely resembles that of a Wirehair Terrier except that

it is even more coarse, is very wiry and resilient to the touch, standing off somewhat from the body. The hair on the ears is tightly curled.

The original mutant, Adam, has a moderate bone structure, but there is some alteration from the normal Domestic Shorthair type which is particularly apparent in his long legs and heavy hips. This is very interesting as this tendency to heavy hips and long legs is noticeable in both Rex and Manx who sprang from the same type of original cat. The head is short with a break at the bridge of the nose and the muzzle too is short.

Adam and his full sister produced a litter of four, two with normal coats and two Wirehairs, both red and white, one of these a female which survived. She carries many of the characteristics of her father, especially the tightly curled coat on the head and in the ears. Her legs are even longer than his.

Adam also has been tested by a mating with an unrelated Blue-Eyed White Domestic Shorthair and this cross produced two Wirehairs in a litter of four, an obvious indication that the Wirehair is not a simple recessive like the Rex.

The female, "Hi-Fi's Amy of Katzenreich," from the original breeding between Adam and his sister, was then bred to her father, the original mutant. From this mating, the first of Wirehair to Wirehair, there were two kittens born in June of this year, one of which was lost at birth. Both were exceptionally large and the survivor, 'Katzenreich's Barberry Ellen', still another red and white, is proving to be a vigorous and healthy kitten. As you can see from her picture taken when she was just six days old, she is so covered with curls of coarse wiry hair as to resemble a Fuller brush with

legs.

In personal correspondence between Dr. Rosamund Peltz whose work in genetics is well-known and Mr. William Beck, the breeder of this kitten, Dr. Peltz made some initial comments (which I have been given permission to quote) on the Wirehair coat types which she has had an opportunity to examine:

"(1) long, thick—nearly straight hairs—which I take to be guard hairs. (2) thinner, very wavy hairs. (3) thin hairs, more curved at the ends with closer "crimps" on the undulations. (4) medium thick hairs—somewhat coarser which are hooked or coiled at the end." Apparently all four hair types are modified, although no distinction between awn, awned down and down was made.

Here again this mutation was fortunate to be seen and recognized by people with the knowledge to work intelligently according to sound genetic principles for its perpetuation and it appears to be off to a good start now. So far there is nothing to indicate that there are any accompanying defects and the American Wirehair gives every indication of being a new and promising truly American breed which will appeal to many. I must confess that I can scarcely contain my own enthusiasm for it.