

THE TORTOISESHELL OUTCROSS FOR IMPROVING RED TABBIES

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This article deals solely with the selection of tortoiseshells that will assist in improving color and markings in red tabbies. That I do not agree with the standards for tortoiseshells will be obvious. She, being a child of "indominance," we should look upon, apart from her great beauty, as a stepping stone for improving the other colors within her line and the standards should require points that will assist in this, not demand features that are a handicap.

Some fanciers greatly admire the division of color on the face and nose, known as the blaze and consider such cats the only ones to breed from. This is a mistake, as cats with this blaze invariably throw it to their kittens, regardless of their color, in some form or another. Red Tabbies from such queens frequently have a darker line of red down the middle of the nose; this has a tendency to spoil the facial expression and make the nose seem long. I have seen black cats that excelled in color but boasted a "cow lick" on the nose coat, the influence of the mother's blaze. It is also interesting to note that cats of other championship colors, through in-breeding, are children or grandchildren of a tortoiseshell with this blaze and they invariably advertise the fact through the color markings on their noses.

Tortoiseshells are produced in several ways: by mating a black with a red or red tabby, a black with a cream, a blue with a red, or a red with a tortie. The tortoiseshell queen bred from a red tabby sire and tortoiseshell dam is the best to breed to another red tabby male to improve color and markings in a red tabby strain, for not only is a step already made in the cross for improvement, but the tortoiseshells so produced have a better distribution of color and are so more likely to add improvement in the resultant red tabby kittens of both sexes.

Selection of a red tabby and tortie bred tortie is for general all around improvement in red tabbies, however, if your red tabby strain is lacking more in some points than others and the cross is being made to correct these weak points, the ancestors of the queen and the question of dominance and indominance of color in sexes must be carefully studied.

The tortie queen to select as a mate for a red tabby stud should have the three colors, red black and cream well broken in patches

over the body, her four legs, feet, tail and ears. Those with solid colored legs produce red tabbies with good leg markings but on poor ground color, with a tendency to being muddy fawn rather than red. Those with solid tail color produce red tabbies lacking the rings so necessary in good specimens, and those who do not have the colors well proven on their ears are often a serious handicap to their red tabby children as the color of their ears is frequently very much darker than the rest of their color and spoils the general appearance of the head.

The distribution of colors on the back of the tortie is very important too, for if not well broken in patches her red tabby children may fail in spinal markings and be inclined to have "saddle backs" of a darker red. The distribution of color should also be well broken in the ruff, as too much red or cream tends to lighten the color of the frills in their red tabby kittens and rob them of the necklaces which play a very important part in their appearance, not to mention their show careers.

If the red tabby strain be lacking in depth of markings select a tortie without the handicaps I have referred to, bred from a black queen and red tabby sire. The black that will be dominant in the male kittens resulting from this cross will also be dominant in the male kittens produced by his tortie sisters and a red tabby sire. Hence not only will markings be deepened in color and be more defined, but the entire color will be improved. The female red tabby kittens so produced will be deeper in color but not always improved in markings, but these, if later bred to a red tabby male closely related to their sire, will produce red tabbies excelling in color and markings. Depth of markings means not only deeper color in the markings but markings deep and even in color to the roots.

For red tabby strains lacking depth of color in legs and feet the tortoiseshell from a black queen and red tabby sire is the best to correct this, but for tail rings, body swirls and necklaces the tortie from like mother and red tabby sire is the best medium, particularly if her tortie mother was from a black queen and red tabby sire, as this combination will contribute to the improvement.

Tortoiseshells bred from blues are not good prospects for the improvement of red tabbies unless there are a number of black cats in the blue strain, as queens so produced not only incline to solidify the color in their red tabby kittens, but also spoil the color of the undercoat, making it too light with only surface markings, and spoil the color of the legs and feet, making them too light. Because blue combined with red produces cream it will be readily seen that too much blue in a tortie line would lighten red tabbies.

While I point out the disadvantages of using tortie strains in blue lines for the purpose of improving red tabbies, and ignore completely the torties bred from black and cream as of little use to red tabby breeders, it is obvious, by my very objections to them, that they are very valuable in the production of solid reds and creams and their use should be confined to those colors.