

BREED FEATURE

THE SELKIRK SENSATION

By ZOE AMARILLI

NOT EVERY DAY does a new cat breed come along, which is as fascinating and captivating to the onlooker as the Selkirk Rex cat. With their curly coats and curly whiskers framing a feline that wants to be cuddled, by their very nature and look, the Selkirk Rex has definitely made its mark on the UK Cat Fancy. Within the pages of OUR CATS you will have seen the breed mentioned more often over the last 12 months, with show wins and a general increase in their popularity so we thought we'd give those of you who are still a little unfamiliar with the breed a quick catch up on the 'Curly' progression so far.

Selkirk Rex are still a very new breed into the UK having been first introduced in 2002 by the three foundation breeders, Lisa Peterson (Trueblu), Linda Davison (Toreska) and Angela Mann (Kresant). These foundation cats were siblings bred in Austria at the home of Christiana and Karl Aichner from their Dam Db Gr Ch Serenitie Betty Boop of Courtlycats (Dilute Tortie & White SH Selkirk) x Sire RW SGC Conan Von Ebenthal of Courtlycats (Blue BSH). All three imports were quickly producing kittens to further the breed in the UK using the permitted outcrosses, British Shorthair, Persian and Exotic.

Cuddly Origins

The breed had originated from the USA in 1987 and is a naturally occurring mutation found in one stray cat. The popularity of the new curly cat in the USA soon took off with their Championship status introduction to TICA and CFA.

With the other Rex breeds at the time being distinctly more foreign in type this was the first large, stocky cat to carry the Rex coat legitimately and that would appeal to those breeders and cat fanciers that enjoyed the more 'cuddlier' look of a cat.

The Selkirk Rex is the result of a dominant gene that causes each hair (guard, down and awe) to have a gentle wave or curl, giving the coat a soft feel. The coat occurs in both longhaired and shorthaired varieties. The curliness of the coat is variable according to age, climate, time of year and hormones, particularly in the female. Kittens are curly at birth but may lose their curl and develop a curly coat again at about eight to ten months of age. The coat continues to develop until about two years of age. It's also common for curly kittens to drop their coats entirely then later grow them back fully.

Standard

The Standard of Points for GCCF can be found on the Selkirk Rex Cat Club website, but to give you a quick overview of the cat type these are the main points to look for: The Selkirk has a similar head type to the British Shorthair except for slightly curved top of the head. The muzzle is of medium width with well-padded whisker pads giving a rectangular look. The nose is short, broad and straight with a down-

ward slant. The nose break is neither too pronounced nor too shallow. The ears are medium sized, broad at the base and may be tufted at the tips, set well apart on the broad head. The eyes are large, round and well-opened, set wide apart. The body is cobby in type with a level back and may have a slight rise to the heavy hindquarters a little longer than you would expect in a British Shorthair. Legs are of medium length and substantially boned and the paws are round. The tail is thick, medium length. The coat is the Selkirks' main feature, it is thick and dense; it stands out from the body. It is a random, unstructured coat arranged in loose individual curls giving an overall soft and plush feel. Ideally the entire coat should show the effect of the Rex gene but curliness may be most evident on the neck, belly and tail, Shorthaired or Longhaired in length with examples of the plush coat shown:



Longhair Selkirk Fur



Shorthair Selkirk Fur

From the first kittens produced out of the three original cats and additional imported boys and girls the small group of Selkirk Breeders developing in the UK were able to gain Preliminary status with the GCCF from 2004 with the first UK bred kittens shown for Merit awards at the Kensington Kitten & Neuter Show in the July, these kittens were Catbalu Fristante, Frascati and Fleurie; all of which earned their Merits with pride.

By the November of 2004 our first home-bred Selkirk Rex gained its four merits, Trueblu Daring Positively a SH Blue Self bred by Lisa Peterson. Over the following two years a further 16 cats followed with their four Merits; with an additional 28 cats and kittens having been shown to promote the breed earning one or two Merits each.



Photo by Alan Robinson

TICA SGC Trueblu Daring Positively

'Mini Wave Of Awe'

From the beginning these cats generated a mini wave of awe and fascination as show visitors and exhibitors alike walked past the pens and caught their first glimpse of these curly sensations. The first three breeders in 2002 quickly grew to include many well-established catteries throughout the UK. These cats were the ideal companion to any British Shorthaired, Persian & Exotic breeding programmes introducing valuable new blood into the imported lines, so by 2006 more than 28 breeders were registered as working with the Selkirk breed.

At the beginning of 2006 the Selkirk Rex Cat Club was formed with the sole goal of promoting, developing and safeguarding the interests of the breed. With a small but dedicated Committee the club has managed to form a very close bond with its members, sharing information and acting as a support mechanism to those who are either just interested in the breed and purchasing pets, and those planning to get more serious and showing and/or starting their own breeding programmes. The club website is full of valuable information on the breed and well worth a visit.

With a lot of co-operation between the early breeders and owners, the GCCF Council agreed the elevation of the breed to Provisional Status meaning from 1st June, 2007 the Selkirk Rex could compete for the very first time against themselves to gain Intermediate Certificates and be considered for Best of Breed, Best of Variety and more importantly Best in Show!

Intermediate Success

In August of 2007, Trueblu Daring Positively again held the crown of being awarded the first three Intermediate Certificates with Trueblu Jetranger following half an hour later. At the time of writing in March 2008 we already have nine cats with the required ICs and many on their way and with a determined effort the Selkirks could have 20 cats with three ICs by August of this year, resulting in the breed elevation to Championship Status by June 2009, if we are lucky!



Photo by Robert Fox

TICA SGA Trueblu Jetranger

One of the most exciting elements of the Intermediate status is the opportunity for the Selkirk breed to be put up for Best in Show. In July 2007 our first curly kitten won the title of Best in Show Kitten at the Kensington Kitten & Neuter; 'Amazolou Holly Golightly' was awarded the privilege by Judge John Hansson, beating over 70 kittens to the top spot. With great support the Selkirks have also been awarded their own Best in Shows at several smaller GCCF breed shows including the Colour Point and Rex Coated Cat Club.



Photo by Carol Walker

Amazolou Holly Golightly and her KK&N wins

Historical Highlight

The highlight of the awards so far has to go to Crinkles Jack Frost; a Red Self LH boy awarded Overall Best in Show at the Lancashire Cat Club Show on 8th March, 2008 by Anne Gregory. Breeder Kelly Dove and owners Carol Walker and Pat Creaton have to be congratulated for their immense effort in making it a day to remember for the breed. With the ripples still emanating from this amazing day more breeders, show visitors and cat lovers alike are taking note of these unique cats in sheep's clothing. Whether you like longhaired or shorthaired cats the Selkirk Rex has a style and colour to suit even the fussiest of tastes with most cats

easily merging into the carpets and cushions with their plush upholstery feel.



Photo by Robert Fox

Crinkles Jack Frost

Uncomplicated

Selkirk Rex cats have a special relationship to their humans; they are very playful and intelligent, affectionate and uncomplicated in nature. Due to their natures they make excellent undemanding indoor pets but with just the right amount of inquisitiveness to love the outdoor life too. They adore company and love nothing more than a feline companion or two (or 20 if it's my house), they are hard to faze and even happy to bed down with the canine members of the family.

If you would like to learn more about the breed then visit the club website: www.selkirkrexcatsclub.co.uk; or actually meet a few in the 'fur' then why not pop down to the Suffolk & Norfolk CC Show held on Saturday, 17th May 2008 at the Wood Green Animal Shelter in Godmanchester. Several examples of the breed will be on exhibition on the club stall all day with many more participating within the show itself. You'll be able to see and feel first hand the Selkirk Rex's lovely coat quality and friendly nature as well as listening into a mini-presentation of the breed by GCCF Judge, Anne Gregory.

With the breed's popularity building by the day there is rarely a cat show now without at least one or two Selkirks in competition or on exhibition. If you see the Club stall then pop over and have a chat, we are always very happy to share information and welcome in new members and future friends.



The original Selkirk "Gang of Three" (left to right) Count Basie, Call Me Madam and Cookies N Cream.



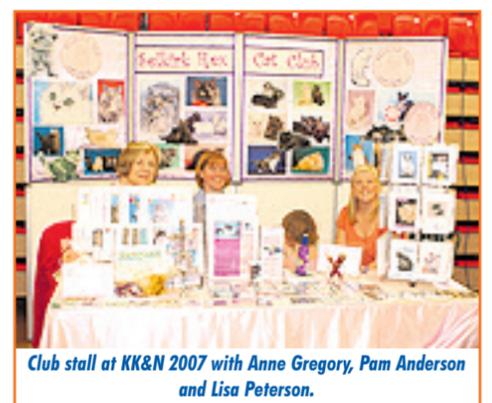
Photo by Robert Fox

Amazolou Rikki Tivvi Tavi



Photo by Robert Fox

Curly Gretel, Lilac LH



Club stall at KK&N 2007 with Anne Gregory, Pam Anderson and Lisa Peterson.