

Abyssinian-Somali Matings

The subject of Aby-Somali matings, and how to treat their descendants, has been a hot topic in the US of late, at least in part because of a couple of Abys imported there from Italy, each with a Somali eight generations behind. When Norman Auspitz retired after many years as CFA Abyssinian Breed Council secretary, the position fell to Marsha Z. Ammons (Zapzkatz Abyssinians). One of the first things she did was to fire off e-mails to Aby people around the world – myself included – to find out how this situation was treated in their parishes. After extensive research which included asking several subscribers who are consequently aware of this investigation, I sent out the following e-mail summary, which I thought others might find also interesting.

“Marsha.

Sorry to have taken so long to respond, but I was obtaining some of the information from others, and in a couple of cases it was like puling teeth. Let me now line up my answers with your questions.

1. There were 15 cat councils in Australia, the last time I checked, but they operate under two co-ordinating bodies, the CCCA (Cat Co-ordinating Council of Australia, covering about 2/3rds of the breeders in the country) and ACF (Australian Cat Federation). See also my Web site at <http://www.nileabys.com/australia.htm> which also gives links to all their Web sites.

2. There is not really a problem with Abys being descended from Somalis here, to the extent that I am not aware of ANY Abyssinians in Australia with proximate Somali ancestors. Aby and Somali breeding is more fraternal than in the US, and there are a number of prominent breeders who breed both. They occasionally introduce Abys into their Somali lines, but to the best of my knowledge, do not introduce shorthaired offspring of Aby-Somali matings into their Aby lines.

3. Breeding rules are promulgated by the co-ordinating bodies. The CCCA rules are:

Rule 01.06.09

Offspring from Abyssinian/Somali matings are not to be used in Abyssinian breeding programs.

Rule 02.06.09

The shorthaired progeny from Abyssinian/Somali matings will be recognised as Abyssinian for the purpose of showing only. These progeny shall have their registration certificates annotated “var” and may also be used in Somali breeding programs.

Rule 12.11.09

That no further motions regarding Abyssinian & Somali crosses be considered by CCCA for a period of not less than 4 years.

The ACF rules are:

1.1.1. Abyssinian (Shorthair) and Somali (Longhair) Breed/Type

11.4.8.1 Ticked coat pattern (*amended 1999*)

a) Progeny resulting from matings between Abyssinian x Abyssinian or Abyssinian x Somali will be recognised as full register and entered in the appropriate register under their recognised breed/variety.

b) All shorthaired kittens from matings of Abyssinian x Somali to be identified with the suffix “var” on their registration number. Cats having “var.” as part of their registration number are not considered a separate breed.

c) Abyssinian/Somali progeny resulting from matings with silver Abyssinian/Somalis to have the following notation included on all subsequent pedigrees “This cat has Silver Abyssinian/Somali in its ancestry”.

I am seeking confirmation that, under ACF, the rule means that that there is nothing to stop Abys with the suffix “var” from being used in Aby breeding, unlike in the CCCA rules. If that is correct, I don’t know if all offspring of “var” cats also have “var” on their pedigrees, and so on ad infinitum, but I suspect that they don’t. So if there were a problem, it would be most prevalent under registries affiliated with ACF. I also understand that the NZCF rules regarding Aby-Somali matings are the same as the ACF rules.

4. We don't think that we have a problem with Somalis having somehow crept into the Aby breed in Australia.

5. A standard certified pedigree under most if not all registering bodies in Australia is five generations (cat+4), but longer pedigrees can be obtained, e.g., when exporting to the US for registration with CFA. This is possible only because, when you register a cat from elsewhere, the registry enters in its computer not only the external cat being registered, but also all its ancestors that aren't already in the registry's database. I know that CFA does not do this, but I highly commend it to them – they could always charge a bit extra for the service, like ours do. So if you wanted to “smuggle” a Somali-descended Aby into Australia, you could do it if the Somalis or “var” cats were five or more generations behind the “smuggled” cat. However, I would know, and I haven't come across any lately!

6. In my opinion, the best thing that CFA could do is what it is doing right now: ask for cat+8 generations pedigrees, and if there are no

Somalis on it, fully accept the imported cat. There may well be Somalis a dozen generations behind the cat, but if you go back twice as far, there are no Somalis because they hadn't yet been “invented”, but there are the WW2-introduced shadowy cats that appear behind all Abys and Somalis. The only difference is that Somali breeders tried to maximise the longhair gene, while Aby breeders tried to weed it out.

To put it another way, does it really matter if one of your 17th century ancestors was a bastard?

Cheers,

George Kennedy

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All this happened recently, and I don't know what changes, if any, the Aby Breed Council has recommended to CFA Inc.

GK