

Silver Somali Love Affair

I thought I would tell my story – but where to begin? My name is Linda Schneider and I live on a sheep farming property in the Upper South East of South Australia between Bordertown and Naracoorte. Some 6 years ago my 16 year old daughter, Jess, lost her beloved 16 year old Siamese cat to liver cancer, possibly as a result of his age. She was broken hearted and after a couple of weeks without her beloved Bennie-George she asked if she could get another kitten. After researching different breeds she decided on an Abyssinian - and so it came to pass that we managed to make contact with Rita & Evelyn Bruche's Vivace Cattery in Adelaide, who had available for a pet a Black Silver Aby kitten.

new family member, the Aby kitten, another member of the Bruche family decided to attach himself to me like a "cling-on". This beautiful animal was a 5-year-old Black Silver Somali neuter called Buddy. Even though I had heard of love at first sight I had no idea this could happen to me. We had an immediate connection and the thought of leaving this house without him was almost heartbreaking. So after some discussion it came about that on this day we travelled home with two beautiful cats: one little Black Silver Aby kitten that we call Poodgeman because he has grown into possibly the biggest Aby I have ever seen, and my beautiful, beautiful Buddy Roo. Thank-you Rita & Evelyn!

Buddy Roo



As time has gone on, my daughter has grown up and moved away leaving Poodgeman with us, and my love for Somalis has just kept growing. My particular passion is for the Silver Somalis. Why is this so? Not sure, except I love the silver colour as it is as soft as the beautiful Somali nature. I have heard from other Somali owners on more than one occasion that once you have had one they find a place in your heart and they don't leave. For me this is true.

We made the 600-kilometre round trip to Adelaide to pick up this beautiful kitten but what happened when we arrived at the Bruches' home was something that I never thought could be possible. We came to their home and were warmly invited in to a house full of beautiful Abyssinians. There was also another breed of cat in their home that I had never heard of: SOMALIS. As explained to me, they are the long-haired version of the Abyssinian. Once seated and introduced to our

I am not sure when this thought first popped into my head, but I decided I might like to breed these Silver Somalis. Given the standards for the breed and the very small gene pool in Australia for this particular colour how, was I going to do this? I once again had conversations with Rita & Evelyn, and was able to purchase a pretty little female Blue Silver Somali



Imiko in France

(Vivace Ruby Tuesday) and later a gorgeous Vivace Black Silver Aby variant (Jackie). Thus started my breeding program. Even though I was fortunate enough to purchase these beautiful girls as an excellent base to start with, I still felt there was the obvious problem of where do I go for new bloodlines that are not related and that are in line with the standards regarding colour, confirmation, type, etc, etc. Then I had an epiphany "I know I will import one". After I searched the Internet it became obvious that Europe seemed to have a large number of Silver Somalis and a very wide gene pool.

To be honest, I was not really sure what I was doing but I just kept looking at websites and reading about different catteries and their foundations. I found a litter of kittens in Oslo, in Norway, that looked nice. I sent an email to the lady and she kindly answered telling me that these kittens were all taken, but if it was Silver Somalis that I was really interested in then I should contact a Valerie Bourel in Montgermont, near Rennes in France. I found Val's website De Cornaline Cattery in France and I could not believe she had a litter only a week old, of five Black Silver Somalis!

I sent her an email and it started off fairly tentatively. Val had been breeding for many years and she was clearly making sure that I was a reputable person and that I was serious about my request. It also came to light that we had another small technical hitch in regard to language - Val could not speak English and I could not speak French. Thank god for modern technology; over the next 12 months, every word that was communicated between us was translated through Bing. So began the process of importing. In this litter, there was one boy in particular that stood out - Val had named him Imiko. So after I sent her a deposit it was decided that Imiko would at some stage in his life become an Australian citizen.

I first made contact with Val in March 2013 and the whole process was very lengthy and a complete journey of the mind. The paperwork was huge, and a lot of it had to be done from the French end. I did use

a Pet Transport Company to assist; this was an expensive exercise, but not having imported anything before I could not have done it without them. Val was fantastic and followed through at her end with rabies serology tests and vaccinations, etc., all within the required timeframes, and provided a constant flow of documents and photos of Imiko. It was decided that we would import around December/January, since that was when he would be eligible to arrive after clearing all tests. Just before his date was arranged, there was a change in the quarantine laws thus from 4th February 2014 allowing cats to be in quarantine for only 10 days rather than the existing 30 days. Because of this, we arranged for him to arrive in Australia on 7th February 2014.

As the arrival date got closer, I could hardly contain my excitement and something that had seemed surreal was finally becoming a reality. I received word from Val on the 5th of February to say she had driven the 350 km from her home in Montgermont to Paris to place Imiko on the plane. He was on his way! On the due date I received an email from the transport company to say Imiko had arrived safely in Melbourne and had been transported to the Spotswood Quarantine centre. My husband and I travelled to Melbourne (500 km one way) on the following Wednesday with the plan to visit Imiko in quarantine and stay until his release day on 17 February.

I will never forget the first day I met Imiko it was the



Imiko in Australia

Thursday. The quarantine facility had very strict guidelines regarding visiting times and I could only visit twice in one week for 2 hourly visits. I arrived at Spotswood at 10:30 am that morning and the staff member took me to his enclosure. The first moment I saw him he was more perfect than I had imagined. He was just beautiful. He was however, to say the least, extremely stressed and frightened and even though he had been well adjusted in France the trip and his new

environment had certainly affected him. I spent my 2 hours with him and managed a couple of cuddles. The next day I went back and before I left managed to get a purr out of him. We then had to wait until the Monday to take him home. This day finally arrived and we took Imiko back to his very rural life on our sheep farm in South Australia. He is housed in his very beautiful cattery that was built especially for him and our queens in November 2013.



It took me about a month to get Imiko to settle in completely, and with lots of love and cuddles he has blossomed into the beautiful smoochy boy that I am sure he was before he left France. One of his biggest hurdles was adjusting to our climate given that he had come from a France winter of snow to our February summer with days of 40 ° heat. His enclosure is air-conditioned so this did help. Imiko turned 1 in



Australia on the 22 March. Where to from here with my dream to breed the perfect Silver Somali! Well, my dream is now a reality, and a progress in the making!

I have my breeders prefix "Silamos". Ruby delivered 2 beautiful Silver Somali kittens on New Years Day as I had taken her to one of Rita & Evelyn's boys, Vivace Poetry in Motion, in October 2013. One of these kittens is a little Black Silver girl Silamos Annie

Lennox and she has turned out to be quite clear, well coloured and good in type. I am looking forward to future litters from Annie and Imiko.

I am expecting a second litter of kittens at the end of July, and these will be the first kittens from Imiko, so my little cattery is starting to develop.

I am new at this but I have so enjoyed my journey thus far and my wish is that I can add something positive to this lovely breed and colour, and help to improve the Silver Somali lines in Australia. It is not a hobby for me but a passion - I just love this breed of cat so much and feel that they are worthy of more recognition.

Am I officially a "Crazy cat lady" - Still not quite sure what that means but I guess in the eyes of the ones that don't know what it is like to share the company and the love of felines, I must be up there.

Linda Schneider

SILAMOS Somalis
South Australia