

Short Haired Cats (Excerpts)

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BREEDING

Knowing Your Breed

Knowledge of the breed you intend to propagate is vital, as is the understanding of the responsibility you carry for the lives you will intentionally bring into this world. This responsibility starts with the mating of your queen and continues until the kittens have been sold into a desirable home or cattery. Until you have watched a little female grow to maturity, have witnessed her contortions when in season, mated her with your careful choice of sire, followed her stages of pregnancy, lived through the wonderful day (or more likely the night) of her delivery of fine robust kittens, and become awed and humbled by the devotion she shows towards her new family, you will not



have experienced one of Nature's greatest mysteries and certainly one of her greatest rewards.

The breeder from whom you bought your kitten will be able to furnish you with breed information and bloodlines within her jurisdiction, but you should inquire into other catteries and bloodlines as well. Cat club associations, cat shows and cat magazines are also sources which will add to your knowledge and offer a good deal of information as to availability and worth of a number of possible sires.

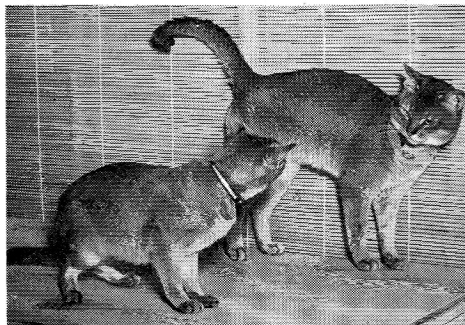
While you are selecting a stud service for your queen, it is imperative that you study the breed-standard of the cat you own. Evaluate your cat's best qualities and her poor ones as well, for she will have faults; no cat is perfect. This is the thrilling challenge. Do not expect to improve all the poor qualities with one breeding. When one attempts to breed up to a standard, it is best to breed first for one improvement, then for another, until gradually the better qualities are established, or "anchored", in your breeding line. All this time there are other breeders who are working for improvement just as you are. When these established bloodlines are merged in a breeding, a winner may be expected from the litter.

Breed improvements are not achieved overnight. Years and years of breeding programs have been abandoned when a breeder finds too many imperfections within a litter. It is not uncommon for a

breeder to plan a program, step by step, covering three to six years. This is done on paper, of course, and with the full knowledge that at any time Nature or disease may step in to retard or wipe out years of planning, money and effort, causing a disruption of the intended program.

Breeders who have an understanding of Mendel's Law of Hereditary Characteristics have advanced the quality of their breed faster than those who breed haphazardly.

Stud Service



Male and female usually get along well but squabbles do arise. Here Abigail and Sha, owned by the Sherman Arps, square off.

A most important requisite in selecting a sire is the condition of the cattery to which you will be sending your female to be bred. It will do you no good at all to pay for top stud service if you must cure an illness contracted by your queen during the breeding period. If a prolonged series of antibiotic injections must be given to a pregnant queen, she may abort her entire litter. She will then have to be nursed back to excellent health and await another

periodic season, another shipping and another mating. It should be explicitly understood that it is a waste of time and money to breed a queen in poor health, for if she is to deliver a healthy and robust litter, nurse and 'diaper' the kittens through to weaning, she must be in perfect health at the time of breeding.

After you select the sire you may ask for references, or you may want to inspect the cattery. A reputable breeder will not object to this request for he, too, will wish to have proof of your queen's health and the health of the home or cattery from which she comes. Owners of stud cats, either for private or for public service, have double problems of care, as compared to the owners of female cats exclusively. Such problems are: controlling pungent male odors, the need for larger cages for exercise space and the need for keeping a male in top physical condition for regulated siring.

Good stud service is not an inexpensive item. The responsibility for the care of the visiting queen, the adjustment needed to help a virgin queen accept the stud, the requirement to witness a breeding and the handling of sometimes angry, upset queens is all part of the fee. The owner of a stud should not allow him to sire too frequently. Generally three matings are sufficient to insure conception. If a positive mating is achieved between the male and female (one mating is all that is necessary) the costs and trouble of shipping a queen to a sire warrant added insurance of dividend matings.

When studying the choice of available sires it would be well to know something of their owners and the reliability of the service offered. Just because a cat sired an incoming queen does not mean the contract is completed. The queen should be fed, as nearly as possible,

the same basic diet she has been accustomed to; care should be taken to avoid her being marked during the mating activities, for some males are rough in breeding, while others are gentle. The owner of the stud must give service from the contracted stud and have written consent to breed the queen to a substitute male should the originally planned mating fail to materialize. A pedigree should be given upon payment of the stud fee (if fees and contract call for it), and if the owner of the queen is a novice breeder, she will certainly appreciate some information on the pre-natal care of her cat so as to insure a good litter which will, in turn, be a credit to the sire. The queen's owner should have the assurance of considerate care of her cat from the moment she arrives at the stud's cattery until she is safely home again.

Most stud cages in catteries are so arranged that breeding does not interfere with other cats within the cattery. It is the law of nature that males will fight for a female. Should the stud cattery hold more than one servicing stud cat, a turmoil will result when a queen comes in for breeding. This is extremely upsetting to all concerned and tends to make the breeding more difficult. The ideal situation for breeding is a separate room, usually called a stud room, in which a male and female may be placed. This room or cage should be large enough to allow freedom of movement and should contain shelves upon which the cats may jump for safety or security (queens have the habit of slapping with extended claws after they have been bred). A separate room is desirable because if other males are near the servicing male, he will be more aggressive and rough with a queen as a result of his instinct to control his mate. Secluded breeding quarters assure an easier mating and less worry over the care and condition of the visiting queen.

Not all breeding quarters can be ideal; much depends upon the stud's owner to give the best possible care, and to so assure the owner of the queen.

When correspondence begins in regard to the breeding of a queen to a selected stud, it should be done months in advance of the expected breeding date, and all requests of the owner of the queen and stud discussed. The owner of the stud will wish to know the age of the queen, whether this is her first experience or if she is a proven queen, what her blood line is (not all queens are accepted), in what manner she will be shipped, and how long will she be allowed to stay should she not breed within the allotted time and season. The queen's owner will wish to know how many generations will be included on the pedigree in return for the fee, the number of matings the stud's owner allows, conditions for the queen's rest, her return shipping, board costs over and above the breeding period, and how long a period of rest is given the stud between incoming queens.

If these questions are asked and answered adequately previous to the date of the expected breeding, there will be little margin for error or unpleasant misunderstanding later on. Animals are not machines and do not always react upon a given signal. If humans accept this margin of error in good faith, and allow for nature's whims, more pleasure will be derived from the results of a breeding contract.

Established and reputable owners of studs and queens rarely need the reassurance of contracts, but the novice owners of either studs or queens will find it advisable to begin their activities in the cat fancy in good business manner.

As mentioned before, shipping a queen who is in subnormal health is a waste of time and money. But, above all, it is most inconsiderate to the queen. A healthy litter cannot be produced by an undernourished mother, so for the best possible results with your cat's progeny see to it that she is in top physical condition.

When to Breed

A female cat should never be bred before one year of age, the only exception being caused by the seriousness of her seasons and the number and length of them. A veterinarian will be able to tell you whether or not the young female is being harmed by too frequent and too severe seasons. Occasionally a female will develop ovarian cysts if withheld from breeding for too long.

A short-haired female cat's reproductive cycle (heat or season) occurs every thirty days and lasts from three to seven or ten days. If the female has been withheld from breeding too long, the seasons may be almost continuous. You will note her becoming increasingly affectionate and at times almost silly in her attention to a chair or table leg. She will rub and roll as if coaxing, and will have a soft throaty rumbling tone of voice, varying in volume as the period intensity increases. Breeds vary in this characteristic of vocal lamentations from a vibrant purr to a banshee wail.

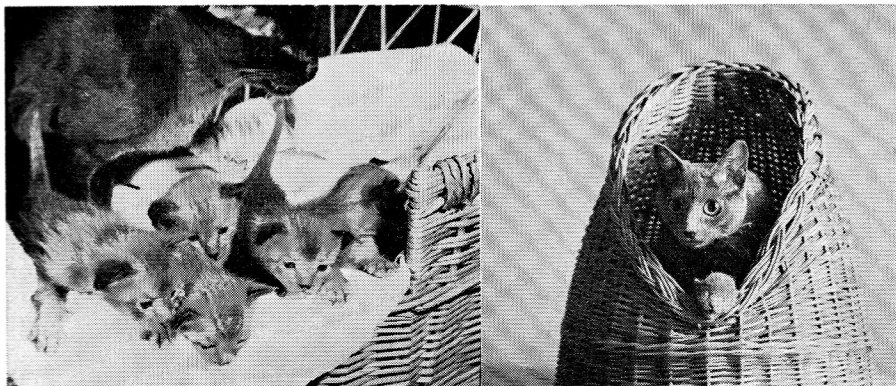
I consider the third day of the season the ideal time for a female to be bred. However, this is not a hard and fast rule. It is possible for her to conceive any time she will accept a male. The gestation period is sixty-five days. This is an average estimate and may be from sixty-three to sixty-eight days. Should the birth of the litter begin before sixty-three days, the kittens should be cared for as premature, and if the birth is delayed beyond sixty-eight days consult your veterinarian for help.

When a cat is in season she is temperamental, excitable and extremely affectionate. Truly a female. Treat her as such, for she is the controlling interest in the future of your cattery and efforts. She probably will eat less, so watch her intake of vitamins and basic foods. Be certain she is free of worms and fleas. Both will infest the kittens should the mother be burdened with them. Groom her seriously to remove all loose hair, or she will groom herself with increased vigor because of her nervousness, and you will not want her to have hairballs to spoil her appetite and digestion. She should be as immaculate as you can make her when she leaves you to be bred.

If she must travel (even only just next door) put her in a carrier. Do not expect to carry her in your arms, place her in the arms of a stranger, in a home or cattery full of strange odors, and have her remain in good temper. She will be more content and much more willing to accept the stud in good manner if she has something (blanket or toy) near her with her own odor on it.

If she is to be shipped out of town for a breeding, do so at the first indication of her coming into season. This will give her time to adjust to her new surroundings by the third day of the season. She will accept the male until the end of her season but the third day is best for a normal breeding.

Breeders who accept virgin queens to be bred to their stud cat often ask to board the queen for three weeks. At this time one can be certain that she is bred. Indication of pregnancy may be noted in about 21 days after mating by the swelling and pinkness of the queen's nipples. If she is not bred, re-breeding can be given without the costs and hardships of travel. Proven queens are usually returned to the home cattery as soon as the required matings have been witnessed.



Winsome and trusting, these kittens depend on their owner. Photographed and lent by owner, Peg Calkins.

CARE OF THE QUEEN

Fortunate is the pregnant cat who is a pet rather than a cattery queen. The family will have the opportunity to observe the complex work of nature throughout the pregnancy and birth. You will also see that animal instincts are at their sharpest during the reproduction process. Your cat will know how to do all the things that are necessary to give her kittens a safe and healthy birth. You must understand the reasons for her actions. The pregnancy, the birth, and the beautiful litter that your queen will present to you will be a fitting reward for her purchase and the care that you have given her. Certainly you bred your queen in order to have a litter of kittens that would reflect the health and beauty of their mother. Your love and understanding will help her to do the best for her progeny.

The Gestation Period

You will note that your pregnant cat sleeps a good deal of the time. Exercise is very necessary to her health, so, if she does not have any playmates, you will have to play with her yourself to make sure that she gets that exercise. She may have morning sickness and wish to eat later in the day rather than at her usual feeding time. Her

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vitamins and minerals must be increased. Healthy pregnant queens need more calcium and iron supplements. Short-haired cats rarely put on too much weight during pregnancy. Your cat may seem cross or ill-tempered when she first feels life within her body. She may want to rest in your lap for long periods or she may not want to be held at all. In any case, her moods will be just as definite as those of the expectant human mother. Let her set the pattern. As a contented queen will usually have a much smoother pregnancy and delivery, the contented queen is the aim of every breeder.

During the final weeks of her pregnancy, you will note that your queen is rather uncomfortable. She will lie first on one side and then on the other, or even squat flat on her stomach. If you look closely, you will be able to see her sides tremble as the kittens move about within her uterus. You will also notice that she takes a routine walk around the house many times during the day, each time inspecting any number of secluded spots. She will be looking for and deciding upon her place of confinement. If you have a certain spot picked out for her, now is the time to make a bed and place it there. Make it large enough for her to have freedom of movement during her labor. Your cat may not like the spot that you have picked out for her. You may be able to change her mind by putting catnip in the bedding, feeding her while she is in the bed, or giving her special attention when she is in it. After your cat has decided that this will be her place of confinement, she will spend hours digging and scratching in it—making it a general mess. This action is instinctive and natural for her. She is only preparing the bed for the birth of her kittens, and she will do this as her confinement approaches. During the last week of her pregnancy, give her clean, fresh bedding and have auxiliary bedding ready for a change after the litter has been born.

Your pregnant queen will probably want to be with you more of the time than usual, or at least where she can see you. If she is a novice queen, I suggest that you allow her to give birth to her kittens in her own selected spot so that she will not try to move the kittens after they are born. That spot may be the dining room table, the middle of the living room floor, your bed or closet, the top shelf of the vegetable bin, or even in your shoes. There are limits, of course, but if her delivery room is safe and warm, let her give birth where she wishes. When you are certain that she is caring for her kittens properly and contentedly, then you will be able to move her bed into a spot of your own preference.

Labor and Delivery

Stay with your cat during the delivery. I am sure that she will want you to do so. Most people think that animals deliver their young in short order, without pain or trouble. This is far from the truth. An animal goes through the same physical process during labor that a woman does. Animals just do not show it as much or give voice to their pain. Feline fetuses lie in two tubes, similar to the head of a "Y". During the first stage of labor, the fetuses start moving down into position to enter the bottom of the "Y". If you are observant, you will notice that the queen has contractions as regularly as human mothers do. If you time them, you will note their

gradual increase in both frequency and severity. This stage of the labor may begin some 24 to 36 hours before the more active labor that occurs at the time of the delivery. The queen's figure will change somewhat as the labor progresses. Her body will show pronounced protrusion of the sides directly in front of the hip bones. She will clean her vaginal opening frequently, as her contractions cause a vaginal discharge. Watch her closely, for she will soon have contractions that will make her hind legs stiffen and push. Now is the time for her to stay in her bed, for the kittens will be born soon.

This final labor period lasts from the time the cat has regular contractions until the birth of the first kitten. It should not last any longer than six hours. If you notice any trouble, consult your veterinarian. Breech births (buttocks first) are not uncommon in animals giving multiple birth. If and when this condition occurs, your queen may need help.

Each kitten will be born enclosed in a membrane sac. This sac must be broken to enable the kitten to breathe. Instinctively, the mother cat will break the sac and clean off the kitten. This process serves the same purposes for a kitten that the first attentions to a human baby can do, to clear its throat, assure normal breathing, and stimulate circulation. The mother cat may seem to lick and clean her new kitten very roughly. She will lick it from rear to head, roll it around, and give it a good sound tumbling. This releases any mucus and phlegm that might be lodged in the throat, as well as allowing the lungs a chance to fill with life-giving air. She will "cut the cord" by chewing, either before or after expelling the placenta. The placenta does not always directly follow the birth of each kitten, so do not be alarmed if the mother cuts the cord and frees the kitten before the complete birth is accomplished. In chewing off the cord, her teeth will seal it adequately and there is little need to worry about any bleeding. She will then turn her attention to the job of giving birth to the next kitten. This ritual will be repeated every time she delivers one.

If she wishes to eat the placenta, allow her to do so. This act, the eating of the afterbirth, is instinctive. Cats who must survive while delivering their kittens in wild and unprotected areas need nourishment after birth has been completed. Usually they will be too tired to go out to hunt for food. They must protect their young from natural enemies and certainly cannot leave them until they have had their first full nursing and are soundly asleep. Our house cats do not necessarily need to eat the placenta, but this act is such an important part of the whole instinctive birth process that it would be unwise to prevent her from doing it.

Should you find it necessary to care for a newborn kitten, break the membrane and lay the kitten in your hand on a small bath towel. Then rub the kitten with a stroke from rump to head, just as its mother would do, keeping its head lower than the rest of its body. Should the kitten struggle or appear slow to breathe, hold it in both hands with its head slightly protruding from your fingertips. Give a few fast downward motions of your arms. This forces mucus from throat or nose. Continue to rub and massage the entire little body until you are certain that it has made the first important step in life.



Kitten 24 hours old. Clearing mucous from mouth.

er length. It is better for the cord to be too long than too short. Short cords can cause hemorrhage. Put the kitten with its mother as quickly as possible.

When the queen has completed her delivery, offer her a drink. She will need extra fluids to help her body supply nourishment for her new family. She will enjoy warm, whole milk, the kitten formula (see chapter on diet), or just plain, fresh water. When she leaves her bed for the first time, change the bedding. Be sure to use warm bedding, for the kittens must not become chilled.

Caring for the New Kittens

Now that you have the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped your cat to give her kittens the best possible entry into the world, you will certainly want to see that the tender new kittens get the best possible care.

Exercise is very important to a nursing mother cat. While it is not a common occurrence, some overly attentive queens will not leave their kittens long enough to perform their own natural elimination processes. This causes impurities to be absorbed by the body and the milk to become poisonous for the kittens. If your queen will not leave her kittens of her own volition, carry her to her sand box and massage her to increase her desire to eliminate. Take her to the farthest part of the house several times during the day and make her walk back to the kittens. Once she realizes that her kittens are all right without her, she will resume her natural elimination habits.

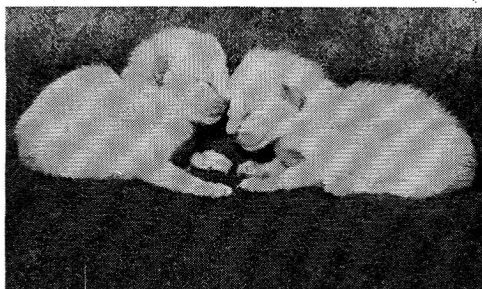
If the queen is a cattery cat, and not allowed the privilege of having her kittens with the human family, the same methods and procedures still apply. She will need a cage large enough to contain a shelf. She will be able to use this shelf as a refuge where she can rest out of the reach of the kittens. As the kittens increase in size and vigor it is only fair to give the mother cat a chance to get away from them when she wants to relax. Special attention should also be given to her exercise during pregnancy and to the drying of her milk supply as the kittens are weaned.

Kittens are born with their eyes closed. When the kittens are from seven to ten days old, their eyes will open. If they are not opened

Before giving this aid to a kitten, you will have to cut the cord from the placenta if the mother cat has not already done so. Have a pair of sharp, sterilized scissors ready. Cut the cord in a clean, precise cut about 2 or 2½ inches from the kitten's body. Disinfect the cord with alcohol, iodine, or any other good antiseptic you have on hand. There should be no bleeding. When the mother cat has adjusted to her new family, she will chew the cord to the proper

by that time, sponge them with warm boric acid solution, for if they remain closed too long, infection will develop behind the lids. Kittens born with their eyes open are usually blind. Should this happen, a veterinarian will be able to tell you whether or not there is any chance for the kitten to see again. If there is no chance, it is much more humane to have the veterinarian put the kitten in permanent sleep immediately than to let the poor kitten be blind all of its life.

When the eyes open, the kittens must learn to focus them. This is a delightful adjustment to watch, for their world is so new and big—and ever so interesting for them! They will explore their bed time and time again, wrestle with each other, get too far away from their mother, and then cry for help. You will notice that the mother cat has many more tones and inflections in her voice than she usually does. She uses these tones specifically for training her kittens. She will scold them and, if they are extremely naughty or disobedient, cuff them with her paw. When they resent her constant cleaning and struggle to get away, she will hold them down with her body and paws.



These are 24 hours old kittens from author's cattery.

One of my older and more experienced queens covers fractious kits with her body, allowing only the part of the kitten's body that is being washed to protrude from under her paws. Once a sassy little male turned and slapped his mother as she let him up. She slapped him right back and sent him sprawling. I never saw him slap her again.

Mother cats take care of the toilet of their offspring until the kittens are able to take their first solid food. Unless a litter is very large, there will be no urine or feces in the maternity bed.

Give each of the kittens an individual daily check. They should be active and sturdy. If they appear weak and listless, supplementary feedings (kitten formula) should be started and continued until the mother can produce enough milk to supply the demand or until the kittens are able to accept soft food.

Cat's milk is rich and sweet, so the nursing supplement must be as close to the character of the mother's milk as possible. Good formulas are: Evaporated milk and water in equal parts, with liquid vitamin oil and a small amount of sugar added to it; Similax with added liquid vitamins, following the directions on the label; and Sommigen and vitamins used as directed on the label; whichever formula you find most suitable to your needs, be sure that it is warm when you give it to the kittens. Never give a cold feeding. Use a doll's nursing bottle or a small medicine dropper and hold the kitten in a warm blanket or towel, with its head as nearly level with its body as you can. Do not force the fluid into its mouth. Any fluid that gets forced into the lungs will be harmful to the kitten. Keep the feeding regular,

usually every two or three hours. Do not overfeed the kittens and distend their stomachs or allow air to be forced into their stomachs.

As the kittens grow older, the mother cat will try to make them more self-sufficient by leaving them for longer periods and taking her rest away from them. If they do not progress fast enough for her, she will carry them or coax them into new rooms in order to get them accustomed to the world. This can be a trying period for the owner, as accidents are likely to happen when unprotected kittens get under one's feet. Keep a sharp lookout for wandering kittens and you will be able to prevent such accidents.

By this time, the kittens will be ready for their kitten formula. A litter box should be made available to them. It is delightful to watch a tiny kitten waddle over to the litter box and sit there and cry when it experiences the new sensations of urinating or having a bowel movement without its mother's help. Make sure that the sides of the litter box are low enough for the kitten to get over them in time.

Now that the kittens are eating their semi-solid formula and using the litter box, it is time for the mother cat to be away from them over night. Give the kittens their breakfast formula each morning before the mother is allowed to nurse them. This will begin the weaning process and the drying up of the mother's milk. Continue this routine of feeding before each nursing. The kittens will eat more formula and nurse less. Gradually their mother's milk will dry up without the pain of caked or distended breasts.

The kittens should now be on their own. Attention should be given to their inoculations. Hasn't it been exciting?



Chi-Sai SUSI OF SHERMAX and her kittens.