



INTRODUCTION TO THE STANDARDS

What is a standard?

The standard is the precise and complete description of the ideal cat for a given breed. A good standard should allow the reader to imagine very precisely what a breed should look like without seeing the cat.

This ideal description is made of a scale of points where all the parts of the cat, including coat and colour, are attributed a value in points and a written description.

The points allow to evaluate the importance of a quality or a fault and to appreciate them differently. The Egyptian Mau, for instance, needs 35 points for the colour and the coat pattern whereas the same criteria applied to the Norwegian Forest Cat will only require 5 points: one immediately understands that colour is much more important in the Egyptian Mau than in the Norwegian Forest Cat.

Beside the description of the ideal cat, the standards outline the faults that should be avoided for each breed. This part is a negative of what is required. Some faults are specific to the described breed, others are common to all breeds: a lack of condition or a bad temper are always penalized by the standard.

What is the purpose of a standard?

For all those who breed and select purebred cats, the standard is the essential reference.

The cat breeder should tend towards the ideal described by the standard. In this search for perfection, one needs a great amount of perseverance. The standard hinders the breeder from forgetting his goal; it is his guideline.

Cat shows are a must for purebred cats selection. The cats are examined by judges whose training qualifies them in order to pick the best cat for a given breed. According to what criteria? Those described in the standard. The standard is the judge's bible and he should refer to it permanently.

Who is in charge of drafting the standards?

Everybody interested in feline world knows that cat breeds evolve and there are not many common traits between yesterday's and today's Siamese or Persian.

What is more, new breeds and colours are regularly selected. These changes require adapted standards.



In the first case, concerning the evolution of breeds, the standard already exists but changes. On that matter, judges have a major role since it is often by following their advice at cat shows that breeders will make the breeds evolve. But it sometimes happens the other way round and a remarkable subject can have an influence on the whole breed and pull the standard in one direction or another. The revision of a standard must be the reflection of a true evolution and not one of fashion. It requires the presence of judges, breed club members and breeders of the concerned breed.

When a new breed is selected, breeders write a first standard pointing out the required features. The new breed is then observed until the moment when those characteristics are set enough as to reproduce regularly. The standard is reviewed according to the breed's evolution and until it gets stable. This work is conducted collectively by the breeders and the judges.

Respecting the standard: towards the ideal cat?

The standard is the cornerstone of selection breeding: it shows the breeders which direction to follow to obtain a cat that is true to what is required and gives the judges the means to make their choice. One should not forget that the standard should always follow the interest of the animal. If breeding and selecting a purebred animal generally implies to get away from the average model shaped by nature, breeders and judges should keep in mind the well-being of the animal they are in charge of. Maintaining the type, i.e. all the characteristics common to a breed and making it distinct from another, means to refuse hyper type. Hyper type, starting when the animal suffers or is uncomfortable, is a deviance from the standard and should be considered as a fault as much as a lack of type. Making a selection is also choosing the animals that are the more able in their temper and health to offer the greatest happiness to those who love them.

Allowances...

Allowance:

The act of tolerating, not forbidding nor requiring whereas one could; freedom resulting from that abstention. Ex.: it is not a right, it is an allowance.*

What it means practically: for instance, allowing a slight off bite does not change an off bitten jaw into a normal jaw and it is the latter that should remain the goal to reach. Same thing concerning the ear set (according to the age) or a coat texture (according to the season).

** Translated from Petit Robert dictionary's definition*



The requirements, which are supposed to be common to all the actors of feline world and cat shows, should tend towards perfection. One should read and apply the standards with this will in mind.