# RUSSIAN BREED ADVISORY COMMITTEE

# RECOMMENDED BREEDING POLICY FOR RUSSIAN CATS

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## Contents

## Introduction

This breeding policy accompanies and supplements the Russian Registration Policy and should be read in conjunction with that document.

The aim of the breeding policy is to give advice and guidance to ensure breeders observe what is considered “best practice” in breeding Russians. The over-riding objective is to improve the Russian cat, working to meet all aspects of the Russian Standard of Points, which describes the ideal for the well-established breed of Russian Blue and the newer varieties of Russian Black and Russian White.

## History and Origins

The Russian Blue is one of the oldest pedigree breeds of cat with a history dating back to the beginning of the organised cat fancy. They were present at the first cat shows and their first breed club, the Russian Blue Association, was founded in 1867. It is thought that the first examples were brought to England from the Russian port of Archangel, or Arkhangelsk, which sits on the White Sea and was an important stop-off on trades routes between Russia and Northern Europe. Many of the first Russian Blues were acquired from sailors, indeed it is documented that one called Kola was swapped for a leg of mutton in 1890 at the London Docks.

By the end of the 19th century the Russian Blue was a popular breed and many appeared at shows. Classes at shows were offered for blue cats, but these were entered by both Russian and British Blues. People felt that this was unfair and eventually in 1912 they were given their own class. Disagreements about the true origins of the breed led to the name being changed to ‘Foreign Blue’. The cats were still popularly referred to as Russians but it was not until 1939 that this was officially changed back again.

World War II was a difficult time for all breeds of cat and the Russian Blue was no exception. By the time it was over very few breeding cats were left from which to rebuild the population. Only one breeder, Mrs Marie Rochford, had been able to keep a pure line going and these had to be mated to unregistered Russian Blues, and to outcrosses including a British Blue and Blue Point Siamese to produce more blue kittens. The Siamese outcross meant that the breed became more elongated and angular, and breeders had to work hard to select the best examples in each generation in order to return to the correct type. The crosses affected the coat also, making it flatter and less dense, but this was eventually corrected through hard work. In the 1960s the breed was helped by some imports from Scandinavia where other breeding lines had been preserved, although these too had made use of Siamese outcrosses. There was never any intention to produce colourpoint Russians, and over the following decades breeders made every effort to remove the Siamese colourpoint gene from the Russian breed.

The breed grew in strength and numbers and spread around the world, becoming popular everywhere that cats were bred and shown. In America breeders followed a slightly different path from elsewhere; focusing on a slightly more delicate look, without the characteristic high set ears.

A new chapter in the breed's history started in the UK in 1961 when Frances MacLeod was given a white female kitten reputed to have come from a Russian boat. The kitten was registered by the GCCF as Arctic Chumvi and was mated to the Russian Blue stud Medliam Lupin in order to improve the coat and gene pool of the Russian Blue. The first two litters produced both blue and white kittens, the third litter also produced a black kitten and so the Russian White and Russian Black arrived as part of a planned programme of improvement within the breed. A further line was started in Australia in 1971 by Dick and Mavis Jones, who bred under the prefix Myemgay.

The Russian Whites and Russian Blacks gained GCCF Championship status in 2013 and breeders are working to further establish and develop these varieties.

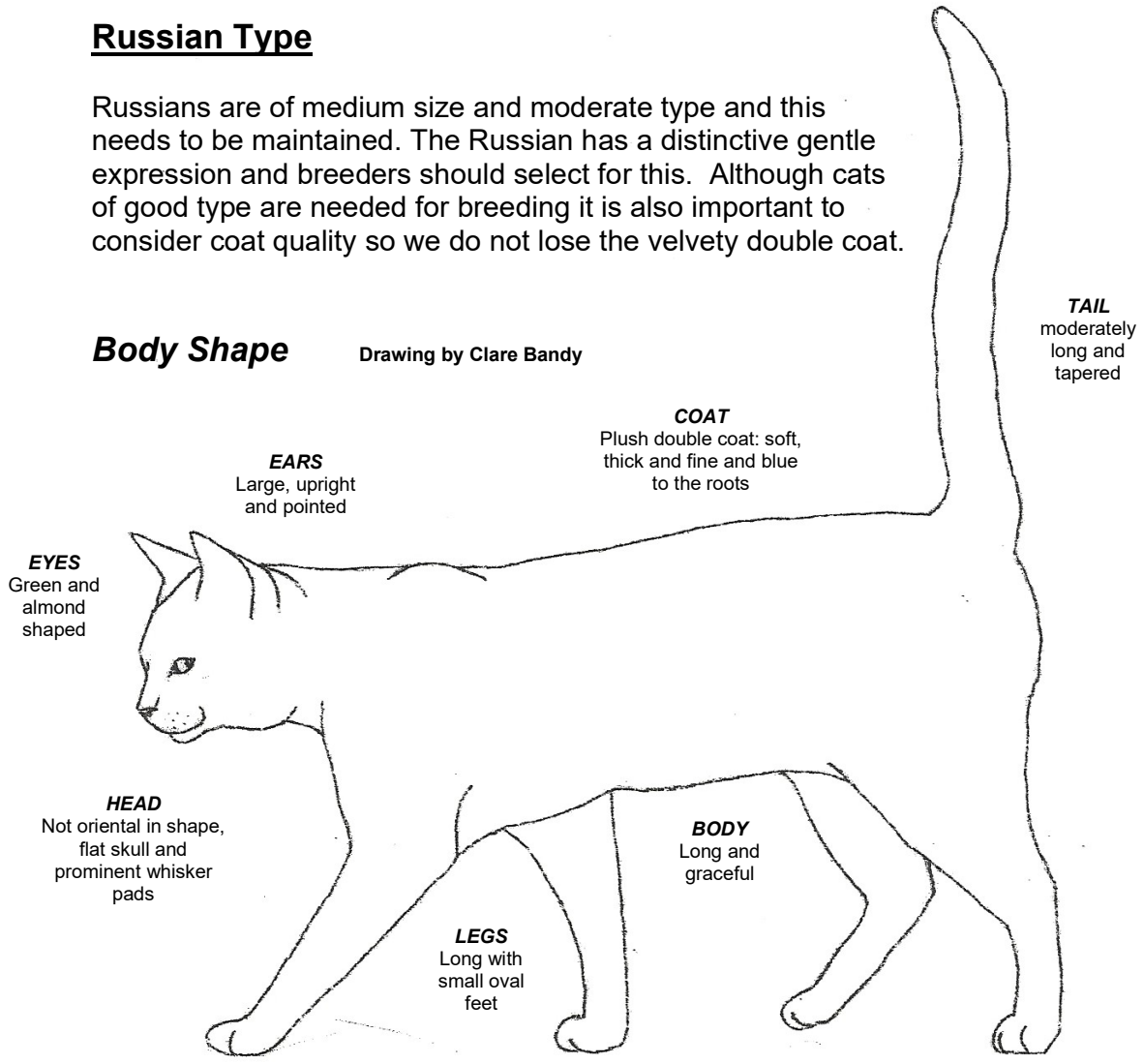
Some European breeders have sought out new 'foundation cats'- blue Domestic shorthair cats of suitable type- to give new bloodlines to the breed and increase genetic diversity. These have so far mainly been cats from Western Russia or other parts of Eastern Europe. Any cat imported into the GCCF from European breeders needs to comply with the registration policy.

## Russian Type

Russians are of medium size and moderate type and this needs to be maintained. The Russian has a distinctive gentle expression and breeders should select for this. Although cats of good type are needed for breeding it is also important to consider coat quality so we do not lose the velvety double coat.

### *Body Shape*

**Drawing by Clare Bandy**



## *Head - side view (profile)*

**Drawings by Clare Bandy**

**Good - the preferred profile & angle**

**Below are variations in undesirable profile**

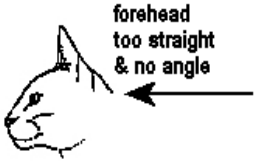
**1. A**

**Reasonably good profile showing nose a little too long**

**1. B**

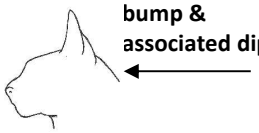
**Forehead & nose too long**

**1. C**



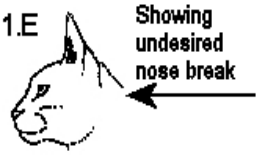
**Nose & forehead too straight & no angle**

**1. D**



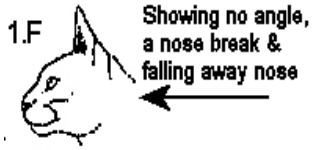
**Showing nose bump & associated dip**

**1.E**



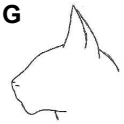
**Showing undesired nose break**

**1.F**



**Showing no angle, a nose break & falling away nose**

**1. G**

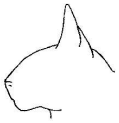


**Lacks angle & rounded skull**

**1. H**

**Showing scooped profile**

**1. I**



**Showing Roman nose**

## *Head - front view*

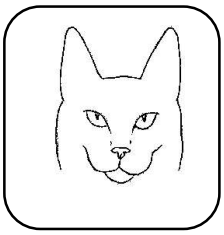
**Drawings by Clare Bandy**

Good front view

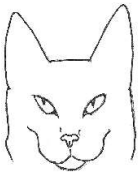
Showing incorrect ear set - too wide apart & flared

Muzzle far too narrow
Rounded top of head
No whisker pads

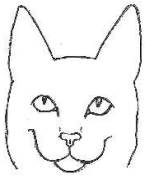
## *Eye set*



**Good eye set**



**Too oriental**



**Too horizontal**

## The Russian Coat

The Russian's double coat is very different in texture from any other breed and the truest criterion of the breed. The double coat was lost in the past when outcrosses were made to Siamese but has since returned as a result of selective breeding. Although breeding cats will often experience seasonal variations in coat quality, cats with persistently flat coats are not recommended for use in breeding programmes.

## Eye Colour

The ideal eye colour is vivid green though a range from yellowy-green to bluey-green can be found in the breed. Due to the action of the dominant white gene odd-eyed white and blue-eyed white cats can occur but these cannot be used for breeding.

## Coat Colour

The coat of a Russian Blue should be an even colour free from tabby markings with a distinct silvery sheen. Breeders should select for a medium blue. Cats without a silvery sheen will appear darker in colour. Russian Blacks should have a jet black coat and Russian Whites should be pure white. Russian Blues or Russian Blacks with a patch of white such as a locket or white toe should not be used for breeding.

## Temperament

Russians are intelligent cats and are renowned for their gentleness and loving nature. As the majority of kittens bred will become well loved pets it is important to breed for temperament as well as beauty. The standard of points will show the beauty required but only the breeder can assess the temperament by judicious breeding. Recent research has indicated a link between the temperament of the sire and his offspring and this should be taken into consideration when choosing a stud cat.

However while a kitten may inherit aspects of its father's temperament its personality is also affected by other factors such as socialisation and environment. The queen's temperament should not be ignored as her kittens will learn from her example. It is important that she is a good mother as well as having an amicable temperament. By careful handling from an early age and exposure to a stimulating environment breeders should aim to raise happy, healthy well-socialised kittens.

## Russian Whites & Russian Blacks

Russian Whites and Russian Blacks achieved Championship status in late 2013. It is recommended that Russian Whites and Russian Blacks are mated to Russian Blues of good type with the correct double coat. Any Russian

Whites with blue eyes or odd-eyes (blue or green) should be registered on the Reference Register and they cannot be used in the Russian breeding programme, however they can be shown in the Pedigree Pet section.

As the dominant white gene is associated with deafness any white cats used for breeding must have a certificate of freedom from deafness. However the onus should be on the breeder to BAER or OAE test white kittens before they are sold for breeding.

## Russian Gene Pool

Russian Blues are well-established in the UK with a variety of different breeding lines. Throughout the breed's history, at times when the gene pool has been diminished, for instance at the end of World War II, breeders have resorted to a number of means to increase the numbers of the breed. This has included limited outcrosses to British Blues and Blue Point Siamese, breeding from blue cats of unknown heritage; close matings such as brother/sister and father/daughter (which are now restricted) and importing Russian Blues from Scandinavia.

The gene pool for Russian cats in the UK is not closed and imported cats can be used for breeding as long as they conform to the requirements of the Russian Registration Policy. Russians have been exported to many areas of the world and imported cats have come from mainly Europe and Australia. However the affect on the gene pool is not as great as at first sight as cats imported from Australia can trace their pedigree back to UK Russians.

New blood lines were added to the Russian gene pool to a limited degree when cats of unknown parentage were used as outcrosses to introduce the new colours. Some breeders in Europe are outcrossing to blue self Domestic Shorthairs and this new blood expands the worldwide genetic diversity of the breed and can 'filter through' and benefit UK lines if sufficient generations are bred to comply with the GCCF registration policy.

The GCCF registration policy allows matings between green-eyed, blue or black domestic shorthairs, and Russian Blues, with the offspring registered as 'Blues, or Blacks of Russian Type' until sufficient generations have been bred to register the offspring as Russian Blue or Russian Black.

In 2015-16 the RBAC commissioned a genetic diversity study of the Russian breed in the UK by UC Davis, California. The report published in 2017 found that the UK cats had 'a more diverse genetic status than their counterpart in the United States'. Compared to other breeds, the UK Russians were 'closer to more diverse or outbred breeds (for example, Norwegian Forest Cat, Siberian Cat, Exotic Shorthair) than to breeds that show significant signs of depletion (for example, Burmese, Birman, Singapura).' Therefore, outcrossing was considered most likely not necessary at the time, provided breeders follow sensible breeding programmes designed to preserve genetic health. The full report by Cecilia Penedo, PhD, can be found at: www.russianblue.org.uk/pdfs/RussianBlueCatDiversityReport_final.pdf

## Genetic Makeup

Unlike some other breeds the genetic makeup of Russian cats is relatively straightforward and Russian Blues bred to Russian Blues will always breed true. The Russian Black is genetically very similar to the Blue, the only difference being with regard to the dilution gene. A Russian White is basically a black or blue cat in a white overcoat, the underlying colour can be determined by DNA testing and/or any progeny produced.

The key genes influencing the colour of Russian cats are as follows:

**Non-agouti or "hypermelanistic" (*a*) –** a recessive gene mutation that turns the original "wild" tabby cat into a self black by overlaying the agouti base colour with melanistic pigment, making the whole animal appear black, although often in certain light the underlying tabby pattern may still just be discernible. The dilution gene works to change this black pigment to blue.

All Russian cats have two copies of the recessive non-agouti allele (aa).

**Black or Chocolate or Cinnamon *(B/b/b$^1$)*** – three different alleles of this gene occur. Chocolate and cinnamon are both mutations of the basic black gene which modify black into dark brown or medium brown respectively. All Russian cats are thought to have two copies of the dominant allele for black (BB) and chocolate and cinnamon have not been observed.

**Dilute (*d*)** – a recessive gene which reduces and spreads out the pigment granules along the hair shaft and turns a black cat into a blue. All Russian Blues have two copies of the recessive allele for dilute (dd), while Russian Blacks have at least one copy of the non-dilute (or dense) allele (D-). Most Russian Blacks carry dilute, but some may be homozygous for the non-dilute allele if they are from two black parents, two white parents masking black, or one of each. A DNA test can confirm if such a cat carries dilute or not.

**White (*W*)** – a dominant gene also known as the white masking gene. It prevents the normal replication and migration of pigment producing cells (melanocytes) during embryologic development. As a result, ***WW*** and ***Ww*** cats have a greatly reduced number of melanocytes and appear white, no matter what other colour genes it may carry. The W gene has manifold effects on coat and eye colour and is associated with an increased risk of deafness. A proportion of white kittens will possess a spot or smudge of coloured fur on the top of the head but this rarely persist into adulthood.
DNA testing can be used to determine whether a Russian White is masking blue, black-carrying-blue or homozygous black.

All Russians are shorthaired self cats (non-agouti). The Russian Blue is homozygous for both the dominant black (***B***) and recessive dilution (***d***) genes and its genetic makeup can be expressed as ***aaBBdd***. Blacks can be homozygous or heterozygous for the dominant form of the dilution gene but only the latter can produce blue kittens. The white (***W***) gene is dominant and masks all other colours and patterns. All Russians should have green eyes.

However due to the action of the dominant ***W*** gene Russian odd-eyed whites and blue-eyed whites can occasionally appear but these cannot be bred from, however they may be shown in the Pedigree Pet section.

As Blue Point Siamese and cats of unknown heritage have been used in Russian breeding programmes the following genes may occur:

**Colourpointed or Siamese ($c^s$)** – a recessive gene which changes black pigment to seal brown and restricts colour to the points. The eyes are partially deficient in pigment as evinced by the blue colour.

Blue Point kittens have occasionally been produced by Russian parents as a result of this recessive gene being carried by subsequent generations. When these kittens are born both parents must be colourpoint carriers, and their registrations will be overstamped "Carries the Siamese gene." Colourpoints are not recognised as Russians and will not be registered as such. Neither they nor their progeny are acceptable in Russian pedigrees. This gene is undesirable in the Russian breed and can be screened out by use of DNA testing.

**Longhair (*l*)** - a recessive gene mutation which produces a semi-longhaired cat. Longhaired kittens are occasionally produced by Russian parents, but generally only from lines originating in other countries. These can either be placed on the non-active register and neutered or placed with breeders working on the Nebelung breeding programme. (Nebelungs are semi-longhaired cats of Russian type.) DNA testing should be used where a Russian breeder knows or suspects that a line may carry longhair.

With both the colourpoint and longhair genes, carrier cats should not be neutered purely on the grounds that they are carriers; they can be mated to non-carriers, their offspring DNA tested, and their non-carrier offspring retained for breeding in order to preserve lines.

## Breeding System

The prime motive is to perpetuate the Russian as a recognisable breed: to improve the quality of the breed as measured against the Standard; and also to gain success on the show bench.

The skill in breeding lies in the choice of the individual cats and how these cats may be mated with each other – these two acts should be regarded as completely separate although interconnected.

Breeders should ensure that, to the best of their knowledge, any Russian cats from which they breed are of sound temperament, free from any hereditary defects, (including those listed in the GCCF Standard of Points), and conform as closely as possible to the Standard of Points. Any Russian White cats used for breeding must have a certificate of freedom from deafness.

Breeders are encouraged to follow the guidelines of the GCCF Breeding Policy to ensure healthy breeding practice. In order to ensure the maintenance of good Russian type while allowing scope to further improve aspects of type, coat and colour to meet the ideal described in the standard, breeders need to have a clear, definite and well understood **breeding system**. This means the development and management of a breeding programme in which certain cats are affirmatively selected to be bred to others, for predetermined reasons. Equally important it also means that breeders allow no matings until they have given careful consideration to the outcome. In particular three key rules must be followed:

- **Health must be the overriding consideration in any Russian breeding programme.**

- **The good and bad features of the individual cats should be assessed and weighed against each other before any mating.**

- **When planning a breeding programme, the breeders must realise that doubling of the good traits in a cat also results in doubling the defects; the breeding of cats with similar faults should be avoided at all costs otherwise there is a danger of fixation.**

## Inbreeding

Inbreeding is an inclusive term covering many different breeding combinations and degrees of relationship – including the more distant, less intense. It is consistently more efficient in eliminating heterozygous (varying and diverse) genotypes and increasing homozygous (same) genotype, thereby ensuring a greater likelihood that kittens will closely resemble their parents. Used here, the term does not mean close, purposeful, inbreeding of closely related cats (brother/sister, father/daughter), but rather the moderate form that results from mating of not too distantly related (but not directly related) cats (first cousins, half-brother/half-sister, second cousins, etc.). some in-breeding is essential to stabilise conformation around a definite type. Inbreeding is the act of mating individuals of various degrees of kinship, and if continued it produces ever increasing homogeneity in the offspring.

It is important to monitor the percentage intensity of inbreeding for any mating (see Coefficients of Inbreeding below) – use this consideration as a key part of the decision-making process when considering any mating and remember: **“The more intense the in-breeding, the more careful must be the selection.” “Loss of innate genetic variability must not be too great.”**

The overall approach should be one of balance and moderation in the degree of inbreeding coupled with consistent selective breeding with a clear objective in mind – i.e. improvement of a key aspect and/or the elimination of weak traits or defective genes.

Breeding systems and practices need to operate so as to ensure the Russian gene pool contains enough variation to give scope to continue improving the

breed and avoid the danger of either fixing type too quickly (before the ideal of the standard is reached) or deleterious genes being expressed and fixed in the breed. Breeders need to use a degree of inbreeding to gain sufficient homogeneity to fix recognisable Russian type but with sufficient variation to both enable improvement and maintain health and vigour, avoiding fixation of defective genes or unwanted traits (and to ensure the elimination of anomalies).

Breeders should be discouraged from using restrictive practices and work with one another for the benefit of the breed. Outcrossing to green-eyed, blue or black self-domestic shorthairs, in accordance with the registration policy is permitted. This process should not be undertaken lightly and may benefit from being done in partnership with other breeders.

**Coefficients of Inbreeding**

Calculating the coefficient of inbreeding (COI) prior to mating will help to determine how closely related the two cats are to each other. The GCCF Coefficient Calculator available via your cats' records in the GCCF database, or a computer programme such as 'Breeder's Assistant', will automatically calculate the percentage of inbreeding for any planned mating. The Pawpeds website can also be used to calculate a coefficient for a proposed mating.

When calculating coefficients, ideally the highest number of generations should be used, if possible, back to the foundation cats, as this will give the most accurate result. However, a degree of inbreeding between 1% and 25% over a pedigree of *at least 8 and ideally 12 generations* may be considered perfectly acceptable. (If breeders can only access pedigrees of less than 8 generations, then they should work to lower maximum percentages, e.g. 1-20% for 6 generations, 1-17% for 5 generations.) Matings with a COI above 25% should only be undertaken by experienced breeders for a specific purpose, and the pedigrees of both parents should be researched thoroughly to ensure a minimal risk of the ancestors carrying any known defective genetic traits. A COI above 40% over a 12-generation pedigree is highly inadvisable in any circumstances.

N.B. Bear in mind that different databases/programmes may give slightly different results depending on the settings or the number of generations stored in the database.

**Acceptable levels for Coefficients of Inbreeding (over 8-12 generations)**

0 to 10% = Low
10 to 20% = Fair
20 to 25% = Acceptable
25 to 40% = High. *Only to be undertaken by experienced breeders for specific reasons.*
40%+ = Not advised

**Inbreeding Depression**

A breed, breeding line or individual can suffer from inbreeding depression when inbreeding co-efficients are raised to high levels and a loss of heterozygosity results. Inbreeding depression can result in a general loss of vigour, even if the animals in question are not suffering from specific recessive genetic diseases. A small gene pool can result in inbreeding depression in a breed. A popular and numerous breed with a small gene pool has a low 'effective population size', regardless of the numerical size of the breed's population. A popular breed with a small effective population size can be compared to an overinflated balloon.

Inbreeding depression can compromise a cat's immune system and make it less able to resist disease. A group of genes called the Major Histocompatibility Complex, or MHC plays an important role in the immune system. The way in which the genes in the MHC are inherited means that it is particularly vulnerable to inbreeding depression and a loss of genetic diversity in the MHC can impact on the health of the cat.

Inbreeding depression can manifest in different ways depending on the particular make-up of the gene pool in question. Few cases of inbreeding depression will manifest all of the signs. Although these are problems which can occur in any random-bred cat, a combination of some of these signs could well indicate a problem with inbreeding depression. A Russian breeder who is worried about inbreeding levels in their lines should consider introducing Russian cats from different lines or outcrossing to approved breeds.

Signs of inbreeding depression include slow growth rate, small adult body size, small litter size, reduced fertility, increased kitten mortality, increased prevalence of allergies, reduced ability to fight infections, physical asymmetries, especially facial, an increase in congenital abnormalities, increased prevalence of cancers, increased incidence of genetic disease, and reduced life expectancy.

## Outcrossing

Outcrossing to Domestic Shorthairs is permitted within certain limitations (see registration policy). Cats should be chosen for their closeness to Russian Blue type and general good health. No cat of known or reasonably suspected pedigree parentage should be used.

Few cases of type B blood have been detected in the Russian, so no further cats of type B blood or which are carriers of the gene for type B should be introduced.

Russians may be used as outcrosses for other breeds, including Cornish Rex, Sphynx and Nebelungs. All offspring from such matings are registered in accordance with the registration policy of the other breed and cannot be registered as Russians.

Consideration should be given to which other DNA tests (refer to registration Policy) would be appropriate before the use of any cat for outcrossing in Russian breeding.

## Imported Cats

Although imported cats add to the gene pool it must be remembered that the Standard for Russian cats varies throughout the world. Breeders should only import cats for breeding of good UK Russian type that conform to the requirements of the Russian Registration Policy, and consider the use of appropriate DNA tests (refer to Registration Policy) Breeders should not use imported cats excessively, especially at first, as this could introduce something detrimental to the breed which could be difficult to eradicate.

## Genetic Defects and Anomalies

The problem of the genetic anomaly is something of which all breeders should be aware – this is not to suggest that such anomalies are common but the cat must be expected to have its quota of defects just as are found in other animals. The GCCF Standard List of Withholding Faults for all breeds lists all of the major faults commonly seen in cats and breeders and exhibitors of Russian cats should ensure that they are familiar with this list.

The golden rule is that health is paramount and must be constantly and consistently monitored; any evidence of weakness or the emergence of lack of vigour must be dealt with immediately through modification of the breeding system. No cat with evidence of health problems or lack of vigour should be used for breeding.

In order to maintain health queens should not be over bred and should be given ample time to recover from the stress of pregnancy and lactation, especially after a large litter.

Although a number of serious defects have manifested in other breeds, to date there has been little evidence of any major genetic problems associated with Russian cats. A small number of cases of luxating patella have been reported in Russian cats. HCM is not generally associated with Russians though it may be present in some European lines. Flat-chested kittens are very rare in Russian litters but have been produced on occasion.

Umbilical hernias are known to occur in Russian kittens some of which have required surgical repair. Breeders should ensure that cats with hernias are placed on the non-active register and this includes cats that have hernias repaired.

**Umbilical Hernia -** an umbilical hernia is a condition in which abdominal contents protrude through the abdominal wall at the area of the umbilicus. Small hernias are generally not a problem for the cat. It is recommended to electively repair a larger hernia due to the risk of intestinal loop strangulation.

The exact cause of an umbilical hernia is unknown although there may be a genetic link.

**Feline Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy -** more easily referred to as *HCM*, this disease is a thickening of the heart muscle, and is believed to be largely genetic in origin, with several breeds considered suspect. It is found most often in middle-aged cats, and in males. Although there is no known cure for this condition, with prompt diagnosis and early treatment, cats may live on for years after diagnosis.

**Flat-chest syndrome –** there is good evidence that this is caused by a simple recessive gene, but it may also have a more complex genetic cause; the disorder results in a kitten with a compressed flattened rib-cage that has difficulty in breathing etc. It can be fatal in a number of cases, depending on the degree of severity. No test is available.

**Deafness in white cats –** caused by progressive degeneration of the auditory apparatus of the inner ears and may affect one ear (unilateral) or both (bilateral). The W gene is associated with deafness though this is more likely to be associated with blue-eyed animals but the association is not complete. The BAER test and the OAE test are available to detect deafness. As Russian Whites have green eyes the incidence of deafness is likely to be low.

**Luxating patella –** the patella (kneecap) should lie on the front of the knee joint on the hind leg, moving slightly up and down as the joint bends and straightens. In kittens it may be possible to move the kneecap from the front of the knee joint to the side by the exertion of pressure, but in adults only very slight movement should be possible and it should not be possible to move the patella out of the groove in which it sits, except by force. Any cat exhibiting any degree of spontaneous patellar luxation (i.e. grade 2 or above) should not be bred from as at least some cases appear to be genetic in origin. It is suggested that kittens are checked for spontaneous patellar luxation by a vet at the time of their vaccinations at 9 and 12 weeks, and any showing spontaneous patella luxation are not selected for breeding. It is recommended that cats should also be checked pre-mating or at the time of their first booster, whichever is sooner, as the condition can sometimes develop later.

## EMS codes and breed numbers

The GCCF has recently replaced breed numbers with EMS codes to describe breeds.

| | |
|---|---|
| RUSa (16a) | Russian Blue |
| RUSw 64 (16a 14c) | Russian White (green-eyed) |
| RUSn (16a 15) | Russian Black |
| RUSw 61 (16a 14) | Russian White (blue-eyed) |
| RUSw 63 (16a 14b) | Russian White (odd-eyed blue or green). |

## Evaluating Kittens

Breeders should make rational decisions on which kittens to retain for future breeding, or allow on the active register, based on a range of different factors. Animal breeding scientists use evaluation systems to calculate Estimated Breeding Values, or EBVs for animals. Cat breeders can use similar methods in a less formal way in order to evaluate kittens and make comparisons which can help to inform decisions.

There is a risk that breeders will make selections based on too limited a range of factors. The following should be taken into consideration;

- Closeness to the standard of points
- Number and severity of faults
- Temperament
- Health
- Development
- Co-efficient of Inbreeding
- Generational Level
- Parental/familial breeding history
- Fit with breeder's breeding goals
- Breeder's intuition

Breeding evaluation score-sheets are available for breeders to use to make assessments of their kittens.

## Mentoring

All new Russian breeders should start under the guidance of a mentor, who is an experienced breeder and has already bred a number of litters of Russian cats. This is especially important for novice breeders with little or no prior experience of cat breeding, but support should also be available to breeders who may have experience of other breeds but are new to the Russian breed. If a new breeder does not have a mentoring relationship with the breeder of their cat a mentor will be identified through one of the clubs represented on the Russian BAC. To assist breeders commercial pedigree software programs are available.

All breeders are strongly recommended to participate in ongoing education and development about cat breeding through participation in appropriate discussion forums, seminars and cat clubs.

## BAC Recommendations

The BAC recommends that breeders re-read this breeding policy, as well as the general GCCF Breeding Policy, the Russian Registration Policy, the Russian Standard of Points at least once a year.

Breeders will be encouraged to take advantage of any relevant official scheme, which may be devised by the BAC to test the soundness of the Russian breed.

Russian breeders are encouraged to work closely with other like-minded breeders to improve the Russian breed whilst maintaining a diverse gene pool.

The BAC would also advise breeders that by importing a Russian from another registry there is a possibility that the pedigree may be the result of a non-GCCF approved outcrossing programme. If you are considering doing this then contact the Russian BAC for advice and guidance.

The BAC further recommends that any breeder wishing to import any Russian onto the GCCF register (either from overseas or from another registry within the UK), obtains a copy of the pedigree and forwards this to the BAC for checking before agreeing to purchase the cat/kitten if they are in any doubt about whether it complies with the current registration policy.

Please note that any cat or kitten found to not conform to the GCCF Russian Registration policy may, together with any registered progeny, be transferred to the GCCF Reference Register with no progression.

Breeders are urged to observe the GCCF Code of Ethics and the recommendations of the GCCF, and the advice of their own veterinary surgeons regarding cat welfare, the importance of neutering, health, inoculations etc.

The BAC recommends that breeders should think carefully before selling any Russian cats on the active register, taking into consideration the purchaser's experience, and that no kitten should be sold on the active register to a breeder new to the breed without ensuring that a mentoring relationship is in place, either with the breeder of the kitten or another suitably experienced breeder.

For further reading on cat genetics and breeding practices breeders are advised to refer to: "Robinson's Genetics for Cat Breeders and Veterinarians" by Vella, Shelton, McGonagle and Stanglein, published by Butterworth & Heinemann.

## Gallery

Gallery of photos showing Russians of different colours demonstrating good type and faults.

***Russian Blues (RUSa; 16a)***


Photo by Robert Fox


Photo by Alan Robinson

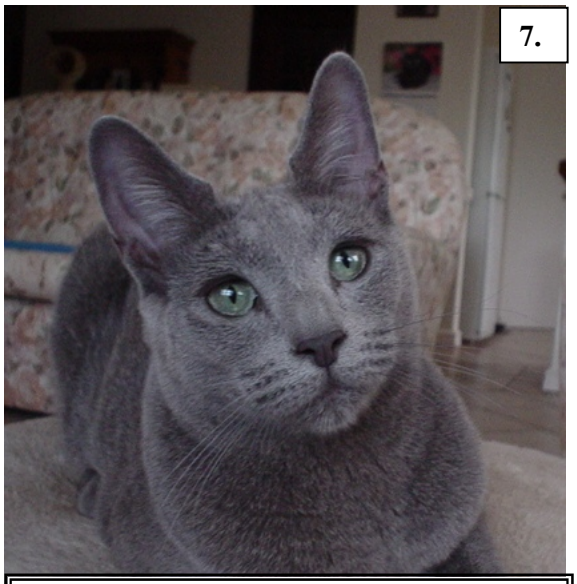
Good examples of the breed.


Photo by Robert Fox



A balanced litter of kittens.


Showing round eyes.




Slightly long and narrow head. Lovely gentle expression & well set ears.


Showing thick coat, excellent eye colour, good wedge & gentle expression. Ears set slightly wide apart.

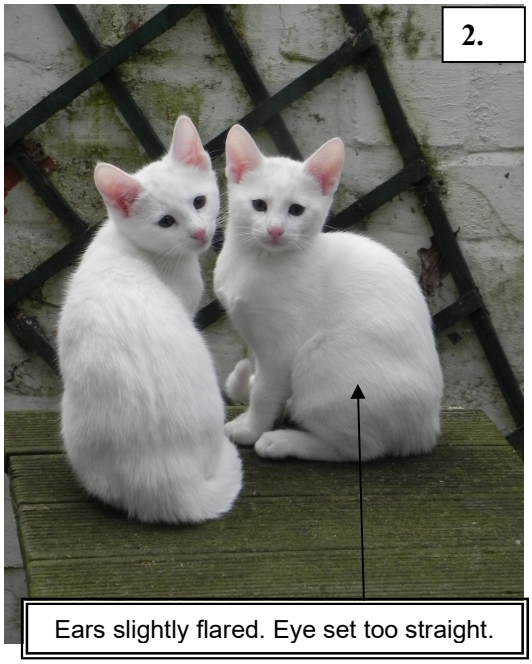

Good ear size but they are set slightly wide apart.

12.


Showing too rounded skull & whisker pinch.

***Russian Whites (RUSw 61; 16a14, RUSw 63; 16a14b and RUSw 64; 16a14c)***


Lovely pure white coat. Nice short wedge and whisker pads. Ear set could be more upright.




Ears slightly flared. Eye set too straight.

**4.**


Odd-eyed white with whisker pinch and colour spots.


Same kitten as in 3. but older showing more balanced head.


**TIP**: Unsure about eye colour?

With flash photography the retina of the blue eye will show red.

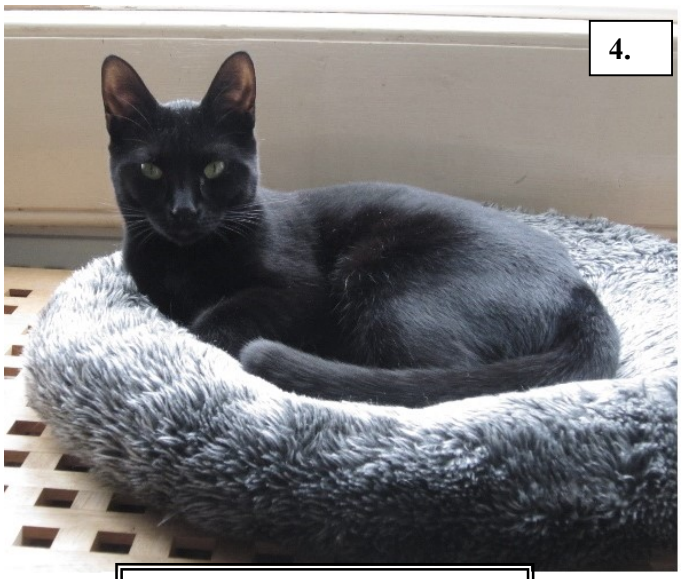

A mixed colour litter of kittens.

***Russian Blacks (RUSn; 16a15)***


Very young kitten illustrating domed head, blue eyes & ears still to develop correct setting.


Older kitten than in 1. showing sheen on coat.


Showing good eye colour.




Showing good ear set.


Showing long legs with neat, oval paws.

## *Appendix 1*

### GCCF REGISTRATION POLICY FOR RUSSIAN CATS (approved June 2023)

All cats must be microchipped before they are DNA or BAER/OAE tested and the microchip number recorded on the appropriate certificate.

### APPROVED OUTCROSSES

Domestic Shorthair (green-eyed Blue or Black Self, only). The application for registration of a kitten or entire adult where one parent is a domestic shorthair should be accompanied by a DNA test certificate(s) showing that the kitten or entire adult is not a carrier of colourpoint, longhair, chocolate, cinnamon, PKD, PK-Def and PRA-CEP290 and that the cat is blood type A, not carrying B. It is not expected that the domestic shorthair parent will be GCCF registered.

### IMPORTS FROM OTHER REGISTRATION BODIES

Before an entire Russian Blue, Russian White or Russian Black cat imported from any other registering body may be registered with GCCF the cat must have a DNA certificate(s) showing that the cat is not a carrier of colourpoint, longhair, chocolate, cinnamon, PKD, PK-Def and PRA-CEP290 and that the cat is blood type A, not carrying B. This certification must be lodged with the GCCF at time of registration.

Note: The taking of the swabs for DNA testing must be carried out and verified by a veterinary surgeon and this verification, along with the certificate of testing must be lodged with the GCCF at the time of registration. The DNA testing will not apply to any neutered cat. However a veterinary certificate of proof of neutering stating the cat's microchip number must be supplied at the time of registration.

### FULL REGISTER

Russian Blues, Russian Whites and Russian Blacks with championship recognition which have in their pedigrees within five preceding generations only Russian Blues (RUS a), Russian Whites (RUS w 64) or Russian Blacks (RUS n).

### SUPPLEMENTARY REGISTER

Russian Blues, Russian Whites and Russian Blacks with championship recognition which have in their pedigrees within five preceding generations only Russian Blues (RUS a), Russian Whites (RUS w 64) , Russian Blacks RUS n , Russian-type cats or approved Domestic Shorthair (as above). In addition the unknown ancestors of approved Domestic Shorthairs may appear in the fifth generation.

Russian Blues, Russian Whites and Russian Blacks on the Supplementary Register can be shown as Russians and used for breeding.

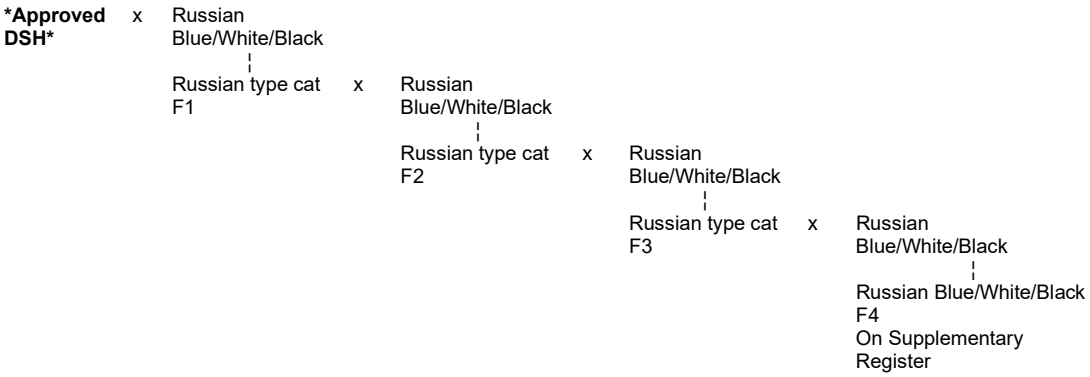
## REFERENCE REGISTER

Offspring of approved Domestic Shorthairs mated to Russian Blues, Russian Whites or Russian Blacks shall be registered on the Reference Register as Russian Type as long as the request for registration is accompanied by a DNA test certificate(s) showing that the kitten or entire adult is not a carrier of colourpoint, longhair, chocolate, cinnamon, PKD, PK- Def and PRA-CEP290 and that the cat is blood type A, not carrying B.
Russian-type cats mated to Russian Blues, Russian Whites, Russian Blacks or other Russian-type cats shall be registered on the Reference Register as Russian Type. Cats on the Reference Register cannot be shown as Russian but can be used for breeding.

Suitable Russian-Type progeny shall be eligible to progress to the Supplementary Register and be registered as Russians after the required number of generations.

In order for a cat to be registered as a Russian Blue, Russian White or Russian Black a minimum of four generations must have been bred since the initial approved Domestic Shorthair cross as shown in the following examples:

**Example 1** – a single outcross line (illustrating progression)




**Example 2** – multiple outcross lines (shown in pedigree format)

| | *Parents* | *Grandparents* | *Great Grandparents* | *Gr Gr Grandparents* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Russian Blue/White/Black F4 (Supplementary Register) | Russian Blue/White/Black F4 (Supplementary Register) | Russian Blue/White/Black | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | Russian type cat F3 | Russian Blue/White/Black | |
| | | | | |
| | | | Russian type cat F2 | Russian Blue |
| | | | | Russian type F1 |
| | Russian type cat F3 | Russian Blue/White/Black | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | Russian type cat F2 | Russian type cat F3 | Russian type F2 |
| | | | | Russian Blue |
| | | | Russian type cat F1 | ***Approved DSH*** |
| | | | | Russian Blue |

**N.B.** The blank boxes above are filled by full Russian Blue/White/Black ancestors.

1. Blue-eyed Russian Whites (RUS w 61) and odd-eyed (blue or green) Russian Whites (RUS w 63) should be registered on the Reference Register with no progression. Whites of other eye colours shall not be registered.

2. Offspring of Russians or Russian-type cats mated to any cat not listed in this policy as an approved outcross should be registered on the Reference Register as "no recognised breed" with no progression, or as directed by the registration policy of the other breed.

3. All cats of Russian appearance which have in their pedigrees within five generations any breeds other than Russians, Russian-type cats and approved outcrosses listed in this policy should be registered on the Reference Register as "no recognised breed" with no progression.

4. All cats which are overstamped as carries/may carry patterns other than self or pointed, or colours other than blue, white or black will be registered on the Reference Register until cleared by DNA test, whereby if appropriate they can be transferred to the Supplementary Register.

5. Any colourpoint offspring produced by Russian or Russian-type cats should be registered on the Reference Register as XSH a 33 <RUS>, XSH n 33 <RUS> or XSH w 67 <RUS>. Neither these nor their progeny will be recognised or registered as Russian or Russian-type cats, and they are not acceptable in the pedigrees of Russian or Russian-type cats.

6. Any longhaired offspring produced by Russian or Russian-type cats should be registered on the Reference Register as XLH a <RUS>, XLH w 64 <RUS>, XLH w 61 <RUS>, XLH w 63 <RUS>, XLH n <RUS>, XLH a 33 <RUS>, XLH n 33 <RUS> or XLH w 67 <RUS>. Neither these nor their progeny will be recognised or registered as Russian or Russian-type cats, and they are not acceptable in the pedigrees of Russian or Russian-type cats.

**OVERSTAMPING**

1. Any Russians or Russian-type cats which produce a pointed kitten shall be overstamped "Carries the Siamese gene" and their progeny shall continue to be overstamped "May carry the Siamese gene" until cleared by DNA test.

2. Any Russians or Russian-type cats which produce kittens of colours other than blue white or black, or of patterns other than self or pointed (see above) shall be overstamped "Carries .... " Their white progeny shall continue to be overstamped "May carry …." until cleared by DNA test. Their blue and black progeny shall continue to be overstamped "May carry .....” if a recessive gene is concerned until cleared by DNA test.

3. Any Russians or Russian-type cats which produce longhaired kittens shall be overstamped "Carries longhair" etc and their progeny shall continue to be overstamped "May carry longhair" until cleared by DNA test.

4. Any Russians or Russian-type cats which produce Rex kittens shall be overstamped "May carry Cornish Rex gene " and “May carry Devon Rex gene” and their progeny shall continue to be overstamped "May carry Cornish Rex gene " and “May carry Devon Rex gene” until cleared by DNA test.

5. Any colourpoint, longhaired or Rex offspring produced by Russian or Russian-type cats will be overstamped “NOT FOR RUSSIAN BREEDING”.

6. The Russian BAC strongly advises that cats which have been overstamped “Carries …” or “May carry …” should NOT be mated together as doing so could result in offspring which would not be recognised or registered as Russian or Russian-type cats.

7. It is strongly recommended that any Russian or Russian-type cats intended for breeding which have been overstamped “May carry …” should be DNA tested to determine whether they carry the relevant gene, and this can then be recorded on their pedigree and genetic profile at the GCCF Office.

**NOTE 1**
When kittens with one or both parents registered on the Supplementary Register are, under this Registration Policy, eligible to be registered on the Full Register it is recommended that the person registering these kittens requests such registration and encloses documentary evidence of the generations required. If this is not done the kittens may be registered on the Supplementary Register.

When kittens with one or both parents registered on the Reference Register are, under this Registration Policy, eligible to be registered on the Supplementary Register it is recommended that the person registering these kittens requests such registration and encloses documentary evidence of the five generations required. If this is not done the kittens may be registered on the Reference Register.

**NOTE 2**
For the purposes of this registration policy, Russian-type cats are cats produced in a Russian breeding programme with unknown or approved Domestic Shorthairs appearing in the first, second, third or fourth generations of the pedigrees, (i.e. parent, grandparent, great grandparent or great great grandparent).

**NOTE 3**
Before any progeny may be registered from a Russian White or White of Russian type sire or dam, this cat must have a BAER or OAE certificate of freedom from unilateral or bilateral deafness which is lodged with the GCCF. Russian Whites or Whites of Russian type without a certificate of freedom from deafness will be registered on the non-active register until such time as such a certificate is lodged with the GCCF and an application for transfer to the active register is made.

For further information please contact the Secretary of the Russian Breed Advisory Committee.