

Cheryl Leigh Chamberlin for Somali Breed Committee

In a nutshell:

- TICA member since 1990
- Somali exhibitor since 1993
- Somali breed committee member since 2005
- Breed Committee Chair 2009-2012 and 2015-present

Somalis and Abyssinians- the same but different

We are in the unique position of having two separate breed committees for one breed group. TICA has merged all other breed groups into Breed Group Committees. I have not advocated this for the Abyssinian/Somali breed group because compared to the Abyssinian breed section and number of cats registered and exhibited, Somali numbers are small. I do not want to see us lose our representation or our separate identity. If our breed committees are merged I will do everything I can to ensure that Somalis are represented in the Breed Group Committee.

However, we do have a unified standard, so we must be willing to work closely with the Abyssinian breed committee on any changes. The standard needs to reflect our vision of the perfect Somali or Abyssinian. I have been working with the Abyssinian breed committee chair, Brenda Russo, on a better definition of ear set. This is an area that has been lacking for some time. I hope to continue that effort.

I am also collaborating with Brenda on the Abyssinian seminar, regarding both historical information and content specific to Somalis. I have a PowerPoint presentation that includes excellent, detailed drawings of the ideal and less-than-ideal Somali, done by a longtime breeder. I hope to incorporate those into the presentation. While our standard should describe the perfect cat, it is also important for judges and new breeders to understand what we do not want. I have been fortunate to participate with Brenda and other Abyssinian breed committee members in several presentations starting with a workshop Penn-Jersey Cat Club hosted in 1996.

Working for the breed since 1993

I took a blue Abyssinian to the Northeast Regional in August 1993, where a breeder from Canada was showing and had Somali kittens for sale. I fell in love with a little fawn named Gigi. The breeder cautioned me that showing a fawn would be difficult and she'd be "lucky to grand". A year later at the same show, Gigi Supremed, and was the first dilute Somali to do so. She went on to earn a regional win and she was Best of Breed Alter in 1995. I have shown several regional winners, all blue or fawn except one, and my cats have been in the top three in breed ten times, most recently this past year when RW SGCA Sunfox FoolinYorself of DesertMoon was Best of Breed Alter. My Somalis have been featured in Tetsu Yamazaki's books and CAT FANCY magazine, including RW SGCA Rampageous SteMmeBlue of DesertMoon, who was the CATS USA cover cat for 2010.

I was also a member of two non-affiliated Somali breed clubs, SCCA and the sadly short-lived TASC. I served as SCCA's scorer in the late 1990s.

Serving TICA

Being "downsized" out of a job several years ago gave me time to design my own pedigree program and an application for scoring cats in TICA. I began linechasing in 1990, and with the help of some dedicated people I have built one of the largest Abyssinian and Somali databases known. I have used that information to provide pedigrees to exhibitors wishing to register cats in TICA, and to provide guidance to breeders wishing to find new outcross lines for their breeding programs.

Linechasing seemed a natural progression towards entry clerking. I have been entry clerking shows in TICA since 2008 and now work for most of the clubs in my region, as well as a couple in the Northeast. I have also been master clerking since 2005.

Currently I serve as one of the Mid Atlantic Deputy Regional Directors and the regional webmaster. I have assisted the past three regional directors with everything from ordering awards to review of the year-end standings. My interest in and knowledge of TICA's rules and policies have led to my RD asking the Rules Committee chair to allow me to serve. I have also been selected to join the group being formed to improve and clarify our existing rules.

I look forward to continuing to serve TICA and the needs of Somali breeders and exhibitors for the next three years.