

Chrissy Russell
Candidate Statement
Burmese/Bombay Breed Committee

As most of you probably know, it is now time for members of the TICA breed sections to vote for their committee members for the next three years.

I joined TICA in 2007, and have bred Burmese cats for almost 18 years, under the cattery name of Ayshazen. 3 years ago, I also started breeding Australian Mists, which are in fact, half Burmese too. I have imported several Thai-born cats from Bangkok, Thailand, to use in my Burmese outcross programme, following the guidelines of Professor Leslie Lyons, et al, in addressing inbreeding problems in Burmese and using the closest genetic match to our breed, whilst introducing some genetic diversity.

Most of you who know me, will know that I am passionate about the inbreeding issues in the Burmese breed worldwide. I am a huge advocate of outcrossing to suitable breeds, especially the Thai-born cats. To that end, I started and still run a very successful Facebook group for outcrossing Burmese to Thai-born cats. Through the group's 400+ members, we have successfully shared our lines around the world, from Thailand, Europe, USA and South Africa. I have sent cats to the USA, Scotland, Finland, Germany and South Africa.

I am also an advocate for separating the Bombay and Burmese breeds into two different breed sections. As it stands at the moment, the Bombays and Burmese share the same section, which means that they can be interbred with each other. Bombays very frequently have offspring which have the Burmese colour restriction, they look like Burmese. However, because they are in the same breed group, these kittens can be registered as Burmese with full SBT status. On the face of it this may seem acceptable, however, when you look into the development of the Bombay, they were created using the American Shorthair, a breed genetically very different than the Burmese, with no Thai or SE Asian roots.

Whilst I am wholly in favour of outcrossing, I prefer to keep the Burmese breed a purely SE Asian breed, without foreign genetics, and possibly other breed problems, seeping into the Burmese.

There are 4 categories in TICA, namely:

Category I, established breed (current BO/BU category)

Category II, natural breed (Burmese?)

Category III, Variant/Mutation Breed.

Category IV, Hybrid breed (Bombay).

It makes sense that the Burmese belongs in CII, natural breed. The Bombay belongs in CIV, hybrid breed.

In TICA the Burmese has suffered a great deal from the lethal head gene issue in the past, mainly, but not exclusively, in the USA, which has almost decimated the BU registrations in TICA.

Although mercifully now there is a reliable DNA test for this, there are still too few Burmese being registered in TICA. The majority of the current committee are Bombay breeders, who passionately

feel that their breed will be decimated if the group split. As much as I feel their pain, my feeling, and I am sure the feeling of many Burmese breeders, is that they cannot ride on the back of the Burmese breed to the detriment of the Burmese.

If the group were split, and the Burmese went to CII, Burmese would be mated only to Burmese, and all outcrosses to go to 4 generations before attaining SBT status. Cats of Thai origin are already being registered as foundation Burmese after being signed off as Burmese type by three TICA judges, although this still requires the 4 generation rule before SBT.

Bombays would be a hybrid breed, and would still be allowed to be mated one of their parent breeds, that is the Burmese, so this should not be an issue. But they will be unable to register their variants as Burmese.

If you to elect me to the BO/BU breed committee, I would work towards these issues. I am aware that diehard Bombay breeders will not vote for me, and I respect this. However, my heart is with the Burmese breed, and those who know me, will already know that I will work tirelessly to protect it.

Sorry for all the rambling, but I felt you needed to be in the picture, to understand my motives, and my reasons for asking you to vote for me.

Thanks for reading

Chrissy Russell.