

# Fur & Feather

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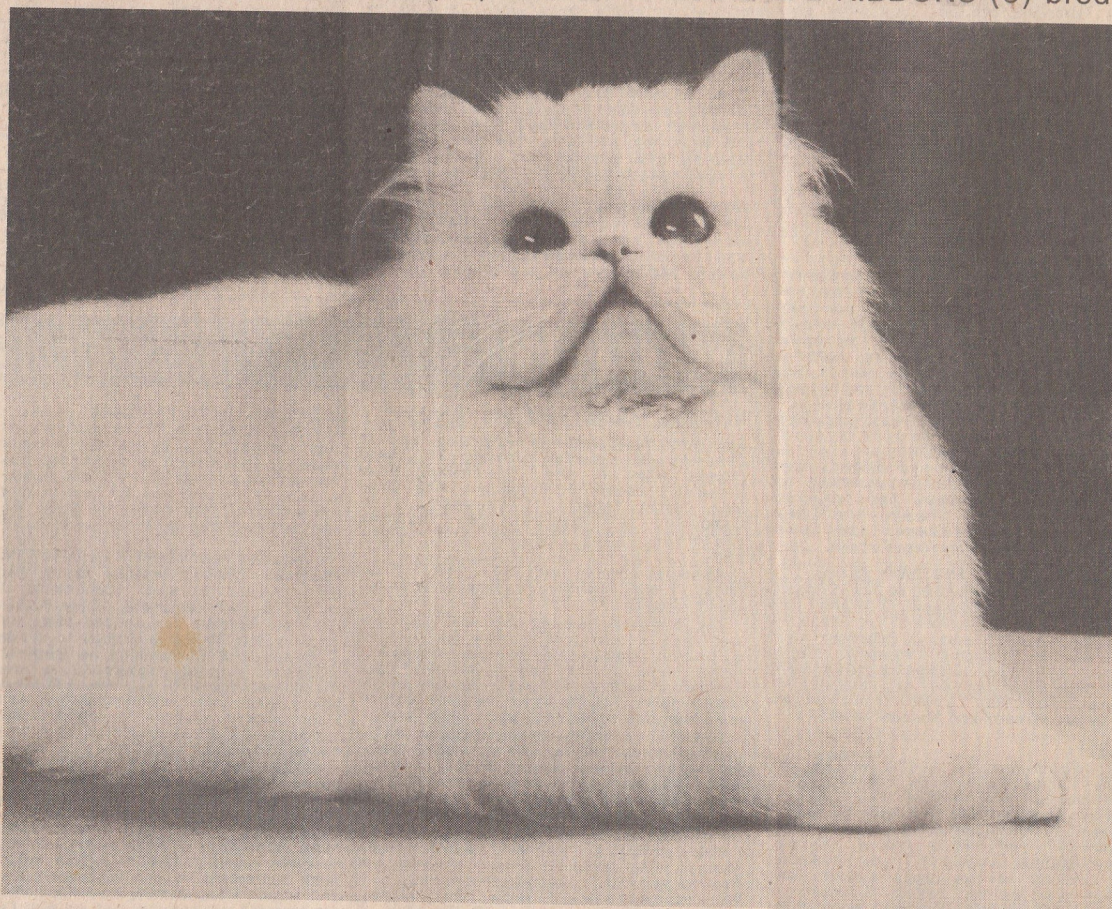


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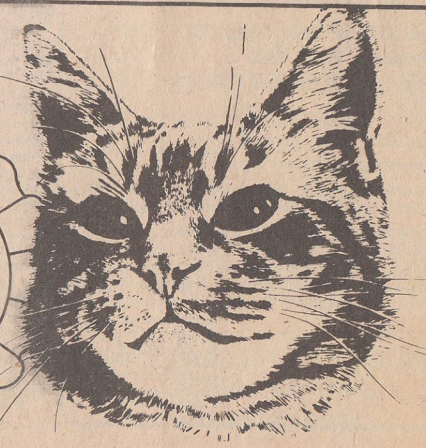
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# cats

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# History of the Chocolate Long-hair or Persian cat

S M Harding

THESE CATS owe their colour to the presence of the genes producing a brown colour in a basically black cat of Persian type with no ticking in the fur. The type is as in any good Long-hair (Persian) with orange to amber coloured eyes. The brown genes bb are widespread among mammals, producing the brown colour of mice, horses, etc. It would be logical to call the corresponding variety of cat a Brown Long-hair in keeping with other mammals but for the confusion with the already named varieties of Burmese cats. The brown Burmese carries no brown genes. Its colour is derived from that of a Black Foreign type cat with the Burmese genes *cbcb* which in the homozygous state inherited from both parents produce a Self Seal coloured cat. The Chocolate Burmese is a paler, richer colour and in addition to the genes *cbcb* carries the brown genes *bb*, as do the Chocolate Pointed Siamese and Chocolate Colourpoints. Thus, illogical as it is, less confusion is caused by naming these newer cats Chocolate Long-hair.

The Standard of Points for the Chocolate Long-hair is the same as that for the Blue Long-hair but with substitution of 'Medium to dark Chocolate Brown' for 'Any shade of Blue'. The desirable colour is the simplest expression of the brown genes, as obtained during the initial twenty years' breeding of these cats and is, as stated, not pale milk chocolate. The chocolate colour is invisible unless brown genes are inherited from both parents.

## Considerable outcrossing

History of the Chocolate Long-hair in Britain goes back to the early 1950s in the Briary Cattery. At that time the brown genes did not exist in any variety of Long-hair. In order to produce both Chocolate Pointed and Self Chocolate Long-hairs it was necessary to introduce the brown gene into the Long-hairs from Short-hairs. The only sources of the brown genes were Havana Short-hair, variety 29, and Chocolate Pointed Siamese, variety 24b. For the chocolate colour to be

the brown gene must be derived from both parents, giving homozygous *bb* genes in the progeny. The chocolate colour is not visible in the heterozygous carriers of a *b* gene. These cats may be any colour.

Inevitably, along with the brown genes were introduced the genes controlling Short-hair type, not wanted in a good Long-hair. These genes are many and not easily controllable. Therefore considerable outcrossing and backcrossing was necessary to improve type from the early Chocolate Long-hairs. But the paralyzing requirements of the GCCF have postponed until recently all progress in this direction. If type has not improved through eleven years of Chocolate x Chocolate breeding to the fourth generation, we only have the GC to thank for it, as Professor Bentley has pointed out previously in *FUR & FEATHER*.

The first female Chocolate Long-hair, Briary Perkins, born in 1956, was bred by Mr Stirling-Webb from a Colourpoint carrying chocolate from a Chocolate Point Siamese three generations behind him, mated to a Havana female carrying long-hair from two generations behind her. The first Chocolate Long-hair male, Briary Bruno, was born a little later from a Havana male with a Long-hair two generations behind him, mated to a multi-coloured female carrying long-hair from her sire, a Cream, and chocolate from her dam, a Chocolate Point Siamese. It is obvious how much work had been put into this breeding with so many probabilities against getting what was wanted at every stage.

Mr Stirling-Webb showed some of his Chocolate Long-hairs in 1961. Many of the experts greeted them with derision but others, who appreciated the amount of work which the breeding must have entailed, accorded these cats considerable respect and appreciation of a future full of possibilities.

Bruno and Perkins were mated together in 1963 and produced a litter of Chocolate Long-hair kittens. The Briary matings for the development of Chocolate Long-hairs consisted mainly of two types; Chocolate Long-hair mated to Short-hair carriers of the brown gene; and secondly, carriers of brown, both Short-hair and Long-hair mated together, the mating pairs being of different ancestry. In all this work entailed the maintenance of very many cats and in this breeding the Mingchiu Cattery co-operated.

## Seven-year programme

A few days before Mr Stirling-Webb's untimely death I promised him that if I could I would continue the breeding of Chocolate x Chocolate Long-hairs to the fourth generation and so qualify for GCCF recognition, as for Colourpoints.

Actually this programme for Colourpoints was accomplished in about seven years but it took eleven years to Mingchiu Manibozho and Mingchiu Alvis to produce the fourth generation of Chocolate Long-hair kittens. The Briary Cattery had to be disbanded rapidly after Mr Stirling-Webb's death but not a cat lacked a good new home and none had to be destroyed. Many carriers of the brown gene of various colours, short and long-hair and a few Chocolate Long-hair, passed to a number of breeders. From the carriers visible chocolate did not reappear for up to five generations by 1977 and the intervening carriers were not recognisable or known to be such.

In the Mingchiu Cattery Mr Stirling-Webb's wishes were fulfilled and after eleven years of useless breeding on a fairly large scale, but without type improvement, a litter was produced with nothing by Chocolate Long-hair behind it for three generations. But was the GCCF appreciative of the expensive eleven years of effort, space and money devoted to meeting their requirements? No. The old prejudices remained and even the recommendation by the Genetics Committee that these cats and the dilute form, the Lilac Long-hair, should be recognised, was swept aside.

The old determination to down these cats persists today, as those who have been complying with recently concocted new regulations have discovered to their dismay. Since the refusal to recognise new varieties on the original regulations, years of stagnation went by when there were no regulations to comply with. How much better it would have been to have proceeded from Mr Stirling-Webb's basic spade work, ignored by a Cat Fancy which now receives ridicule from abroad (see for example Mrs Prose's letter in *FUR & FEATHER*, September 15, 1977, page 893) and directed the breeding to advance the type, as has been done in other countries where our Chocolate Long-hairs have been exported. No idiotic breeding of known recessive genes through many generations to

prove what we already know has been indulged in by other countries.

In meeting the original GCCF requirements, nine pairs of different Chocolate Long-hairs have been bred together since 1962. Often luck was out and all kittens born in one year were of the same sex. There was the usual difficulty of housing enough males of different parentage and the two years at least which each requires before becoming mature. The most noteworthy Chocolate Long-hairs produced by this extensive, if dismal, programme was a female M Koca (1968), with the best type of the decade. Her dam was very prolific but, regrettably, Koca did not reproduce. Others of note were M Phineas (1969), M Dandi (1970) and M Alvis (1972). Some fairly good Chocolate Long-hairs were bred from Ch Mingchiu Ptan. A Chocolate Colourpoint, mated to a Lilac Long-hair, gave M Bronzey (1971) with very good eye colour; another Chocolate Colourpoint and the same Lilac gave the Chocolate Long-hair M Kohcoh (1967), a male with good type but too short in the coat, however, he was a very useful male.

## Brave breeders

At the present time the repressive hand of the GCCF which has prevented the progress in type of the Chocolate and Lilac Long-hairs is lightened and another generation of brave breeders is taking on the pleasanter task of outcrossing the Chocolate Long-hairs to fine Blues, Blacks, Creams, etc and backcrossing to the Chocolates. Good type with good eye colour is now appearing, as it might have done in the mid-1960s but for the deadening actions of the GCCF. Over one hundred Chocolates have been bred in this country and many more from those exported from the Briary and Mingchiu Catteries to countries where breeding for type and not for senseless generations has been an initial and primary object.

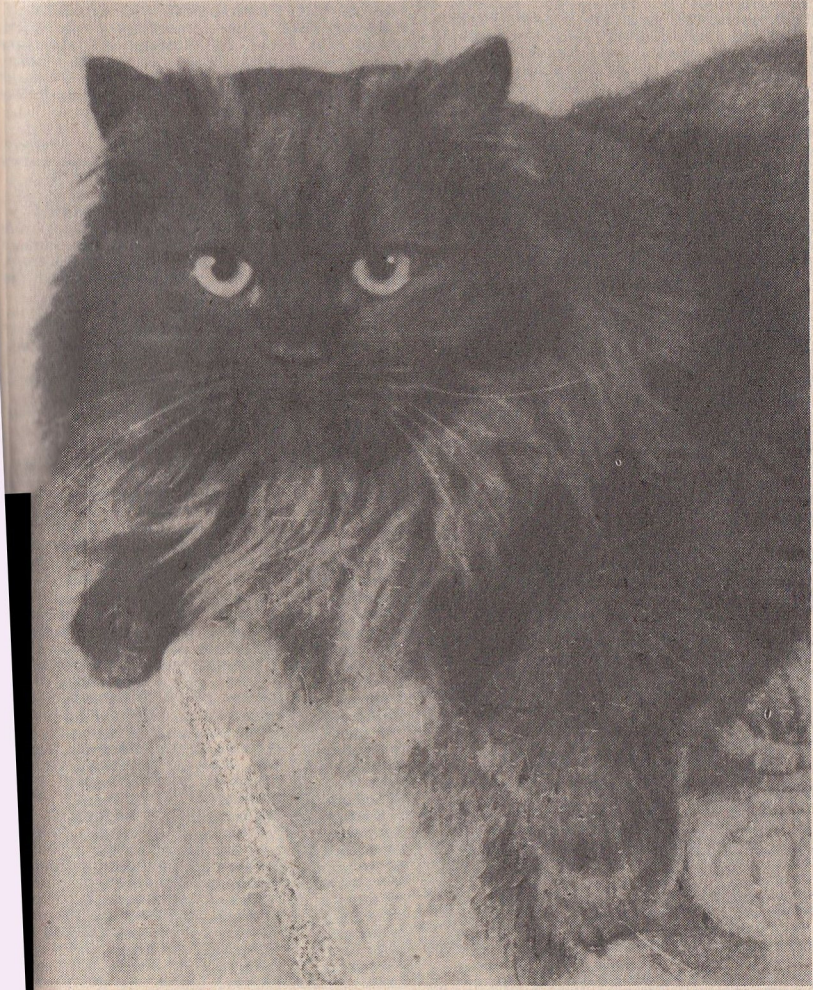
I take pleasure in seeing the progress made abroad from my breeding stock under helpful and not hindering legislation. Chocolate Long-hairs have died of old age in Britain and are still not recognised, while more enlightened cat Fancies abroad, with perhaps some glimmering of appreciation of simple genetics, have given recognition and encouragement to their breeding.

A note of warning is due concerning breeding for coat colour in Chocolate Long-hairs. All the sixty to seventy Chocolates in the Briary and Mingchiu Catteries have been the same colour, without exception. This dark rich sound colour has been present also in the young kittens. Since as little outcrossing as possible, apart from the creation of the variety, has taken place this uniform colour should surely mean the purest manifestation of the brown genes *bb*. But, more recently, other breeders, often making extensive use of Colourpoints, have kittens with pale unsound coats. The colour darkens with age and may in the end resemble those of the older breeding, but we appear also to have some paler adults and one breeder has claimed that the proper colour is pale milk chocolate, a conclusion not in agreement with our satisfactory standard.

Blacks cats in particular show much variation in the kitten coat and there is a range in intensity of blue coats among adult Blues. But for many reasons it is best to avoid outcrossing Chocolate Long-hairs to Colourpoints and to use instead the best Blue, Black or Cream Long-hairs and then select the best of the carriers for mating back to Chocolate Long-hairs. There is no objection to the use of Chocolate Long-hairs for colour breeding of Colourpoints, provided that it is remembered that any ensuing Chocolate Sells may be only pet type, unless the Colourpoint used is one of the very few with superb type

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A Chocolate Long-hair.

Photograph J P Harding