

Things We've Learnt

The item below is reprinted from the Abyssinian Breeder Vol. 1, No. 1, published in February 1983. It was meant to be a joint article from the co-editors of the brand-new magazine, but we quickly discovered that there was not a lot we actually agreed on, so we published it as a "he says, she says" piece, as you see it below. The photo of the two of us was not published with the original, but is a contemporaneous photo, with Crownfields Abbai, Australia's first Blue Aby whom we had jointly imported, and his very first Challenge ribbon.

George Kennedy

1 ... Scraped beef is still best for initial weaning of young kittens, though baby cereal is pretty good, too; other foods can come later.

2 ... If your pregnant queen has very pale gums, by all means take her to the vet, but don't panic, because the chances are excellent that she is suffering from anaemia. It seems that during advanced pregnancy, the haemoglobin (red corpuscles) in the blood circulates mostly around the uterus, leaving other parts looking rather pale.

3 ... If your queen is about to have her first litter, line up a foster mother, by checking around who else is having kittens. The chances are pretty good that you won't need her, but if you do, the need will be very urgent. As I've found, not only can you save a lovely litter this way, but you can discover how many darned nice people there are in the cat world.

4 ... A formula that keeps kittens free of 'flu is: have the mother given a shot of killed vaccine a couple of days before the kittens are due, vaccinate them (also with killed vaccine) with a half-shot at five weeks, another at seven weeks, a full shot at 11-12 weeks, and of course an enteritis shot at

Robin Fisher

1 ... Wean kittens onto canned food – it is balanced and it's what new owners will most likely use. If the kittens are reluctant, mix with 'roo (I can't afford beef!), baby cereal and milk for 5-10-week-olds; it keeps up the calcium without the need for supplements.

2 ... If your pregnant queen, or any other cat, has any symptoms whatsoever, race it off to your friendly, cheap vet, the one who gives you a nice discount for being a breeder; have all your cats tested for FIA – it can kill.

3 ... Sure, go ahead and line up foster mothers all you want, but remember: if your girl is a bomb-out as a mother, or if she gets sick, or dies, or anything, remember that no litter of kittens is so special, so important, that you should mess up your own life, emotional stability and sleep patterns (especially if you work) to save them – let them go and start again. Remember, too, that if the fostering fails, you've

invol-ved someone else in your troubles.

wean kittens at 5-7 weeks to get them away from possible 12 weeks. From the 5th week, keep the kittens right away from any known or suspected 'flu carriers, including their



own mum if you suspect her, and also away from any show-goers; don't show them until a few days after they've had their third 'flu shot.

5 ... If your kitten's weight gain slows right down, suspect a tongue ulcer and check the mouth carefully. If you do find an ulcer, a few days on an antibiotic (such as Amoxil) will cure it. Applying a glycerine-borax mixture to the ulcer with a cotton bud will also help.

6 ... Fundamental equation: Aby kittens + cow's milk (unprocessed) = diarrhoea.

7 ... Groom your cats, especially during seasonal weather changes, even if they aren't show cats, or they'll get hairballs. Grooming with moistened hands is best, and you'll both enjoy it, anyway (if you don't like the feel of a cat, what are you doing reading this magazine?!))

8 ... Cats' metabolism is much more rapid than humans' and accordingly their state of health can change very quickly. Moreover, they can't talk and they seldom cry. So, give each one of yours a good look over at least once every day. Remember that with some injuries or diseases (e.g., urolithiasis) speed of recognition is essential, and just a few hours can literally make the difference between life and death.

"contamination".

5 ... If the kittens get tongue ulcers, ignore them as long as the kittens keep eating. Nothing cures ulcers; they are viral, and lots of medicating can spook kittens and drive you up the wall.

6 ... I use dried whole milk mixed with Heinz Baby Cereal (high protein) – very satisfactory every 2 or 3 days until kittens are 3-4 months old, then once in a while.

7 ... Groom, groom, groom; the more you do it, the better. I've never had a shorthaired cat with hairballs, even the woolliest, but the fleas can be a real problem. I use powder, spray, flea collars, and a Malathion wash in desperate cases – and a flea comb all the time.

8 ... Like with kids, you can spend all your time hovering, wondering what ailment your cat is going to come down with next. By all means check them over, but do it because they like to be handled and you like handling them. If they eat well, as usual, they're probably not sick. I think a lot of cats need to be wormed a lot more often than they are, and lots of cattery cats need vitamin supplements if they don't get turns to run loose to eat grass and eat bugs and mice, etc. Remember: if your breeding program is good, and you select stock for health as well as show qualities, you ought to have a minimum of problems.

WELL, GENTLE READER: WHY DON'T YOU GET TOGETHER WITH ANOTHER EXPERIENCED BREEDER "WHO WENT TO A DIFFERENT SCHOOL" (AS YOUR CO-EDITORS CLEARLY DID!!) AND, HAVING POOLED AND CONTRASTED YOUR EXPERIENCE, SEND US THE BENEFIT OF IT?¶

¶ 31 years later, the offer still stands ☺

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