

UK Ocicat Health Reassurance

The “Ocicats” Facebook group (not affiliated to the Club) has a membership of over 1000 owners, breeders and other interested parties, around the world. A recent discussion on this forum portrayed a high prevalence of various health issues affecting the Ocicat and Ocicat Classic breeds in the UK. This has resulted in several concerned owners and breeders making contact. Some of our members had joined and supported this group, but have since been either removed or blocked from posting, other members applying to join have been refused; thus rendering it impossible for a direct response from these people.

On this matter, The Ocicat Club UK has issued the following statement:

The main health topic being discussed was Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM), a disease of the heart muscle in which the heart walls thicken and prevent the heart from pumping properly. HCM occurs in many animals (humans included), and is the most common form of heart disease in cats.

Unfortunately, the impression given was that HCM is a widespread problem in UK Ocicats, and many group members were concerned that their pets could be affected. We want to reassure everyone that there is no known prevalence of HCM in Ocicats and Ocicat Classics*.

**The number of Ocicat and Ocicat Classic kittens registered with GCCF over the last 18 years is 1642, this figure does not represent all kittens born in the UK as not all UK cats are registered with GCCF. The Ocicat Club is aware of very few cats over that time period who have been suspected or reasoned to have HCM. These cats would only represent less than 0.5% of the known population.*

The discussion thread stated many “known” deaths caused by HCM, naming individual cats and blaming other UK breeders for hiding the problem. Other health issues were also discussed in a similar manner; namely Plasma Cell Pododermatitis and Cancer.

There is an appropriate route to report and investigate any health concern with GCCF in the UK, which is to report it to the relevant Breed Advisory Committee (BAC). Any health information that is supplied to the BAC with supporting evidence will be considered with due care and attention. The BAC may if required seek advice from the GCCF Genetics Committee or other suitably qualified professionals, and will take action to amend the breeding policy or provide advice for breeders if deemed necessary. **It is important to note that this route is not exclusive to members of any specific Club or indeed any specific cat registry, as health concerns transcend these limitations.**

Any health information that may be pertinent to the BAC can be sent to the independent BAC Secretary of The Ocicat and Ocicat Classic BAC, Mrs Hilary Dean.

The Ocicat Club would encourage anyone who has relevant information about the specific cases discussed, to forward the information to the BAC.

On some of the general comments made on this group, The Ocicat Club would like to respond as follows:

- A general tone of scaremongering is not a sensible and productive way to investigate and proceed regarding any health issue that may or may not affect our breeds.
- Guessing at a genetic link to certain common ancestors from between 10 and 20 years ago is not a productive way to move forward with any genuine concern.
- Kitten Contracts are recommended by GCCF and should not be misrepresented.

The Ocicat Club **does not** support:

- Misuse of Social Media.
- Personal attacks on individual cats or people.
- Unverified health information being portrayed as fact.

The Ocicat Club **does** support:

- The sharing of health information via the appropriate routes to allow full investigation and consideration.
- A positive approach to supporting the ongoing needs, health and well-being of our breeds.

We hope that health issues can be discussed fairly and reasonably in the future and that verified cases are submitted via the appropriate routes.

If you remain concerned about any of the topics discussed here, please get in touch with The Ocicat Club. We are always happy to help Ocicats, Ocicat Classics, and their breeders or owners.

THE OCICAT CLUB
www.ocicatclubuk.org