

Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

May 2009 – Volume 3 No. 4

EXTRACTED ARTICLE FROM “PAWS FOR EFFECT” MAY 2009 – VOLUME 3 – NUMBER 4

SOURCE:

http://www.polytrak.net/ptnews/archives/PTNews-V3_No4.pdf

POLYTRAK/POLYSTANDARD ATTEND THE WCC ANNUAL MEETING IN ARNHEM

(By Vonne Bode)

The World Cat Congress started in 1994 with five founding members who wanted to promote better understanding and cooperation among the world's major cat association in matters of mutual interest and concern such as feline welfare and legislation since this affects all cat lovers, from breeder to pet owner. Subjects like new breeds, standards, terminology, pedigree registration, health protocols, genetics, show rules, respect for the animal etc. have been discussed in those meetings during the years. The WCC is not a regulated body nor does it make decisions, but it gives the opportunity to meet people from other countries of the 9 bodies.

The membership of the WCC is comprised of the world's major cat fancies, including the founding members:

FIFé - Fédération Internationale Féline, delegate Eric Reijers

CFA - Cat Fanciers' Association, delegate Pam Delabar

TICA - The International Cat Association, delegate Vickie Fisher

ACF - Australian Cat Federation, delegate Lesley Morgan Blythe

WCF - World Cat Federation, delegate Ortrun Wagner

NZCF - New Zealand Cat Fancy, delegate Chris Lowe

CCCA - Co-Ordinating Cat Council of Australia, delegate Cheryl U'Ren

GCCF - Governing Council of the Cat Fancy, delegate John Hansson

SACC - Southern African Cat Council, delegate Jan van Rooyen

The WCC President is Pam Delabar, Vice President is Cheryl U'Ren and Treasurer is Penny Bydlinski.

On Saturday 11 April 2009 the World Cat Congress Annual Meeting was held in the Netherlands for the 3rd time, this time in Arnhem. It was hosted by FIFé and held in conjunction with the International Easter Show of Mundikat where some of the delegates also would be judging.

At 09:00 there was the introduction of individual WCC members. It was nice to put some faces with the names.



Pictured Left to Right:

Lesley Morgan Blythe, Chris Lowe, Pam Delabar, Jan van Rooyen, Cheryl U'Ren, Vickie Fisher, John Hansson, Eric Reijers, Annelies Hackmann, Ortrun Wagner

At 10:00 there was a lecture on European regulations and laws regarding cats given by Iara Boissevain. The laws outside Europe are quite different from the laws in let's say the USA. For example we don't have 'punitive damages' or 'no cure no pain'. Also suing means proving. And looking at pets, we



Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

May 2009 – Volume 3 No. 4

don't have official ownership documents (with the exception of France) like in the USA. A pedigree, microchip and a pet passport doesn't prove ownership. The only thing a pet passport proves is whether the cat had his health shots or not. 😊 That said, it will help in court of law. A judge will also look to at who cares for the cat and has made the costs for the cat.



Iara Boissevain

Contracts were also a topic of this lecture. I bet many of you know all about it. 😊 Just in case... In the EU law selling or buying a cat/kitten is seen the same as for example buying a vacuum cleaner, in other words as a product. With buying or selling a 'product' purchase means there's a contract. The EU legislation also knows consumer protection, meaning the buyer can have reasonable expectations or there's a contractual agreement. Also when a defect shows up within 6 months of purchase, the seller has to prove absence of liability or has to take back/fix the 'product'. A contract can help to put down agreements and makes clear what the responsibilities are for both parties but it doesn't promise rose gardens;-). Some points to take in account when making a contract for selling a cat/kitten:

Names of parties- consider couples: people can divorce so on who's name do you put the cat?

Data of the animals and parents- that speaks for itself;-).

Content of agreement- is it a sell/trade/show/pet/breeder etc. cat/kitten?

Rights and duties- here the testing part can be mentioned.

Payment terms and what happens if a buyer doesn't pay?-

Warranty?- do you cover the costs up to the purchase price or do you give back a kitten or? And till what age..?

Risk - uh... how about Maine Coon polys are an addiction so you're warned. 😊

Which law is applicable?-

What to do in case of trouble- these are the steps for the buyer to follow. For example contact a vet when a kitten is sick and then also contact the seller.

Information provided- here you mention the extra info you give the buyer, like copies of test results and general info on how to introduce a kitten in the household etc. The moment the buyer signs the contract, he/she agrees to be aware of attached information that came with the contract.

There're some points that give trouble guaranteed:

No deal about transport- nowadays many cats/kittens are shipped between different countries for breeding programs. Now let's say you sell a kitten overseas to another breeder. You made sure you fulfilled all necessary requirements (shots, vet check, papers, the right size transport cage, food& water etc.) to ship the cat. The next day you get a panic call from the breeder/buyer...the kitten got lost during shipping!

So who's responsible in fixing this problem? You/the flight company/the buyer? Trouble here for sure;-). The seller did everything that was needed to ship the cat, so the responsibility lays with the flight company. Of course the buyer wants the kitten he/she paid for. The buyer can complain with the flight company, but since the



Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

May 2009 – Volume 3 No. 4

flight company has nothing to do with the buyer, that won't help much. The buyer can't demand a kitten from the seller or the money back since it's not the seller's fault (of course the choice is up to the seller). However, the flight company does have a 'contract' with the seller. So the seller could demand responsibility with the flight company and maybe this way get the money back for the loss of the kitten. But as long as nothing has been put in the contract, it won't be clear. So think about that.



Shared ownership- in the breeding world we see this a lot. The cat lives with one person (breeder or not) and is co-owned by (another) breeder. This is done so both/one can use the cat for breeding. And most of the times this is put in a contract. But what if they get a fight and both claim ownership? Well sorry to wake you up here;-), but in the EU law shared ownership legally doesn't exist! So also in this case the court will look into who actually takes care of the cats and pays the costs.

Obligation/prohibition to breed- many breeders have sold a kitten as pet which wasn't meant as breeding cat. Then to find out the kitten was later used as breeding cat. Unfortunately there's not much you can do. If you take it to court you can say it's breach of contract. Fine, but even if you've put a fine in your contract, the judge will

ask you to prove the 'damage' you've led. To a judge it really doesn't make any difference if a cat has a pedigree or not.

Conclusions. Cats are above the law, breeders are not;-). Contracts sure can help to professionalize and to prevent trouble but do you really want to sue behind the grave?

After this lecture there was a short coffee break.



Winnie Sheffmann on the right

During this break Winnie, Sharon and myself got a hold of Vicky Fisher, who's the new TICA president. Time for some poly talk. 😊 We asked her what she thought our chances would be when going for advancement for the New Traits again soon. She said the outcome probably wouldn't be that much different as the prior one. Ok, but what would be the main issue for not accepting them in her opinion. Well she said, old-time breeders, like herself, were unhappy with the proposal since it was already decided long time ago that polydactyl Maine Coons couldn't be shown. So why now? The second point was probably the soundness of the trait, and proof it's harmless. The third point was that showing great types might help a bit.



Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

May 2009 – Volume 3 No. 4



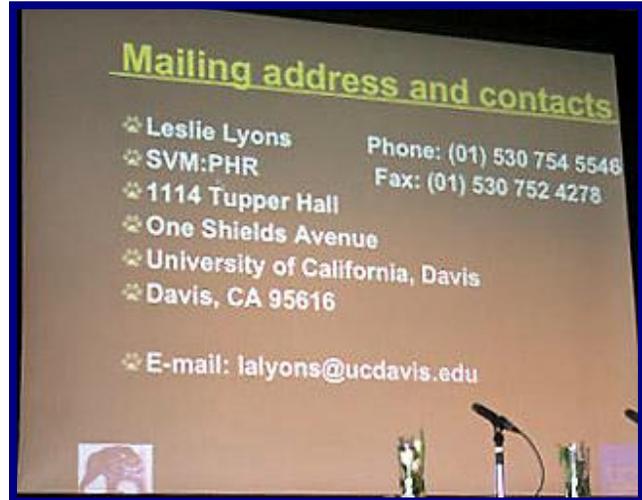
Dr. Leslie Lyons, PhD

At 11:15 **Dr. Leslie Lyons** gave an **update on genetic testing & New Breeds vs. defects**. She explained that cats are often models for human diseases. At the UC Davis lab they've done a lot of different research, mostly on breed cats from the USA. The cats had unrelated grandparents, there were 38 genetic markers over 30 cats per breed. The cats were from different registries. Some example of studies done by her lab are on: feline long fur mutations, distinctness of breeds, PKD, breed diversity and blood groups. Some statistics: 10-20% of the cats are fancy breeds and consistent worldwide. 80% of the fancy cats are Persians. And worldwide 38% of the Persians have PKD.

If we compare the amount of breeds in cats with other bred species, we've about 50 cat breeds compared to 300 dog and 300 in horse breeds. Big difference. 😊

Leslie said she was seeking DNA from cats in Europe, that's why she requested for DNA and would be available on the show to take swabs from the cats. The latest research done was on the sweet receptor in cats. The conclusion was the cat can't taste sweet;-). Leslie also presented a list of genes and diseases the lab had looked into. One of them was polydactyly, named as SHH. In the Pixie Bob and the Maine Coon they found one and the same gene: A479G. But in the DSH they found two different poly genes: G257C and A481T.

In her lecture she also presented a graphic that showed the genetic diversity within the different cat breeds in relation to inbreeding. It seemed the Korat was the winning breed as for diversity and lowest inbreeding. 😊



At 12:30 we had a lunch break. Something to eat and drink and then our try to **talk about the polys** with some of the delegates or with Leslie;-). Leslie had a small group of people behind her waiting in line to get some to talk to her....pull a number. 😊



The line-up waiting to speak with Dr. Lyons

So we went to search for someone else;-). I saw Chris Lowe, General Secretary of NZCF, and she was free. 😊 So I grabbed the opportunity to approach her. She is a nice lady and explained to us how the polys were accepted within the



Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

May 2009 – Volume 3 No. 4

MC breed standard of their Association. She said they've been known for their controversial decisions, like now accepting the poly Maine Coon. 😊 The ladies, as she called Zena and Suzan, did a lot of work and showed their polys in the show hall for 2 years. And the public loved them. 😊 In the beginning the NZCF members didn't understand the poly gene is a dominant gene. So therefore there was some reservation in accepting them. It was decided that they could get them in as a separate breed. So the MC polys were promoted to be accepted as a separate breed. Making the MC polys a separate breed of course would give a lot of registration problems since they were registered as MC's prior to this. And just a few digits more isn't really enough to make it a separate breed is it? 😊 So looking over things again the EC (comparable with the TICA Board) decided to accept the MC polys within the breed by simple changing the current MC standard. Chris said the MC breed section understood that if you don't like them you just don't breed them. I could tell she was very pleased with the fact that her association was the first to accept them. 😊 Let's hope more will follow soon!



Conference Attendees – Vonne Bode Right Corner

If we compare this success story for the MC polys in NZ with our endeavours to get them accepted within TICA, we can see some differences.

First the NZCF, compared to TICA, is a small Association with a total of around 800 members. If we compare this to TICA, we can see that already the TICA MC Breed Section alone consists around 800 members!

Second, the NZCF MC breed section supported the proposal. With TICA 1/3 of those voting supported the proposal. That said, many MC Breed Section members (around 3/4?) didn't even vote.

Third, most TICA MC breed section members have been very well aware of the fact that the poly gene is a dominant gene. But for them the fact that you don't have to breed them if you don't like them, hasn't been enough to quell their fears. The refusal to accept them seems more an emotional point of view than a rational one. In contrast the NZCF MC Breed Section seems to be more open minded in this and didn't have a problem looking at the facts.

Fourth, many of us have shown our polys in TICA shows all over the world and since 2005 in more numbers than ever seen before. We also have talked with the judges, given them handouts and articles. We've advertised and promoted them with lot's of material and yes, also the public loves the polys. Unfortunately the public is not a MC Breed Section member. But we've made progress. The judges have become more accustomed to the phenomenon of the MC poly and have been very open to learn. Even some that didn't think much of the polys previously have now said that they wouldn't have a problem with it. But apparently getting them accepted within TICA takes a lot more time showing them. 😊 The judges that have seen the MC polys in Europe indeed have seen the improvement of type. So type shouldn't be that much of a problem anymore for their acceptance. Also the genetic committee sees the poly trait in the MC as a valid trait. Since polydactyly is already accepted within the Pixie Bob, the soundness of the trait really shouldn't be a point of discussion either. So that leaves us



Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

May 2009 – Volume 3 No. 4

with the emotional point of view...a hard nut to crack. 😊

At 13:30 we had a lecture from **Prof. Dr. Eric Gruijs** called **Ideal Characteristics, general faults and disqualifiers**. He first spoke about feline diseases and disorder. Diseases can be acquired, congenital or hereditary.



Prof. Dr. Eric Gruijs

Examples of acquired diseases:

Contracted kidney disease- can be caused by over vaccinating during the years

Feline lower urinary disease- often a relation with nutrition

Examples of congenital diseases:

Open spinal cord- this is often caused by fever of the mother

Flat chest- caused by muscular hypoplasia. In humans pectus is familial. In the Burmese cat it's known in the breed and familial where in puppy dogs it's known to be caused by nutritional factors. Sometimes it may occur as temporary disorder (after careful taping). He showed us a diagram with numbers of flat-chested kittens within four major breeds (MC, Persian, Burmese and Eastern breeds) and it showed they had found most flat-chested kittens in the MC. But...we need to see this in

perspective he said. Because of the 3250 kittens in the study group, 51 were flat-chested (1,57%). Within the Burmese this was 2,93% and within the MC 2,13%. In his study Stress (8x), thin queen (5x) and disease of queen (3x) was mentioned during pregnancy. Also more kittens with the same disorder were seen in one litter. Some breeders knew flat-chested in their line, often in young females with whom they did not breed anymore and that had the same ancestors.

Examples of hereditary diseases:

PKD, LSD, HCM, deafness in white cats, eye disorders and some skeletal and muscular problems.

He said in **avoiding hereditary diseases** we can learn a lot from cattle. Sunny boy was a famous European bull and also the most frequently (2 million cows!) and widely used in his time. But he was also the grandson of a BLAD-gene positive bull. Farmers liked the milk-rich offspring Sunny gave, but were also afraid for BLAD. So they tested the offspring for the BLAD-gene and did not breed with the positive cattle. Sounds familiar? 😊 He said most farmers know how to breed, they work with organisations who keep herd books. For cattle there're many (EU) regulations to prevent diseases and each cow has it's own unique number. Much has to be known about a bull and his expected offspring before they widely can use him for breeding.

Small animal breeding however is another thing. He said the cat shows appear to have most impact as is also seen in dogs and birds (of course the judges disagreed;-)). He pointed out to watch for extremes. The present system of various, different independent societies offers all freedom to the owner. Animal welfare however is regulated by law, but is not very well described.

The disease **FIP** was also a topic. The corona virus FeCV can become FIPV in some cats. It's comparable to the Aids-virus in that it is a intracellular-hidden virus. Antibodies therefore can't prevent or cure this virus. From a Belgium study done in 2005, it's known that there're



Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

May 2009 – Volume 3 No. 4

differences between cats in the possibility of their monocytes to sustain infection with the FIPV. Some were not susceptible at all. So there're individual cat differences! He said those differences might be genetic, and take care of immune suppressed kittens, due to inbreeding or too much stress.

Prof. Gruijs also gave some **recommendations for breeding**. He advised to perform molecular testing where possible and to **use the results** while breeding. And to prevent further inbreeding by using as much as possible subjects (read cats 😊) of the population of a breed for reproduction, including the non-winners and those males that never went to shows!!! Also prevent stress (multi-cat households, cat shows) and infections (multi-cat households, cat shows). And as last he asked the question “Does small animal breeding need regulations?”. The Dutch minister likes self regulation, but Prof. Gruijs pled: “Cat fancy associations, please do it together. And for the breeding use an over coupling structure of your societies boards as an **umbrella**. Start with the animal welfare and future animal welfare of your cats as basic law.



After this humorous brought lecture we got a lecture on spots, stripes and butterflies at 14:15. Luckily at 15:00 there was a coffee break again. 😊 Not sure 100%, but I think it was then when we got a hold of Leslie Lyons. As most of you

know but some might not know, breeders and fanciers have been sending DNA of poly litters and parents to the UC Davis lab where Leslie Lyons works on her own research. In 2006 Kitty had contact with one of the employees about the current status and the how and what. She was told the study hadn't started yet since they waited for enough DNA samples. It was decided to include the PolyTrak ID number of the cat/kitten on the submission form if it was in the database, so pedigree info on the cat/kitten could be easily found. We encouraged people to send in swabs and had put info on the how and what on PolyTrak. And people did send in DNA, but never heard back. One breeder even mentioned contacting the lab to see if the DNA was received in right order. And they said they didn't or otherwise it probably got lost in the building. Also requests for swabs were never answered.

Recently we heard of new poly study done in the UK (Edinburgh), but this was about non pedigreed cats. A member from PolyStandard contacted the UC Davis lab to hear if Leslie had already started her poly study with the MC poly DNA that was sent in. And the answer was no. Apparently the lab had sent DNA for the UK study. Since the WCC was coming up and I knew she would be there, I decided to write Leslie an e-mail. So I asked her what had happened with the send MC poly DNA samples, if she was planning to do a study anyhow and explained why it was so important to us that a study would be done on the poly gene in the MC breed. But I never heard back.

So now was my chance to get some answers;-). When I explained who I was etc. she said she couldn't remember having seen my e-mail. She said that she had sent the received poly DNA samples (which included MC's and to my surprise also Pixie Bobs) to Oxford. I said that nowhere in the UK study it was mentioned that they had used and researched the poly DNA of pedigreed cats too. She said this was true and that she was going to correct them on that. I explained what PolyTrak had done over the



Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

May 2009 – Volume 3 No. 4

years and how we encouraged people to send in DNA. She grabbed her laptop and went looking for my e-mail. She said, oh this long one. That I had planned to read when I would be back from this trip. 😊 I said that to get the MC poly accepted, we really need a scientific statement on paper saying the poly gene found in the MC is harmless and sound. She said that wouldn't be a problem and she could do that. Before we knew it the coffee break was over. 😊



It was 15:30, time for the **debate on current cat-fancy issues**. On the stage behind a table there were sitting the experts: Catherine Bastide (French TICA judge), Ad de Bruin (FIFe judge), Prof. Dr. Eric Grujjs, Ir. Ed Gubbles and Leslie Lyons. On a screen a statement was shown and each was asked to give comment on it. Then the public had the opportunity to respond on that. One of the statements was: "Is the MC is a natural breed?". The experts said that no breed is a "natural breed". Because the moment you step in the show hall with your cat, there's nothing natural about it. And the genetics even went in further in saying that once the human is selecting the cats for breeding, the "natural" part stops. But there also seemed to be a difference in how the word "natural" was interpreted.

Another statement was: "showing is more important than breeding". It became clear once more, that the genetics and professor were worried about the influence showing has on the breed and it's development. They said you can't deny that there's some pressure within the

breeding community/cat fancy. And of course most want to belong in a group. The judges have a lot of influence on how a cat within a certain breed should (in their eyes) look and these cats get awarded. I could only agree. How a cat should look is also very much subject to fashion. As a result the cats that don't qualify as "show cats" will be removed from the breeding programs. And since fashion changes all the time, many cat lines are removed from breeding to fit the new fashion again. A breeder responded to the subject saying that in the end it's the breeder that decides how much he/she will go with that fashion and which cats to breed. Prof. Gruys said don't underestimate the shows. And again I think he's right. We only have to look at the Siamese and Persian of today. Also producing good show cats and also keeping an eye on health and diseases, often seem to be in conflict with each other. When breeders talk about "improving the breed" they really mean making them look more beautiful (read: match with the expectations of the judges) and not improving the health of the breed!

Since there wasn't that much time left not all statements were used. It was all interesting and to me it was a pity that it was scheduled so late in the day.

At 17:00 we had another **coffee break** and went to Leslie again. Since she wasn't pleased to hear that someone of the lab had suggested the DNA of one person could've been lost in the building, she went to her list with send poly DNA on her laptop. The list of send poly DNA from the MC's was much longer than I had ever imagined, so good going everyone who have sent DNA to the UC Davis lab. 😊 Luckily she could confirm the DNA from this person had arrived fine. 😊 She said she was surprised to find out some of the cats were homozygous for the gene. So I told her that was not strange since some breeders had done poly x poly matings a couple of times, this without any problems.



Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

May 2009 – Volume 3 No. 4

We stayed at Leslie's table when the **Open discussion with WCC Delegates** began at 17:15.

First there was a small introduction on how to debate and a request to not get too emotional. 😊 A microphone was brought to the person who had a question for the WCC delegates. And the WCC delegates were sitting behind the table on the stage just like in the prior debate. It was brought as idea to let the attendees of this seminar ask questions to the WCC delegates. So questions were asked and answered.



Pictured, Left to Right: Jan van Rooyen, Cheryl U'ren, Pam Delabar, Ortrun Wagner, Chris Lowe and Eric Reijers

This was the time to bring up the subject polydactyly within the MC breed. 😊 Sharon popped up the question and asked how each of the delegates felt about accepting the poly MC in their association in the future. The first to answer this question was *John Hansson (GCCF, UK)* and he said "Never!".

Pam Delabar (CFA, USA) said she didn't expect them to be accepted, but that said they would always go with what the Breed Section voted.

Cheryl U'Ren (CCCA, Australia) said they had polled their members about the subject and had received a lot of e-mails from worried members who were afraid it would get accepted.

Jan van Rooyen (SACC, Afrika) said their organization was still very new in the cat fancy. Polys hadn't been a topic thus far, so he

couldn't say what was thought about accepting them in the future.

Vicky Fisher didn't answer the question. But we already knew her answer.

Ortrun Wagner (WCF) said they wouldn't be accepted because it wasn't part of the show standard.

Eric Reijers (FIFe, NL) said as him concerned never.

Chris Lowe (NZCF, New Zealand) said she waited last on purpose. 😊 She said that as we all probably knew NZCF, as first Association, had accepted the polydactyl Maine Coon as part of the Maine Coon breed recently.



Chris Lowe, NZCF participating in the debate

Eric Reijers continued the discussion with saying "Why breed something that's not in the standard? Why breed something that was bred out? Why would you want them in the breed?"

I believe Sharon said (?) that they had been in the breed naturally *Eric Reijers* said why didn't I hear you in the earlier debate when the MC as natural breed statement was brought up? I said in answer to his earlier questions that the polys are already in the breed and that they have a pedigree, they can be bred and their kittens have pedigrees too. They only can't be shown. He



Paws for Effect - The PolyTrak Newsletter

May 2009 – Volume 3 No. 4

asked me what association I was a member of, so I said TICA (of course I know FIFe very well too. 😊) He said well maybe you don't know it then, but as far as I know you can't show them in FIFe as they get a DQ.

John Hansson jumped in by saying it's a beauty competition. And that they could be shown doesn't mean we should. *Eric Reijers* said he also read an article about polydactyly and saw what kind of problems it could cause to the legs and feet. So I would never accept a trait that causes such problems for the cat. Winnie said, interesting, we've read many articles on polydactyly but we haven't heard of one like yours. We would be very interested to hear which article exactly you're referring too. 😊

Eric Reijers said he didn't remember but that she just had to google and she would find it. Then *Leslie Lyons* jumped in. 😊 She said that a recent study on polydactyly was done and that there were no problems with polys, not even when they were homozygous. Then a request from the organization came to close the poly subject so other people could ask their question for the WCC delegates too.

Of course we needed to have a talk with Eric Reijers afterwards. You can't tell a poly supporter polydactyly gives all sorts of problems without giving the source. 😊 So when the debate was finished at 18:30, Winnie and I went to Mister Reijers. But he was very busy with walking to here and there arranging that some people could be brought to the airport. But we stuck to his side 😊 and asked him about the study. He said he had a international meeting last year (he couldn't remember if it was a FIFe or WCC one) and that was the reason why he had read something about polydactyl. He probably had the link to the article at home but couldn't remember which article it was exactly. He said he did remember to have seen all different types of polydactyly (I've a hunch that he probably has seen the Messybeast article). "You probably find it if you google for polydactyly, that's how I found it" he said. He

admitted that he had only remembered 3 lines from the article. He said basically I don't care if you all go for acceptance for the polys, just go by the rules. And I would suggest to not use the "it's a natural part of the breed" as argument then. That's something different than it's already part of the breed today. He said that if there are indeed not any health issues (like Dr. Lyons said), then he had no problem with it. He preferred to put his energy in more important things, like REAL health issues. And off he was. 😊

Here ended a long, but informative day. A thank you to **Winnie Scheffmann** and **Sharon Otten** for showing their support for the polys on this day too. Also a thank you to **Linda Beumer** for the pictures.

