

THE CANADIAN HAIRLESS CAT (Sphynx): ALLERGIES

Riyadh Bawa

When it was initially realized by me that the Sphynx might be useful for those people with allergies I based my assumptions on quantitative effects i.e. the less hair, the less dander, the less irritant; and not on qualitative effects i.e. reactions to specific secretions, odours etc. I assumed that this cat would be particularly useful in families with broad span allergies (hayfever etc.) but not to those with allergies just to cats (since there it would be specific i.e. qualitative). Neither did I think asthma would qualify as 'broad' in my terms (though it most certainly is broad in other terms) since asthma, while generalized, is particularly violent and subject to many psychological factors influencing the degree and intensity of the reaction.



Mr. Bawa & Sphynx Kyran

Five trials have taken place, four with asthmatics and one with 'normal' allergies. All are rather 'telling' examples and all do



Elizabeth of Prune, Prune's
dam and grand-dam of all Sphynx cats in existence

suggest that while the Sphynx cannot be tolerated by all allergy-people it can be established periferally i.e. with families whose allergies are border-line with respect to excluding cats.

Case I. Family, alcoholics (mother and father). Father violent asthmatic (attacks related to emotional environment), one daughter with intense 'normal' allergies. One Sphynx was with the family two months, only the daughter had a response (mostly to 'odour' products) but could tolerate and partially handle the kitten. There

was then a 'crisis' and violent asthmatic attack and the cat returned home. In this case I'm positive that the cat was 'celebrated cause' i.e. had nothing to do with the attack clinically.

Case II. Another asthmatic, this time I believe the reaction was genuine. A girl (who had a variety of compensational pets: snakes, lizards, etc.) and virulent allergies to cats i.e. she could not be in a room where normal cats had been more than a few minutes without her eyes puffing and without associated respiratory inhibition. At this time we still had a few Siamese and such an attack was realized in my presence. She was able to keep a Sphynx ten weeks. When the cat returned it had developed the roughest and most extensive 'coat' we've ever had. This coat at maturity was restricted. Also, the cat had been permitted to sleep in the same bed as the girl. Thus if a reaction was to occur the above would only assist in stimulating it.

Case III. Finally, a generalized allergy including fairly intense hay-fever etc. One male has been (and still is) with the family for now almost a year. He has been neutered and declawed. Before declawing he scratched and the arm scratch blew up. This is the only case that has, in my estimation, fully worked.

Case IV. Asthmatic again. The response was instant. Total failure. Since the man involved was most objective in his letters I believe the attack to be clinical.



Prune, a Hairless Cat

Case V. Similar to IV with an inversion. Husband and wife both had allergies (intense), the husband also asthma and cannot tolerate the presence of any fur bearing animal without severe attack; the wife, however, can. Strangely the husband could handle and tolerate a Sphynx but the wife had an instant reaction (far worse than normal).

Conclusions: nothing in the above really undermines the initial assumptions (only, with respect to Asthmatics, complicates them. I believe Case I could have worked and given a better 'coat' Case II). A set of parameters can be postulated concerning this cat and allergies but all they finally say is: generally the effect will be less than that caused by a normal cat. I would explain the reversal in V by suggesting a contact dermatitis to a topical excretion that hair would have masked i.e. being hairless in this case made the toxin more available. The reason for so many asthmatics in the above examples is perhaps because to date this particular point i.e. 'good for allergies' has only received minimal publication (basically a five second note in the television production: **Big Cats and Little Cats**) and it would be the extreme cases of allergies who would be the first to respond to any such note since they are most intensely aware of the limitations allergies put on them. As is, this seems excessively true since in my correspondence most explained how extremely difficult it was to get in contact with us.



Prune's Tuexedo at four weeks



Prunetta

Finally, I can only reiterate the original position that with respect to allergies the best chance of success is with those with run of the mill hay-fever etc., and that the less intense the generalized allergy the better the chance of a Sphynx being acceptable. I would however like II and IV compared in terms of initial response.

The following evidence supports the initial assumption: one cat was sent to Guelp Vetinary College for clinical studies which included skin scrapings, biopsy, and anlysis of hair etc. The results stated that the cat

in question was normal in every respect except for the lack of hair i.e. the skin didn't yield any abnormal cultures, had the normal compliment of functional sweat glands, the normal compliment of primary

and secondary follicles (in this case all primary follicles functioned producing a reduced hair shaft i.e. down, all secondary shafts were non-functional). So the only difference clinically between a Sphynx and normal cat is a quantitative one i.e. lack of hair. Thus the only statement that can be made with respect to allergies is also a quantitative one based on gross dander i.e. if the allergy is proportional to the gross dander level such that the more dander the greater the response then the Sphynx is an acceptable substitute since the lack of hair lowers the gross dander level to a minimum.



Prune's Brandy Took's litter one week old, normal with hairless male

Biographical Note

Mr. Bawa is a graduate in General Science from the University of Toronto and is now completing a Masters degree at York University in English. Subsequent to completion of the degree a profession is to be sought preferably in Mass Communications i. e. Educational Television etc. He was born in Durban, South Africa; emigrated to England in 1947 and received primary school education there, managed to fail his eleven plus so emigrated to Canada in 1957 and completed High School in Toronto.

As with most breeders he got into Cats by 'accident' through 'inheriting' two Siamese in 1964. It was not however until 1966 that the first example of 'Sphynx' occurred. It was only then that a breeding programme and attendant cattery were realized. Mr. Bawa states,

"My problem specifically has always been I've never had the time nor financial capacity to realize a good job on the cats and have too many other things to do that get in the way and besides cats have always been my mother's bit. I'm quite happy working out breeding programmes but when it comes down to scrubbing litter pans I'm not so happy.

I had made several efforts to get material published but again time was never really available to press the point. In fact, your group is the first to reply in the affirmative to me a fact which I'm not insensitive too. Since in one form it really represents an ignition point for the Sphynx breed by making information on them more readily available. For this I am very grateful since it can only make things easier."

