



December 2009 Issue 113

# ***GLOVE and GAUNTLET***

***Newsletter of the Birman Cat Club of Canberra Inc***



# Birman Cat Club of Canberra Inc

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Mr Phil Charley

## Committee

### President

Mrs Carol Cootes

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Mrs Karen Meagher

### Secretary

Mrs Tracy Stewart

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## Letter from the President

*Hello Everyone,*

*Another year is nearly at the end and a new one starting. I hope that the new year brings lots of good things to all. The Cootes family will be having a very quiet Xmas this year. This time last year I was very stressed and was looking at spending Xmas in hospital with Troy. We did have a lovely time, but at the hospital. You can't beat a Xmas with family and friends at home.*

*I would like to thank the committee once again for their hard work and energy, making our 2009 show a wonderful event. Congrats to all the winners again and also to the members who did well throughout the year with their beautiful cats.*

*I would also like to thank the many friends who supported us through the year with their kinds thoughts for Troy when he was giving his family some scares. All is going well for now so keep all those fingers and toes crossed that 2010 is a fantastic year, not only for the Cootes family, but for everyone.*

*We have to thank Liz once again for managing to get us some interesting judges for the Birman Show in 2010. Thanks also to the other clubs who are kind enough to take some of the overseas judges. Without their support we wouldn't be able to bring different judges from overseas. The committee has already started planning for our 30th Anniversary show. The judges are all organised but they will be a secret for now.*

*I hope that we will see all of our old friends and new friends next year at the show. We will be holding the show once again at the Burns Club. I will be working on the schedules over Xmas so hopefully they will be out in the new year.*

*Merry Xmas to everyone and see you somewhere at a cat show,*

*Carol.*

## From the Editor

*Hi Everyone,*

*The article on "Feline Blood Types" is included in this newsletter with the kind permission of vet and Birman breeder, Dr Jason Stayt. Birmans are one of the breeds in which problems arising from incompatible blood types is more frequent, although still uncommon. Thank you, Carol, for organising the use of this article.*

*The delightful blue point female kitten that graces the pages of this newsletter, including the front page, is the aptly named "Bindura Mischief". I hope you have as much fun as she did with Christmas!*

*Have a wonderful Christmas and all the very best for 2010,*

*Karen.*

## Members' News

### **ACT Cat of the Year Awards**

I have been reliably informed that the keeper of the above awards has gone fishing and will not be back until next year! So congratulations, in advance, to those winners who will be notified in the new year. Ed.

### **CCI and ACT Breeders Show Results**

This combined show was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2009. Special congratulations to Rosemary Agnew and CH & CH (NSW) Bindura Toblerone who won Best Desexed Group 1 Cat in two rings and also received a 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Margaret Keith's CCCA CH, GDGC, DIATGC (ACT) Conde Bajazzo was placed in the top 5 in three rings and her BDGC & CH (ACT) Conde Tchin Tchin received a 4<sup>th</sup> place. Alison Moore's kitten, Peloux Moonraker, was placed twice in the top 5 and Tracy Stewart's Trevallian Altariel also won a place in the top 5. Congratulations!



## Show News

### Birman Cat Club Specialist and All Breeds Shows

The shows will be held at the Burns Club, Kett Street, Kambah, on the 15 -16<sup>th</sup> May 2010. The judges have been finalised and they are:

**Specialist Show** - Yanina Melnikova (Belarus) (WCF), Johan Lamprech (South Africa) (WCF) and Michael Bowra (QFA).

**All Breeds Show** - the three judges above, plus Norm Auspitz (USA) (CFA), Geoff Dumigan (QFA) and Therese Johnson (NSW CFA).

The schedules will be available early next year as downloads from the club's website at [www.actbirmanclub.com.au](http://www.actbirmanclub.com.au)

### Canberra Royal Agricultural Show

Schedules for the show, to be held on 27 – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2010, are on the CCI website at [www.cci.asn.au/shows](http://www.cci.asn.au/shows) . Entries close on 18/1/10.

Show Secretary & Cat Section Head: Ms Denise White, email – [denisewhite6@bigpond.com](mailto:denisewhite6@bigpond.com)



The Christmas clipart is from "Webweaver's free clipart"  
<http://www.webweaver.nu/clipart/>

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# Feline Blood Types

Dr Jason Stayt BSc BVSc (Hons)  
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Blood types result from genetically determined markers on the surface of red blood cells (RBCs). These markers are proteins and are specific for a given species. In cats, only the AB blood group system has been recognised. The surface proteins can be antigenic, which means they are able to be recognised by, and bind a specific antibody. Type A cats express type A antigens, Type B cats express B antigens, and Type AB cats express A and B antigens.

## **Helpful hint: Antibodies bind antigens.**

The three blood types in cats are A, B and AB and their frequency in cats vary geographically and among breeds. Blood type A is the most common and in Australia has been found to represent 70% of cats. Type B cats are less common (approximately 25% of cats in Australia), however the number of type B cats seems to be higher in Australia than other countries; US and UK ~3%, France ~15%, and Japan ~10%. The frequency of type B blood is higher in some purebred cats including; British shorthair, Devon Rex, Birman, Scottish Fold, Burmese, Abyssinian, Persian and Somali. Type B blood is non-existent in Siamese and Orientals. Type AB blood is extremely rare.

Blood groups are controlled by two alleles (or genes) which are inherited in a simple autosomal manner (i.e. it is not linked to sex chromosomes and is inherited as either a dominant or recessive gene). The alleles are denoted as **a** and **b** and an allele from each parent is inherited. Type A blood is also dominant over type B blood. Therefore the genotypes for type A and B are:

**Type A = a/a or a/b or a/ab** (NB: when two of the same alleles are present, this is termed homozygous, and when two different alleles are present, this is termed heterozygous).

**Type B = b/b** (type B cats can only be homozygous for the b alleles since it is recessive and two copies must be present for it to be expressed).

The third blood type, AB is expressed as a separate allele, **ab**. **AB cats do not the result from mating of a type A cat to a type B cat!** (this is a massive misconception among a lot of cat breeders and can be dangerous if you plan your breeding thinking it is!). The **ab** allele is recessive to the **a** allele, but is dominant to the **b** allele so;

**Type AB = ab/ab** (homozygous) or **ab/b** (heterozygous).

In reality, a homozygous AB cat would be pretty much unheard of (although some are probably out there) given the extremely low frequency with which they occur. Because there is dual expression of both **a** and **b** alleles, AB cats therefore express both A and B antigens (proteins) on the surface of their RBCs.

Feline plasma (the blood fluid) generally contains naturally occurring antibodies, called alloantibodies (*allo* meaning "other"). An alloantibody is an antibody produced by one individual that reacts with alloantigens of another individual of the same species (this will have more meaning shortly). Type A cats produce alloantibodies to type B alloantigens and type B cats produce alloantibodies to type A alloantigens. Further to this, the anti-A alloantibodies produced by type B cats are very strong, whereas the anti-B alloantibodies produced by type A cats are quite weak. Type AB cats do not produce any alloantibodies. The strong anti-A alloantibodies have the capability of destroying type A blood cells rapidly, whereas anti-B alloantibodies are weak and shorten the lifespan of type-B blood cells.

### ***So what does this mean?***

Firstly, let's look at blood transfusions. Mismatched blood transfusions can be life-threatening and transfusion reactions are most severe when type B cats are given type A blood. Remember type B blood has strong anti-A alloantibodies so when these cats receive type A blood, these antibodies will bind to the transfused Type A RBCs (which has surface A antigens) and through a series of reactions, cause these donor RBCs to rupture (haemolysis = "haemo" meaning blood, and "lysis" meaning rupture). The haemolysis results in a transfusion reaction similar to acute anaphylaxis. When type A cats are given type B blood, the reactions are much milder, because type A cats have weak B-alloantibodies. These B antibodies still bind to the B antigen on the donor B-type RBCs but only cause mild haemolysis slowly (the transfused cells last about 3-5 days in the recipient cat).

Now let's look at neonatal isoerythrolysis. This syndrome occurs when type A and type AB kittens are born to type B queens. The type B queens will have naturally occurring anti-A alloantibodies, which are secreted in milk. When kittens are first born there is a window period of around 24-36 hours whereby large sized proteins in the milk are able to be absorbed directly across the gut. Antibodies are large proteins. Large proteins are unable to cross the gut in any mammal older than 36h or so, but in the first 24-36 hours they are able to. This is how passive transfer of immunity occurs in mammalian species. So imagine a type A or AB kitten, suckling milk from a type B queen that produces anti-A alloantibodies, these antibodies will be absorbed. We know that the anti-A alloantibodies are strong haemolysins, so when they are absorbed, they bind to the kittens blood cells and cause haemolysis.

In contrast, type B kittens born to type A queens are not affected by neonatal isoerythrolysis (the anti-B alloantibodies secreted in the type A queen's milk that are absorbed by type B kittens are weak).

With these principles in mind you can understand the term "allo". The alloantibody produced in one individual can bind or react with an alloantigen of another (of the same species).

### ***Key Points:***

- 1. Antibodies bind antigen**
- 2. Three feline blood types, type A, type B and type AB**
- 3. AB cats do not the result from mating of a type A cat to a type B cat**
- 4. Type A cats have naturally occurring anti-B alloantigens and type B cats have naturally occurring anti-A alloantigens. Type AB cats do not have alloantibodies.**
- 5. Anti-A alloantibodies are strong (produced by B type cats)**
- 6. Anti-B alloantibodies are weak (produced by A type cats)**
- 7. When Type A blood given to a type B cat life-threatening transfusion reactions will ensue**
- 8. When type A or AB kittens receive type B queen's milk (in the first 24-36h of life) neonatal isoerythrolysis will ensue**

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## The Christmas Cat of Iceland



### The Yule Cat

You all know the Yule Cat  
And that Cat was huge indeed.  
People didn't know where he came from  
Or where he went.

He opened his glaring eyes wide,  
The two of them glowing bright.  
It took a really brave man  
To look straight into them.

His whiskers, sharp as bristles,  
His back arched up high.  
And the claws of his hairy paws  
Were a terrible sight.

He gave a wave of his strong tail,  
He jumped and he clawed and he hissed.  
Sometimes up in the valley,  
Sometimes down by the shore.

He roamed at large, hungry and evil  
In the freezing Yule snow.  
In every home  
People shuddered at his name.

If one heard a pitiful "meow"  
Something evil would happen soon.  
Everybody knew he hunted men  
But didn't care for mice.

He picked on the very poor  
That no new garments got  
For Yule - who toiled  
And lived in dire need.

From them he took in one fell swoop  
Their whole Yule dinner  
Always eating it himself  
If he possibly could.

*In an old legend in Iceland, Jólaköttur or the Yule (Christmas) Cat belonged to the ogress, Grýla, who came down from the mountains at Christmas to look for naughty children. Her huge black cat was much feared as it preyed on lazy humans. The legend has its origins in a time when there was pressure to finish processing the wool in autumn. If someone did not receive a new garment by Christmas they would fall victim to the Yule Cat so everyone worked hard before Christmas to make new clothing, especially for the children. Even now it is traditional that everyone gets a new piece of clothing at Christmas time. The Icelandic poet, Jóhannes úr Kötlum, wrote this poem about the Yule Cat (translation by Vignir Jónsson).*

Hence it was that the women  
At their spinning wheels sat  
Spinning a colorful thread  
For a frock or a little sock.

Because you mustn't let the Cat  
Get hold of the little children.  
They had to get something new to wear  
From the grownups each year.

And when the lights came on, on Yule Eve  
And the Cat peered in,  
The little children stood rosy and proud  
All dressed up in their new clothes.

Some had gotten an apron  
And some had gotten shoes  
Or something that was needed  
- That was all it took.

For all who got something new to wear  
Stayed out of that pussy-cat's grasp  
He then gave an awful hiss  
But went on his way.

Whether he still exists I do not know.  
But his visit would be in vain  
If next time everybody  
Got something new to wear.

Now you might be thinking of helping  
Where help is needed most.  
Perhaps you'll find some children  
That have nothing at all.

**Perhaps searching for those  
That live in a lightless world  
Will give you a happy day  
And a Merry, Merry Yule.**



The translation of the Christmas Cat poem is from the "Christmas/Yule in Iceland" website <http://simnet.is/gardari/index.html>