

Breed Of The Month — American Bobtail

Health Handbook — FIP



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# CATS

M A G A Z I N E

**RIGHT OR  
WRONG?  
THE PROPOSED  
BAN ON BREEDING**

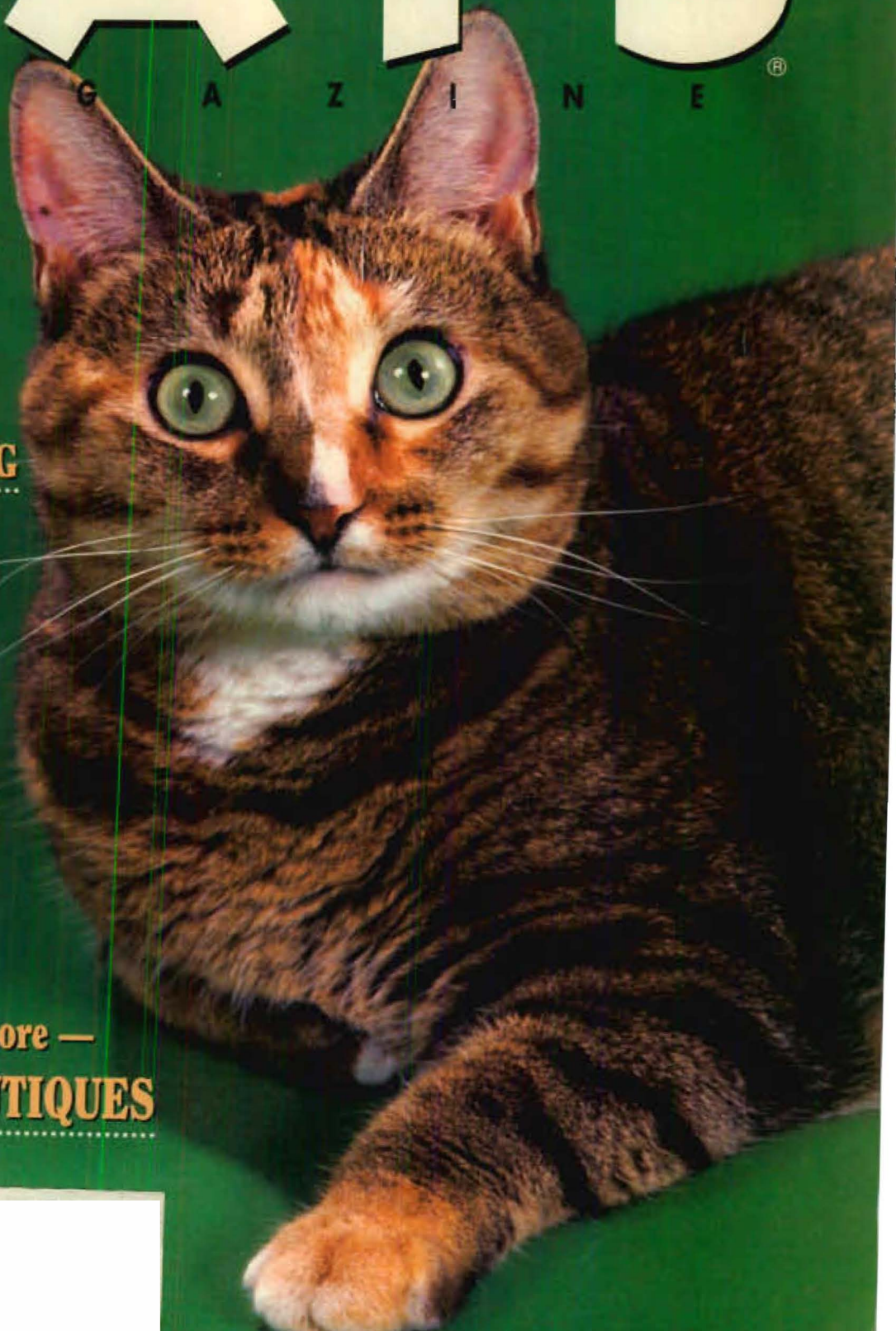
**10 WORST  
REASONS FOR  
NOT ALTERING  
YOUR CAT**

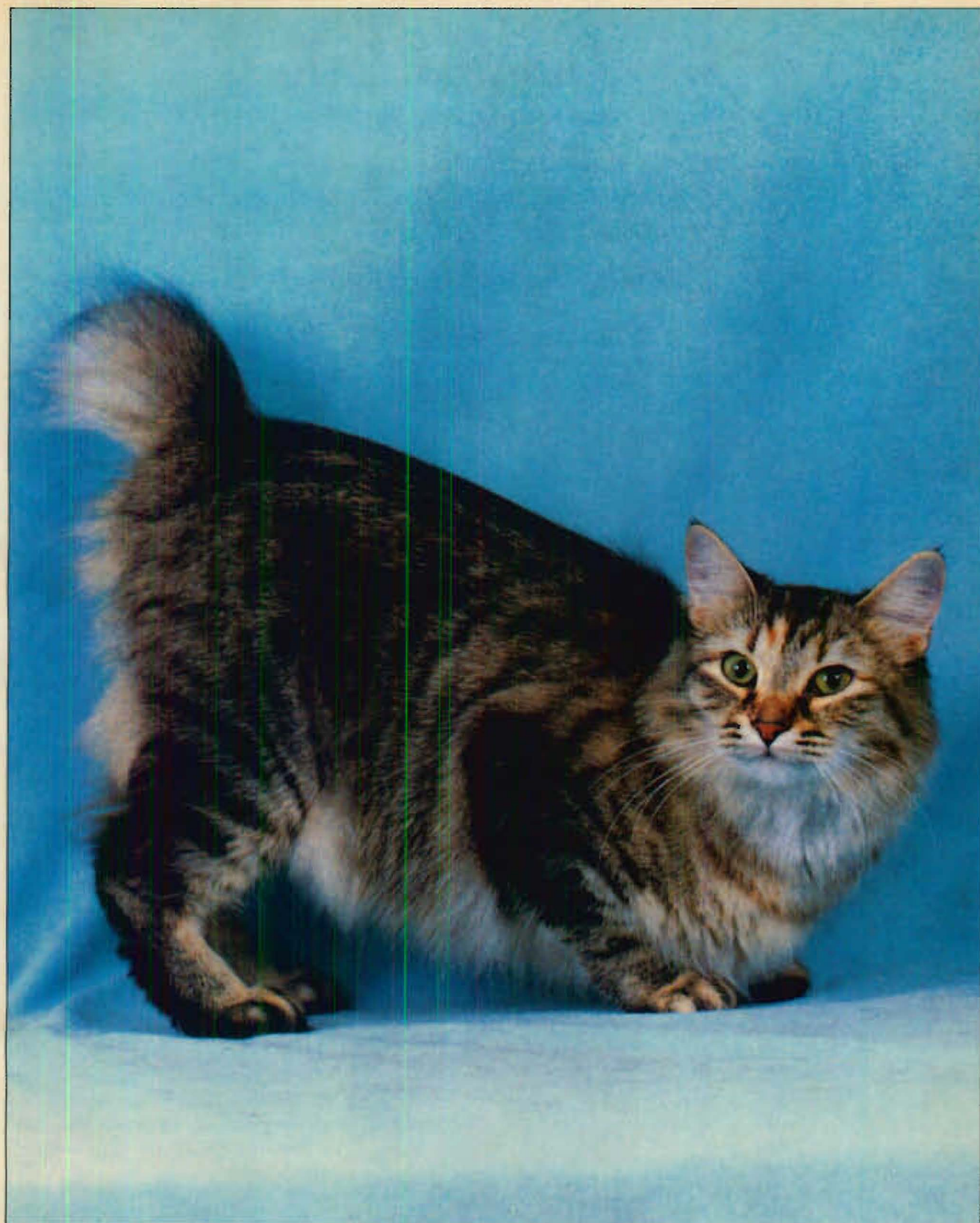
**A New Breed Of Pet Store —  
CATS ONLY BOUTIQUES**

AUGUST 1993



U.S.





**BEBOP PRECIOUS PERFECTION OF SEWBOB**

**BREEDER: LISA BLACK  
OWNER: SHARON WAUGH**

# BREED OF THE MONTH

By J. ANNE HELGREN

## Facts & Figures

- Registered and shown in the New Breed and Color classes in TICA

## THE AMERICAN BOBTAIL

**A**sk the average cat show-goer to point out an American Bobtail, and you might be mistakenly steered toward the Japanese Bobtail — another fascinating short-tailed feline, but an altogether different breed. Until recently the American Bobtail has received little attention, so most folks are surprised to learn that it has been catting around America for as long as the better-known Japanese Bobtail (the first Japanese Bobtail was imported to the United States in the late 1960s).

The American Bobtail appeared on the scene in the 1960s as well, but unlike their Japanese buddies they are as American as the Grand Canyon. Because of the haphazard debut of the Bobtail, the word is just now beginning to spread about this beguiling breed.

### BIRTH OF THE BOBTAIL

The cat's history, like the cat itself, is rather fuzzy. The original Bobtail bloodline came from a mating between a short-tailed brown tabby male named Yodie and a Sealpoint Siamese female. Yodie was obtained by John and Brenda Sanders of Iowa while vacationing near an Indian reservation in Arizona. The parentage of Yodie is unknown, but was thought to have been a bobcat/domestic cat hybrid because of his stubby tail.

Birman, Himalayan and a Himalayan/Siamese cross were then added to the bloodline, according to the *Mini-Atlas of Cats* by Andrew De Prisco and James Johnson. Mindy Schultz (now Mindy Cave), a friend of the Sanders and the earliest Bobtail breeder, wrote the first provisional standard in the early 1970s. However, at that point the breed experienced setbacks due to the usual obstacles — developing and promoting a new breed of cat is an endeavor that requires the patience of Job, the wealth of Midas, the wisdom of Solomon and the tenacity of The Terminator.

### NEW AND IMPROVED

However, what happened in those early years seems immaterial at this point. Most of the early bloodlines have been phased out, says TICA committee member Reaha Evans (Sunnydaze Cattery, Florida). In the mid-1980s, a group of Bobtail breeders decided to break away from the original blueprint of the cat, which was essentially a short-tailed pointed longhair with white mittens and a white face blaze.

"When you're working with a fore-shortened tail gene, the Siamese color pattern and the white spotting gene, you've got a lot of strikes against you," says TICA committee chairperson Lisa Black (Bebop Cattery, Morrison, Illinois). "The original line became too inbred to be usable."

The new and improved American Bobtail comes in all colors, categories and divisions. The trend among today's breeders is toward a sweet, domestic cat that has the natural, wild look of the bobcat.

"The original name and idea is still there," says Reaha Evans, "but the bloodline from Arizona does not comprise 1 percent of what we're breeding now. We're not focusing on a Colorpoint cat, although we do still have them."

The new Bobtail lines are reputed to have begun in Florida with trysts between domestic cats and bobcats, the kittens of which fell into the hands of breeders working with the Bobtail. However, these breedings cannot be documented since they appear to be on the order of: "Well, our cat got out, and there were these bobcats running around all over the place, and then the kittens were born with those stubby little tails..."

While it is within the realm of possibility for the bobcat (*Felis rufus* — a solely North American spotted cat closely related to the larger-sized lynx), to mate with domestic cats, bobcat/domestic cat

*Continued on page 61*

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## Breed of the Month

Continued from page 48

hybrids would most likely be sterile. It seems more probable that the short, bobcat-like tail occurred as a spontaneous mutation within the domestic cat population.

"I know of no documented proof of breedings between bobcats and domestic cats. TICA has listed us as a natural breed, not a hybrid," says Lisa Black. "They could have a Manx-type gene. Some of our lines do work like the Manx gene; we get the very short tails and full tails born in some litters on occasion."

Outcrossing the Bobtail to domestic stock is still allowable. The goal is to keep the gene pool healthy since it is still quite small. Reaha Evans emphasizes that neither Manx nor Japanese Bobtails are used in the matrix, nor are bobcats bred into the existing lines.

"The objective of most breeders is to get large, healthy, personable cats," says breeder William Halbert (Bobby Cats Cattery, Florida).

### THE LOOK OF THE WILD

Bobtails are slow to develop, reaching maturity somewhere between 2 to 3 years. The ideal Bobtail is a stocky, substantial cat, medium to large sized, well-fleshed, muscular and heavily built without being fat. Like the bobcat, the hind legs are slightly longer than the front legs, and the feet are large and round and may have toe tufts.

The head is broad without noticeable flat planes. The muzzle is as long as it is wide with prominent, high cheek pads and strong jaws. In profile, the nose has a gentle curve between the eyes. The ears are wide at the base, alert, and dec-

orated with bobcat-like tufts on the tips.

The Bobtail's most noted feature — its succinct tail — is one-third to one-half the length of an ordinary cat's tail, and should not extend below the hock. The tail is straight and articulate but may curve, have bumps or be slightly knotted. Bobtails with no tails (also called *rumpies*), are not acceptable because of the health problems associated with the shortened spine.

The coat is medium in length, resilient, rather shaggy-looking, and has a non-matting, all-weather texture. The coat may be decorated with a neck ruff and longer hair on britches, belly and tail. The length of the coat will vary with the season. An updated standard is being implemented this year that will allow for a short-haired version of the American Bobtail.

### SMART AND SOCIABLE

While the breed is still developing and will take time to settle into a uniform pattern of behavior, breeders say that Bobtails are playful, energetic and friendly, and possess an uncanny intelligence for Houdini-type escapes from closed rooms and fastened cages. Very people-oriented, they are not above demanding human attention by meowing or commandeering available laps.

"They're very sweet," says William Halbert. "They want to give you kisses all the time."

On the cat activity scale (with, perhaps, the Abyssinian as an animated "one" and the Persian as a serene "10"), the Bobtail rates a three or four — fun-loving and frisky, but not overactive. As Lisa Black writes, "They can be bouncing around like popcorn, yet pick them up and they're all purrs."