



The American Curl

BREED SEMINAR

TICA 2019 BY GRACE RUGA



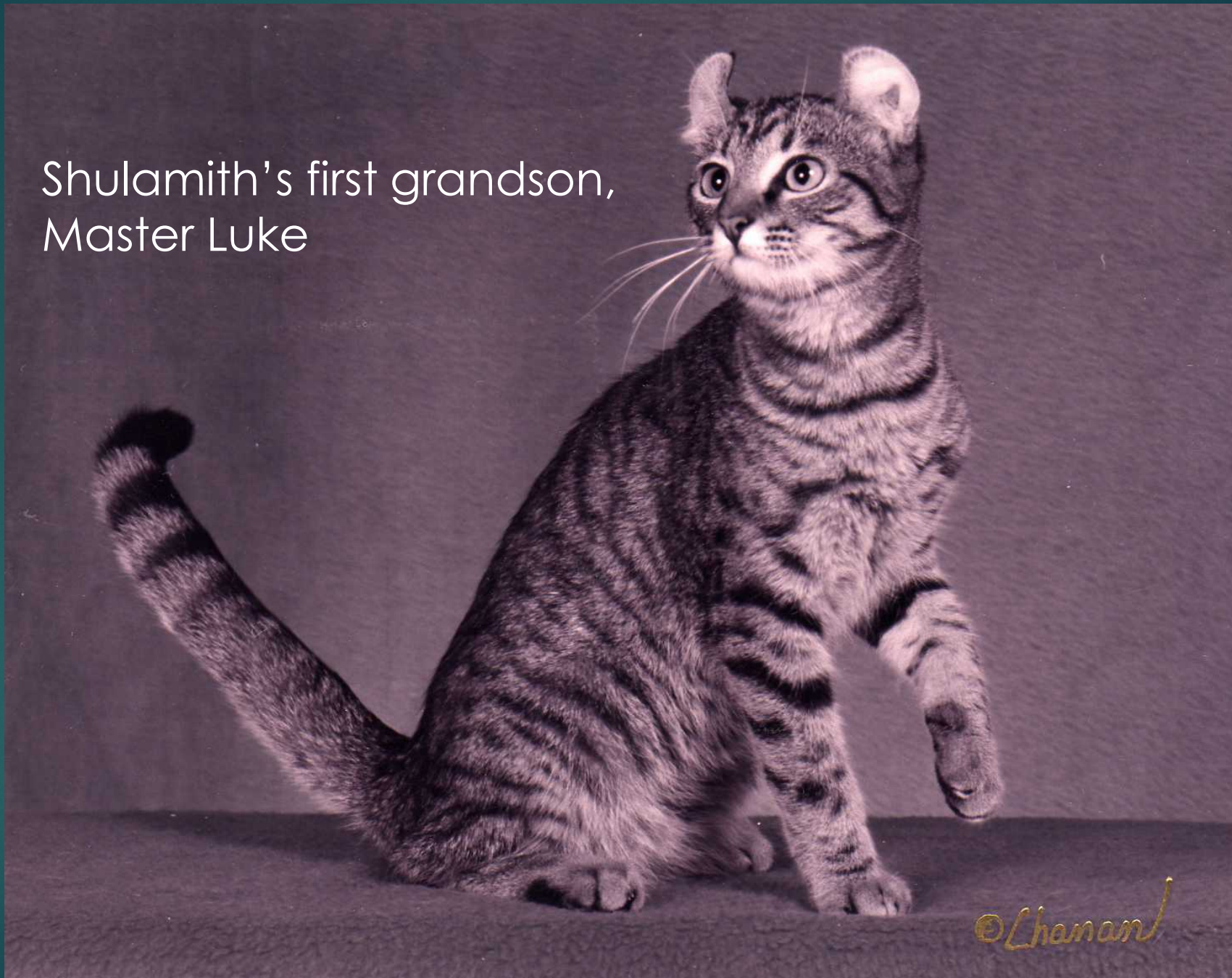
Introduction

- History and origins
- What influenced us as we wrote the American Curl Standard
- Defining the American Curl Core Identity Traits
- Understanding American Curl Ear Types

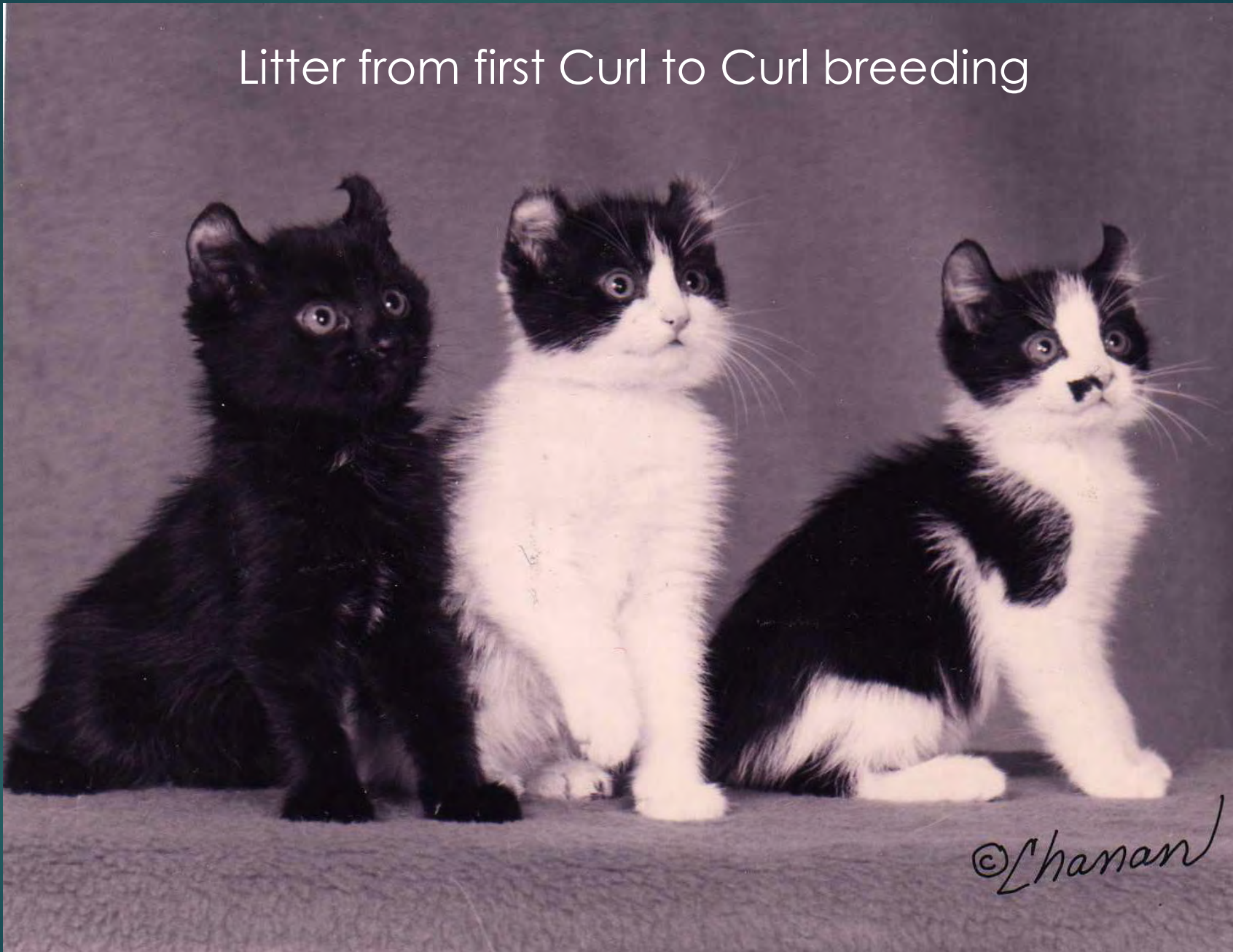


This is what MORNING SICKNESS looks like
with Warm Cat Treatment!!

Shulamith's first grandson,
Master Luke

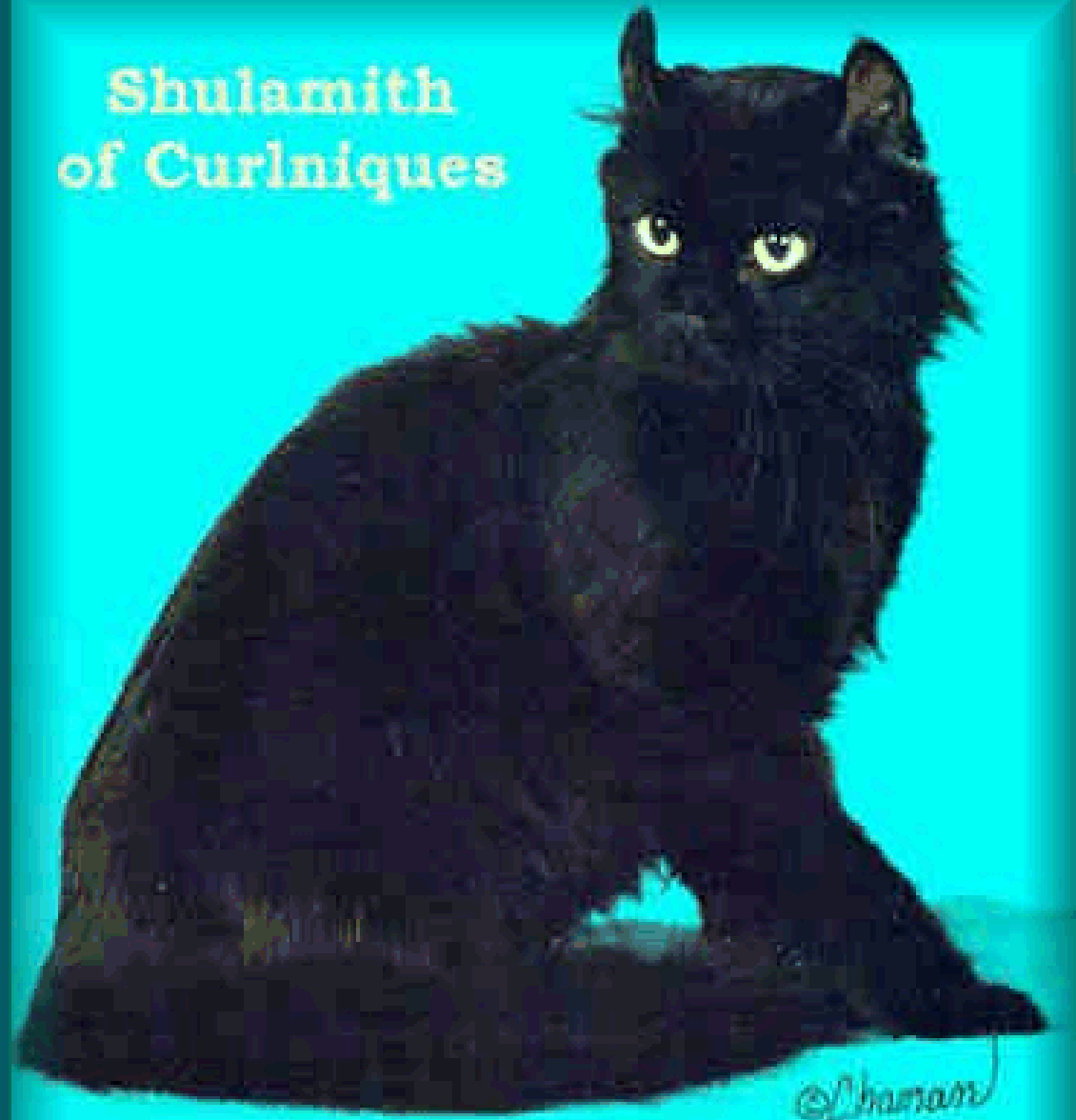


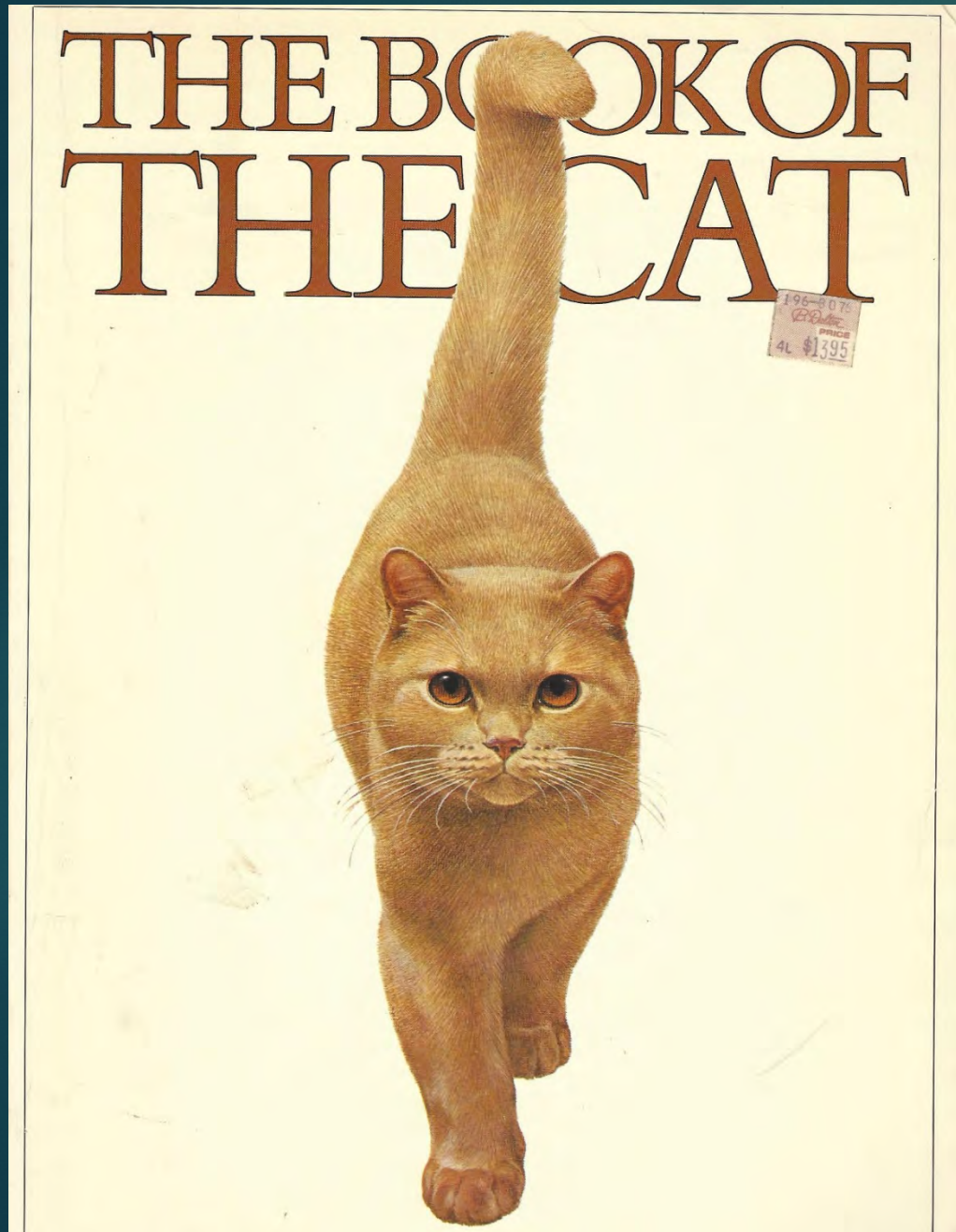
Litter from first Curl to Curl breeding



The American Curl was born!

Shulamith
of Curlniques





To assist us, in writing the Breed Standard for the American Curl, Jean introduced us to a book, called The Book of The Cat. In the early 1980's this volume was considered the most accurate text available, presenting a short biography of each recognized breed with detailed drawings, some photos, a section on coat and color genetics, and basic cat care information.

We were told in order to develop a breed we needed to choose a recognized breed similar in type and structure to the American Curl to use as our “outcross” breed.

At the same time we were to write a Breed Standard for the American Curl describing our structural ideal and the traits that made the American Curl unique from all other breeds.

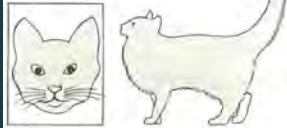


Writing the American Curl Standard

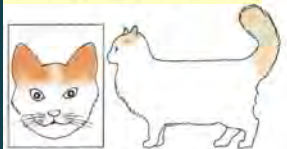
Choosing Terminology to reflect the breed identity and essence

Here are a few of the pages from The Book of The Cat with visuals and/or vocabulary words we borrowed from a few of the breed's descriptions in that volume.

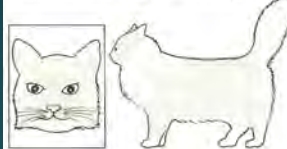
LONG-HAIRED BREEDS



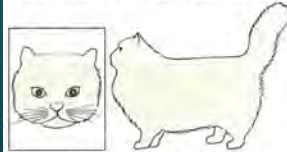
Angora (UK); Turkish Angora (US) Wedged head; body relatively slim. Tail long, bushy. Coat fine, long and silky.



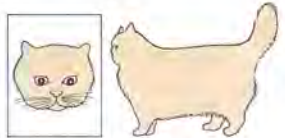
Turkish (Van) Heavier build than Angora; shorter head. White, auburn head and tail markings.



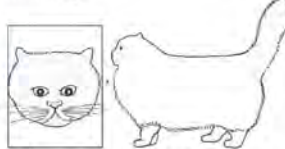
Maine Coon Large, muscular cat. Medium-long head. Tail straight, long, bushy. Coat long, smooth, heavy; hair tufts on cheeks; large ruff. Norwegian Forest Cat is somewhat similar.



Persian (US); Longhair (UK) Round, short head; rounded, small ears. Body and legs short. Hair fluffy and very long. (In US, some colours are in Himalayans.)



Peke-faced Persian As Persian, but face resembles Pekingese dog, with very flat indented nose. Red or red tabby.



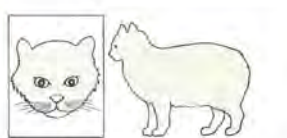
Colourpoint Longhair (UK); Himalayan (US) Persian-type body and coat; Siamese colouring. In US, some self (solid) colours of Persians (eg, chocolate, lilac) classed here or as Kashmir.



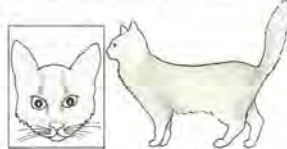
Birman Paws white; otherwise colouring like Himalayan/Colourpoint LH. Body slimmer and head longer. Hair straight, long and silky. Ragdoll may have similar colouring.



Balinese/Javanese Long-haired Siamese/Colourpoint SH. Wedged head; large ears. Slim; long legs. Long silky hair. Coloured points.



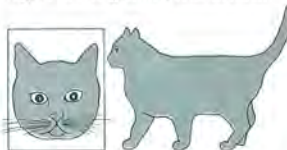
Cymric Long-haired Manx. Round head; full cheeks; rounded ears. Compact body; tailless; long hind legs. Medium-long coat.



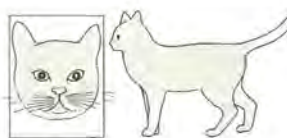
Somali Long-haired Abyssinian. Medium-long body and head. Soft, dense coat. Ticked (agouti) colouring. Tail bushy.



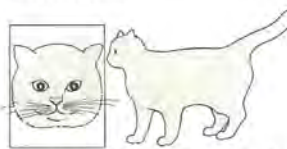
British/European Shorthair Broad, round head; rounded ears. Compact, heavy and muscular body; broad chest; short, strong legs; relatively short, rounded tail.



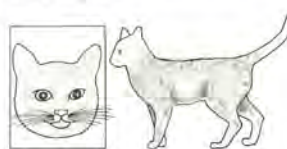
Chartreux Similar to British/European Shorthair, but slightly larger. Short, dense greyish-blue coat with silvery sheen. In Europe, same as blue European Shorthair.



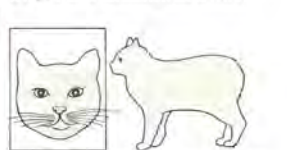
American/Domestic Shorthair Strong and muscular, but not so cobby or massive as British/European Shorthair. Head not so round. Somewhat longer legs and tail. Hard coat.



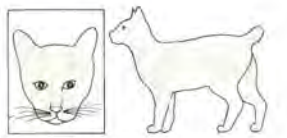
Exotic Shorthair 'Short-haired Persian'. Very round head with small rounded ears. Coat thick and dense, somewhat longer, softer and more plush than in other short-haired breeds.



American Wirehair As American SH, but coat coarse and wiry, like a wire-haired terrier.



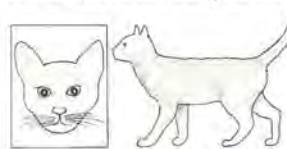
Manx Tail completely or partly absent. Short, rounded body with arched back and deep flanks; long hind legs. Head usually longer than British/European SH.



Japanese Bobtail Tail 5-8 cm (2-3 in) long, with hair fanned out like a rabbit's tail. Slender body with slim legs. Triangular face with high cheek-bones.



Scottish Fold Ears small and folded forwards and downwards, like a cap. Otherwise similar to American or British/European SH.



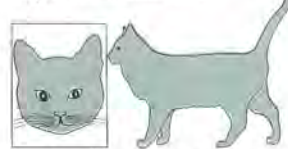
Abyssinian Lithe, muscular body with long head, but neither are so extreme as in Siamese. Long legs. Ticked (agouti) coat. Often some tabby markings on legs and tail. Usually warm brown or reddish. Often ear tufts.



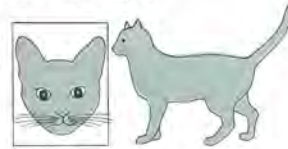
Egyptian Mau Spotted tabby pattern (silver or bronze) with intricate face markings. Medium-size, intermediate-type body.



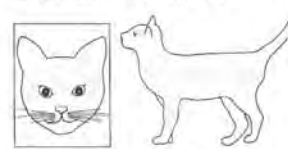
Ocicat Large spotted tabby. Moderately slim body; long legs. Abyssinian-Siamese cross.



Russian Blue Bright bluish-grey springy 'double' coat with silvery sheen. Unique head shape and 'look'. Green eyes.



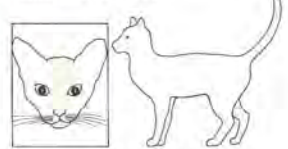
Korat Silvery-blue coat with heavy silver sheen. Somewhat rounded, intermediate, like old-fashioned Siamese. Unique heart-shaped head; very large eyes.



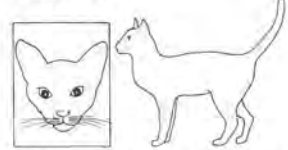
Burmese Solid and muscular; moderately foreign body type but very rounded (especially in US). Round eyes and head. Coat glossy, satin-like. Often brown (sable) but other colours recognized by some associations (which in US may class them as Malaysians).



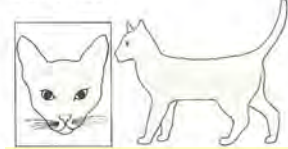
Bombay Dense black coat with sheen like patent leather. Burmese/American SH cross.



Siamese Extremely slim, elegant body with long legs and tail. Head an elongated wedge, often with no nose break at all. Large, pointed ears. Pale body with coloured points. (In US, some point colours are classified as Colorpoint Shorthairs.)



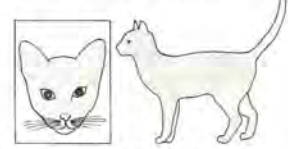
Colorpoint Shorthair Name in some American associations for Siamese with tabby (lynx), tortie or red point patterns/colours or their derivatives.



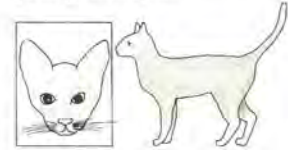
Tonkinese Intermediate in colouring and body type between Siamese and Burmese. Sometimes called light-phase Burmese.



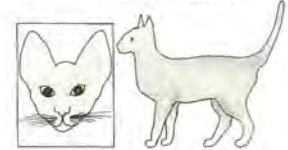
Havana Brown Smooth brown coat. Intermediate foreign body type with unique muzzle shape. So-called Havana of UK is really brown Oriental Shorthair.



Oriental/Foreign Shorthair Same body and head shape as Siamese. Coat colours and patterns as found in British/European and American Shorthairs, etc - selfs (solids), tabbies, etc.



Cornish Rex Short, curly but soft coat. Foreign body type but not extreme. Strong hind legs. Sometimes simply called Rex.



Devon Rex Coat similar to Cornish Rex but shorter and slightly harsher. More foreign body type than Cornish, with extreme 'pixie'-like head.

Angoras and Turkish cats

The Angora is one of the most ancient breeds of cats, with its origins rooted in the history of its native Turkey. It is undoubtedly also one of the most beautiful, with its elegant body and long, silky coat. It was probably the first type of long-haired cat to reach Europe, yet until quite recently was completely overtaken both there and in North America by the much more powerfully built Persians.

The original Angoras

Although there have been suggestions that the Angora traces its descent from the manul, or Pallas's cat (*Felis manul*; see p15), most zoologists agree that fundamental differences between the two make this impossible. A more likely explanation is that the gene for long hair (see p43) mutated in – or spread to – a group of cats with the lithe body build known to cat breeders as foreign (see p41). Limited opportunities for breeding outside the group allowed the long-coat characteristic to become fixed, so that a true-breeding long-haired cat with foreign body build evolved.

When, in the 16th century, Angoras from Turkey were taken to France and England they were much admired, yet it was not until the mid-19th century that attempts were made to chronicle the differences between them and other long-coated cats coming from Persia and Russia. An English writer of 1868 described the Angora as 'a beautiful variety with silvery hair of fine texture generally longest on the neck but also on the tail'. But the breed had to compete with the Persians and Russians, and eventually the Persian became the preferred variety. Any resemblance to the Angora was frowned upon by cat fanciers. By the 20th century the breed was virtually unknown outside Turkey.

In their homeland, Angoras were (and still are) seen in many colours, each with its own descriptive name. Among these are *sarman* (red tabby), *teleu* (silver tabby) and *Ankara kedi* (odd-eyed white). Other colours are brown tabby, black, red, tortie and white, and white. The whites are often deaf, as is the case with whites of most other breeds (see p31), but they are great favourites with tourists and there are some cat fanciers who claim that the white Angora is the only variety that is truly the pure native breed. It has been stated that the Ankara Zoo has a breeding programme for the recording and conservation of the pure white Angora, but this is discounted by others.

An interesting aspect of Angora history is that, while Angoras were named after the old city of Angora (now Ankara), there developed a true-

breeding variety within the breed in the area of the great Lake Van. This is now known in Britain as the Turkish cat, though there and in some North American cat associations it is also called the Turkish Van. These cats are red and white (the British show standard describes the red colour as auburn), but with a coat pattern very rare in cats: The red colour is restricted to areas around the ears and on the tail. (This has come to be known as the Van pattern.) In their native region it is not only their beauty for which they are renowned but also reputedly for their habit of swimming in shallow pools and streams.

Angora and Turkish cats today

Although the Angoras of Turkey thrived in their homeland, they were extinct in the Western world until after World War II. But in the 1950s and 1960s, cats from Turkey were taken to North America, Sweden and Britain to form the foundation stock for the pedigree Turkish Angoras of North America and the European continent and Turkish cats of Britain.

The odd-eyed white
Turkish Angora, known in its native country as the *Ankara kedi*, is one of the white varieties considered by some purists to be the only true Angoras. The CFA show standard for the breed states that it should give 'the impression of grace and flowing movement'.



We highlighted terminology from the following breeds:

- Turkish Angora** - “Wedged head; body relatively slim. Tail long and bushy. Coat fine, long and silky
- Somali** – Long-haired Abyssinian. Medium-long body and head. Soft, dense coat...Tail bushy.
- Abyssinian** – Lithe, muscular body with long head, but neither are so extreme as in Siamese. Long legs....
- Havana Brown** – Smooth brown coat. Intermediate foreign body type with unique muzzle shape. So called Havana of UK is really brown Oriental Shorthair.

Foreign



Abyssinian



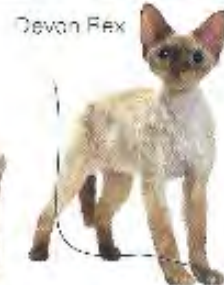
Somali



Japanese Bobtail



American Curl



Devon Rex



Havana



American Curl Shorthair



Egyptian Mau



LaPerm

Semi-Foreign



Japanese Bobtail Longhair



Russian Blue



Nebelung



Turkish Angora



Munchkin Longhair



Ocicat



Sphynx



Munchkin



Tonkinese



Snowshoe

Foreign

Semi-Foreign



American Curl profile: nose, straight, slight rise from bottom eyes to brow, gentle curve to top of head flowing into neck, without a break.



All vocabulary was taken from breeds in the foreign or semi-foreign categories.



© Chaman
1985



© Chanam
1985

First domestic outcross for American Curls




Recognizing we already had a style of our own in evidence, with the encouragement of the geneticists, we decided to do what no other breed had done, and declare “domestics” as our only allowable outcross.

Even though, The Book of The Cat, had become our primary resource for chosen terminology in writing the American Curl Standard, the first functional American Curl Breed Standard was written in TICA, with guiding counsel from:

Gloria Stephens, Judging Administrator at the time (author of Legacy of The Cat), who patiently assisted me in writing the original definitions for American Curl Terminology in 1987.

Dr. Solveig Pflueger, Genetics Committee, actually provided our eye shape description. She told us to go home look at all our cats' eyes, crack a walnut, trace the shape, compare. We did. It was exactly the one word term we needed.

Carol Brown, another TICA judge, who wrote the book "How to Build a Cat", was also very influential. Her mantra was, "Build your barn before you paint it!" Always focusing on structure, she was one of several who strongly advised putting all undesired traits, particularly undesirable ear types, into Penalty or Disqualify.



These leaders explained, for new breeds, this helps build uniformity more quickly, because, breeders will be less likely to breed traits that will not provide them positive attention in the show hall. It provides judges a point of reference for how serious a young breed takes its ideals. This creates boundaries, and is a protection for every breed's genetics and identity.

Some say a breed should not be too 'restrictive', or it won't ever get finales. Another way to say 'restrictive' is 'selective'. Selective creates clearly recognizable breed uniformity. Isn't that the purpose of a Breed Standard? It becomes the goal. And achieving the goal, is the journey.

These early TICA pioneers helped us learn how to use as few words as possible to get an accurate description in the Breed Standard; to provide vocabulary that the judge was able to 'see' on the dimensional cat on the table.

The definitions of specific terms, would be listed in the Glossary of Terms, with longer more detailed explanations.

For example, they advised us to NOT use the word 'medium' in the American Curl/American Curl Longhair Standards, because 'medium' has no definable definition, and is a word applied loosely in the majority of breed standards. We chose to use the word "intermediate" instead. (Thank you Havana's!)

*Notice how the term 'intermediate' stands out from the crowd!

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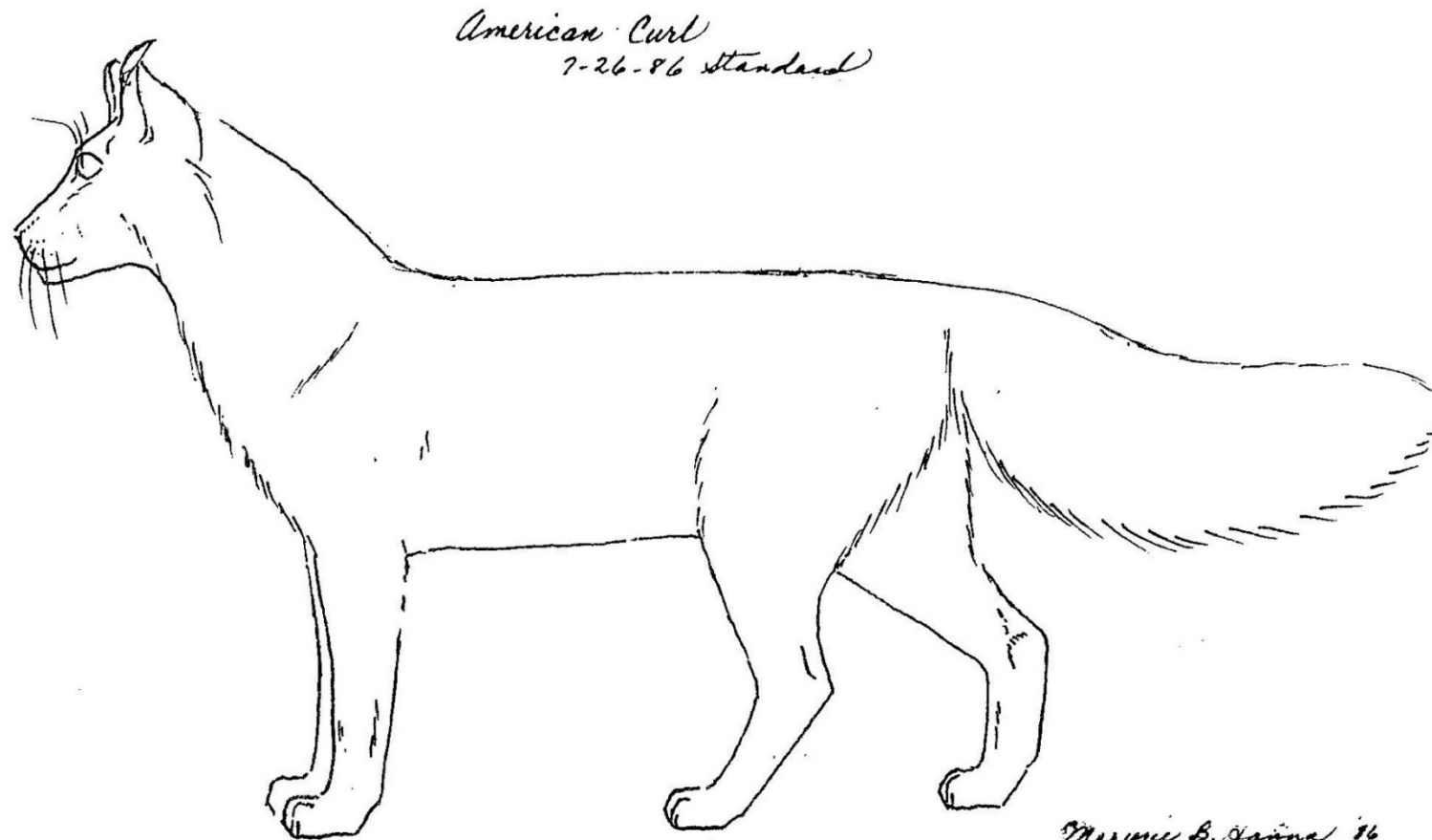
Shulamith of Curlniques



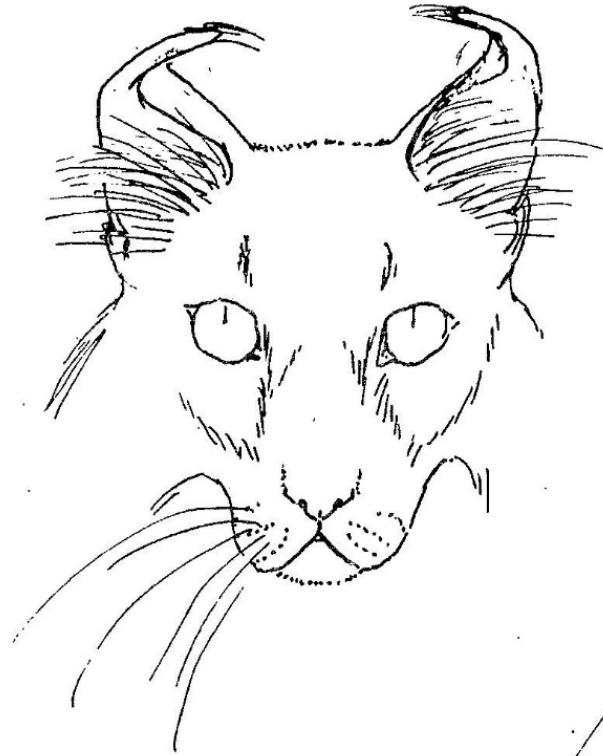
©Chanan



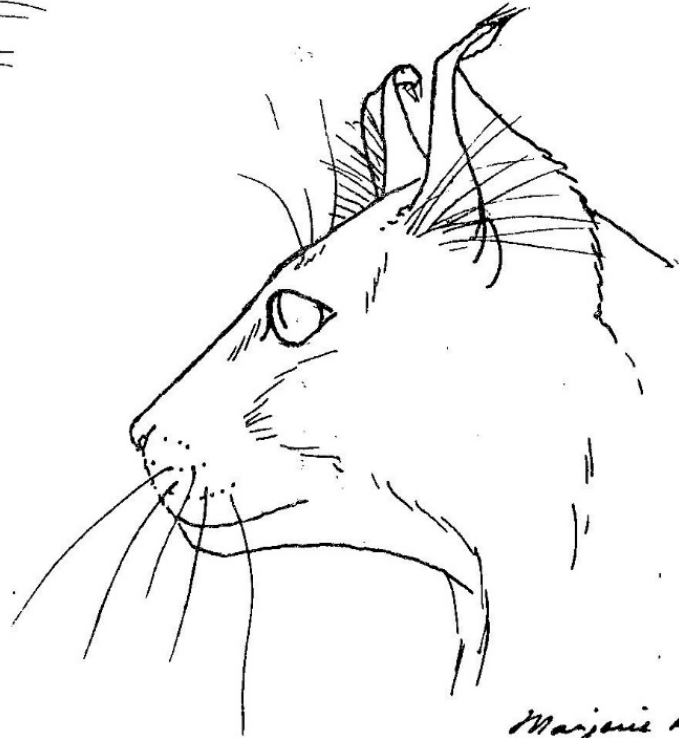
The American Curl and American Curl Longhair, now had a standard that reflected the ideals of their unique identity.



At a TICA Judging School in 1986, is when we saw THESE pictures drawn by an early TICA judge, Marge Hanna, for the first time, American Curls were used for training.



American Curl



Marjorie A. Hanna '86

Marge drew these, using only the words of the TICA American Curl Standard, without ever having seen a Curly ear of any kind. She was verbally told that the Curl was opposite of a Fold.

Kitten present at the 1986 Judging School, some thought
was the model for the drawings by Marge Hanna.
It was not!





American Curl



Majorie B. Hanna '87

1987 adjusted drawings with corrected head shape and muzzle transitions. Profile and chin are incorrect.



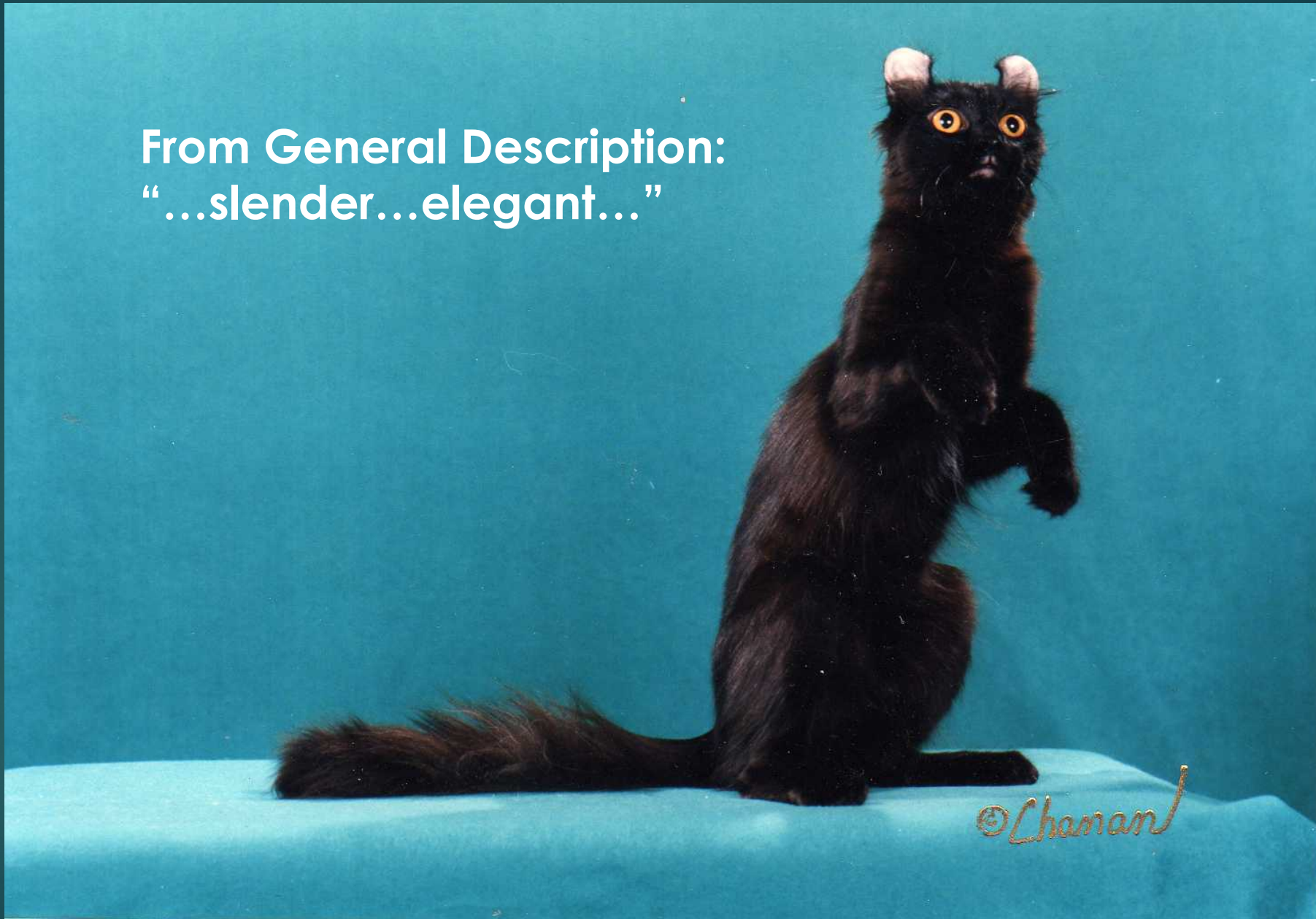
Current AC/ACL:

- Priorities
- Importance of Penalizations
- Clarification of Definitions of Terminology
- Balance & Proportion
- The Ears
- Questions

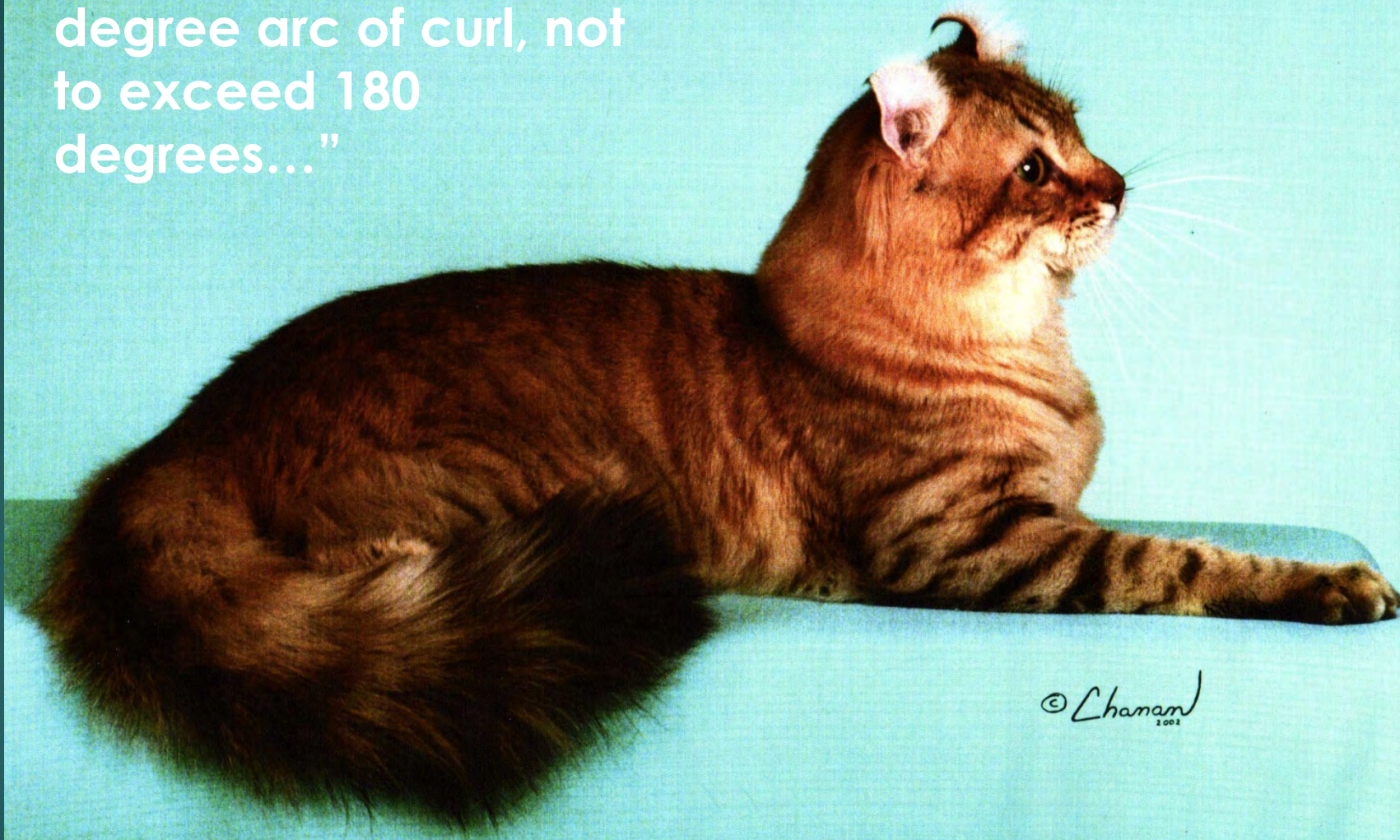
CORE IDENTITY words and phrases for the American Curl:

- **Note: Standard written for the female**
- **General Description:**
- "...elegant, well balanced, moderately muscled, slender..."
- **EARS:** "CURLED", "LARGE", 90 DEGREE ARC OF CURL- NOT TO EXCEED 180 DEGREES"
- **HEAD:** "MODIFIED WEDGE"- "1-1/2 TIMES LONGER THAN WIDE"
- **EYES:** "WALNUT"
- **PROFILE:** "NOSE STRAIGHT...SLIGHT RISE FROM BOTTOM OF EYE TO BROW..."
- **BODY:** "SEMI-FOREIGN" (Longer body), "INTERMEDIATE", "5...TO 10 LBS" WHEN FULLY MATURE.
- **COAT:** (Longhair) "SEMI-LONG", "MINIMAL UNDERCOAT", "SILKY", "TAIL FULL AND PLUMED".
- **COAT:** (Shorthair) "SHORT", "MINIMAL UNDERCOAT", "SILKY".

From General Description:
“...slender...elegant...”



Ears: Curled,
“...large...erect...90
degree arc of curl, not
to exceed 180
degrees...”



GCH and SCH Sandybears Im A Buddy 2

The Penny Test!





Male kitten 5 months old, ear looks good.

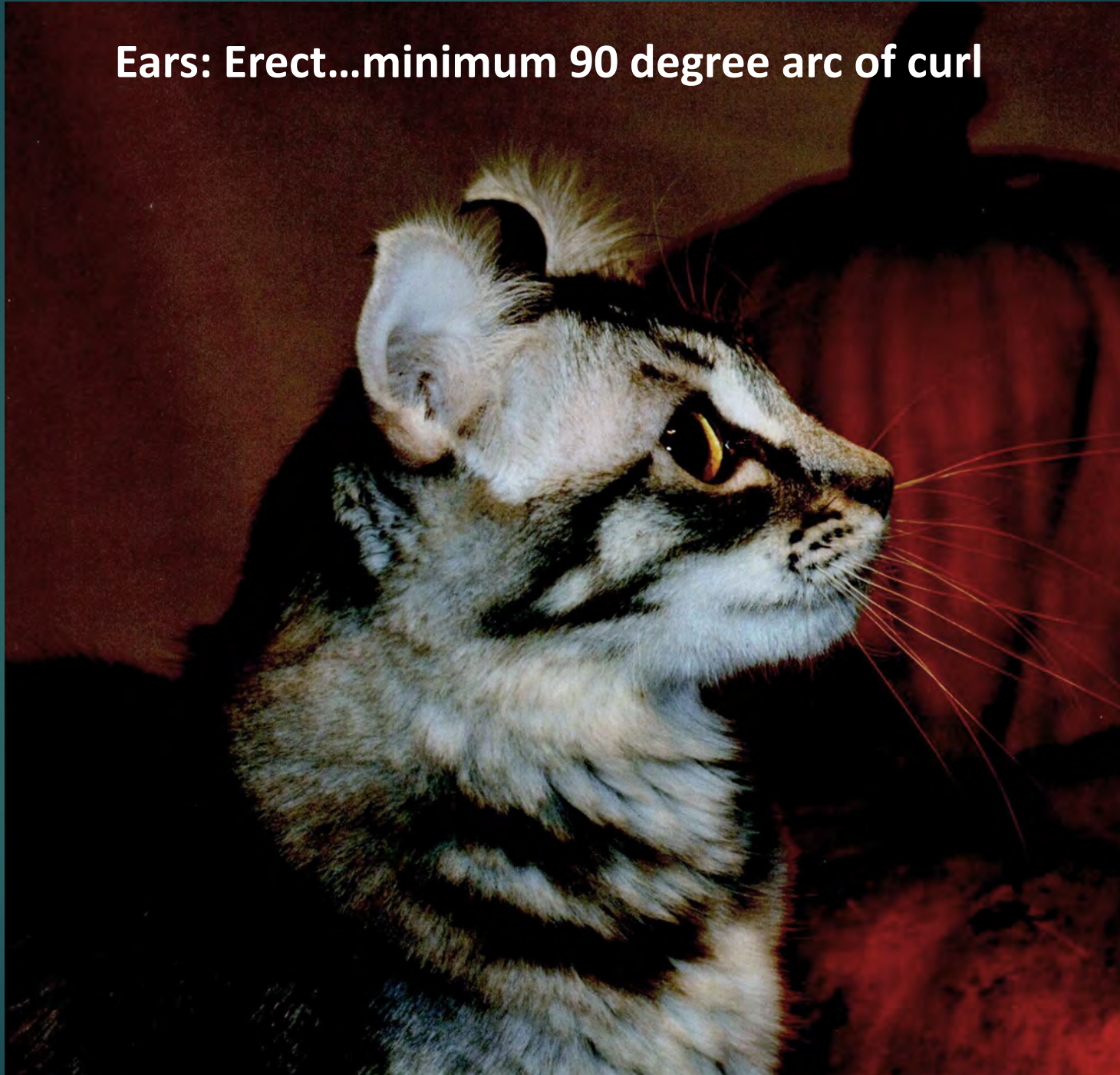
As a mature adult, no longer passed the Penny test

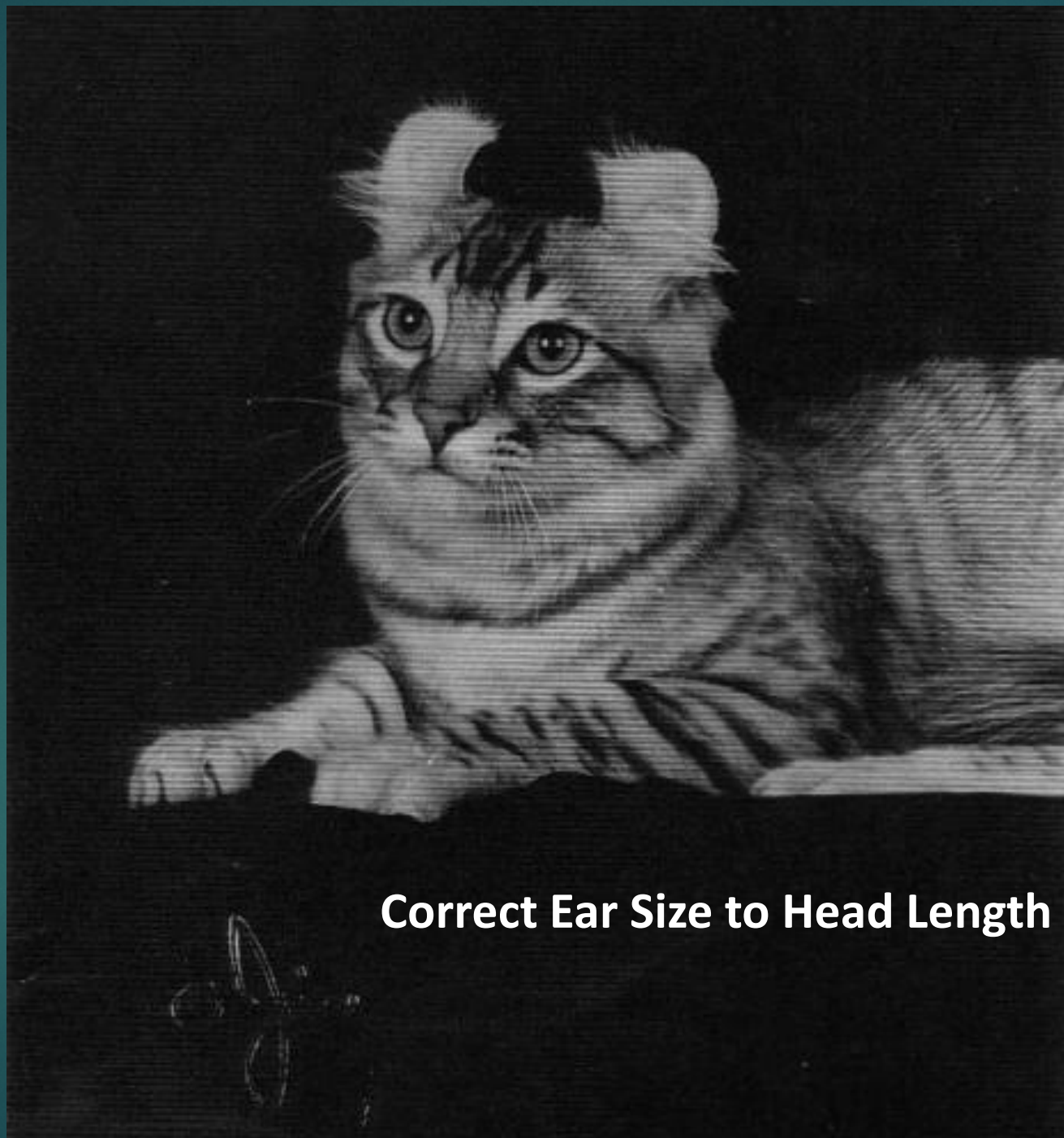


Correct 90 degree Arc of Curl



Ears: Erect...minimum 90 degree arc of curl

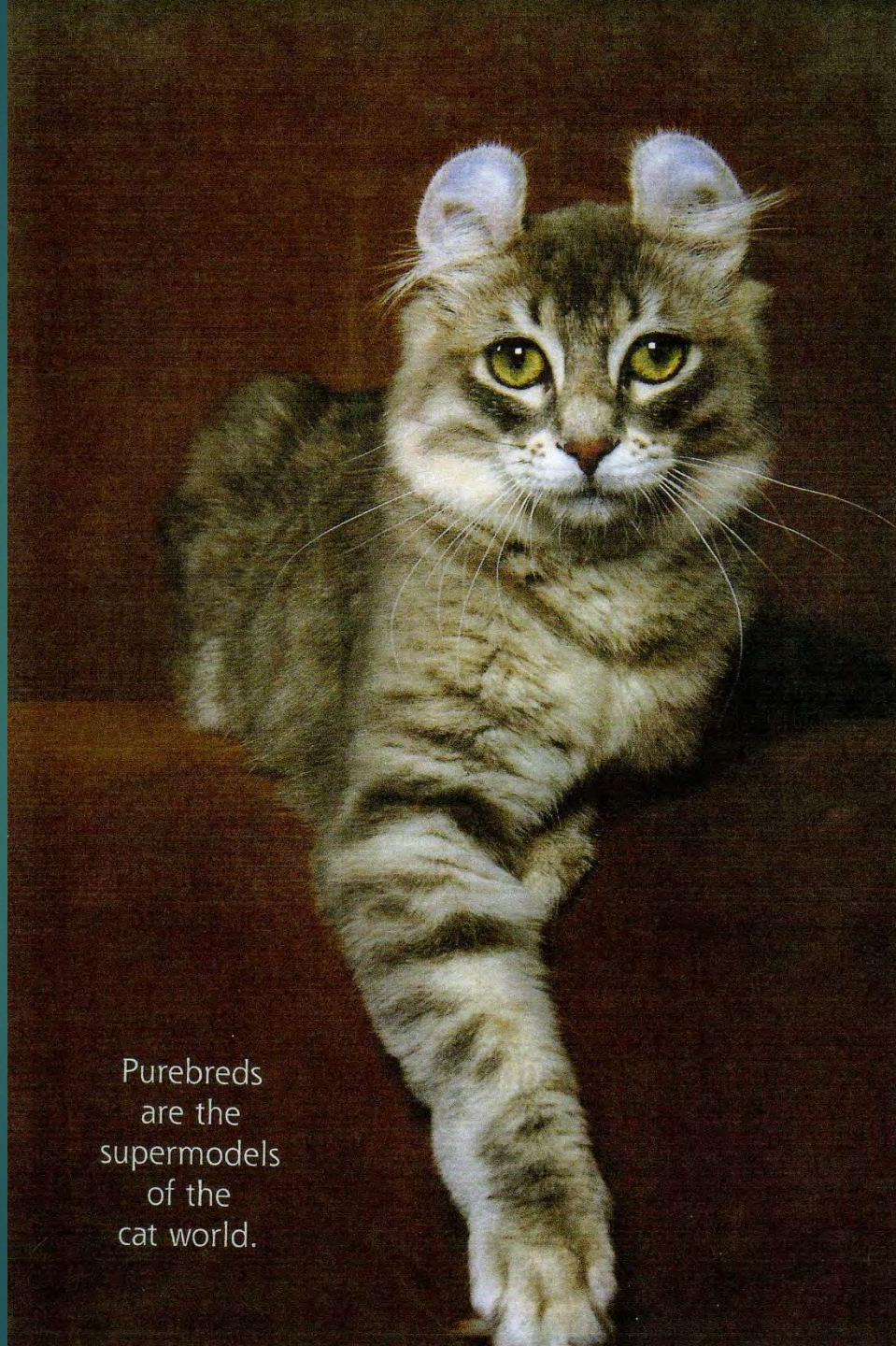




Correct Ear Size to Head Length

**Ear Size: In proportion
to head length**

Purebreds
are the
supermodels
of the
cat world.





Ear size on a 6 month old kitten,
Same cat as an adult.
Correct proportion



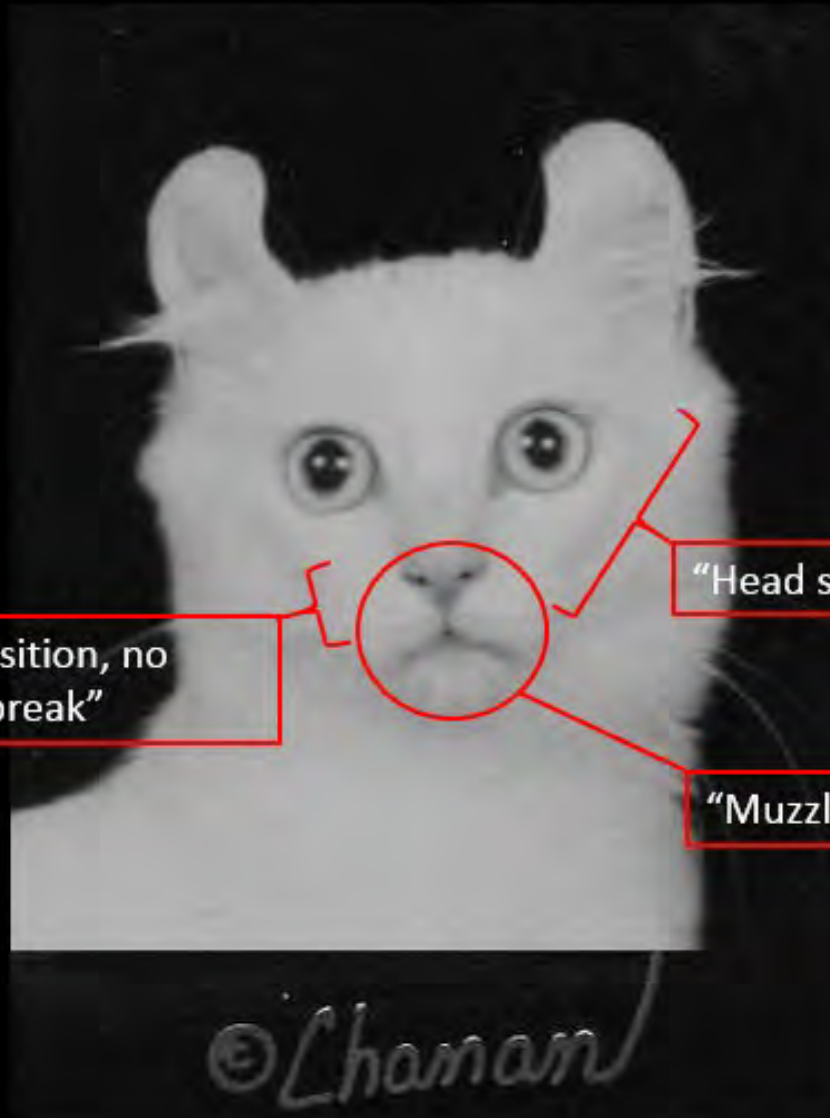
Head:
**“Modified wedge –
1½ times longer than
wide”**



Modified Wedge - Correct

**Equilateral Triangle –
Incorrect**





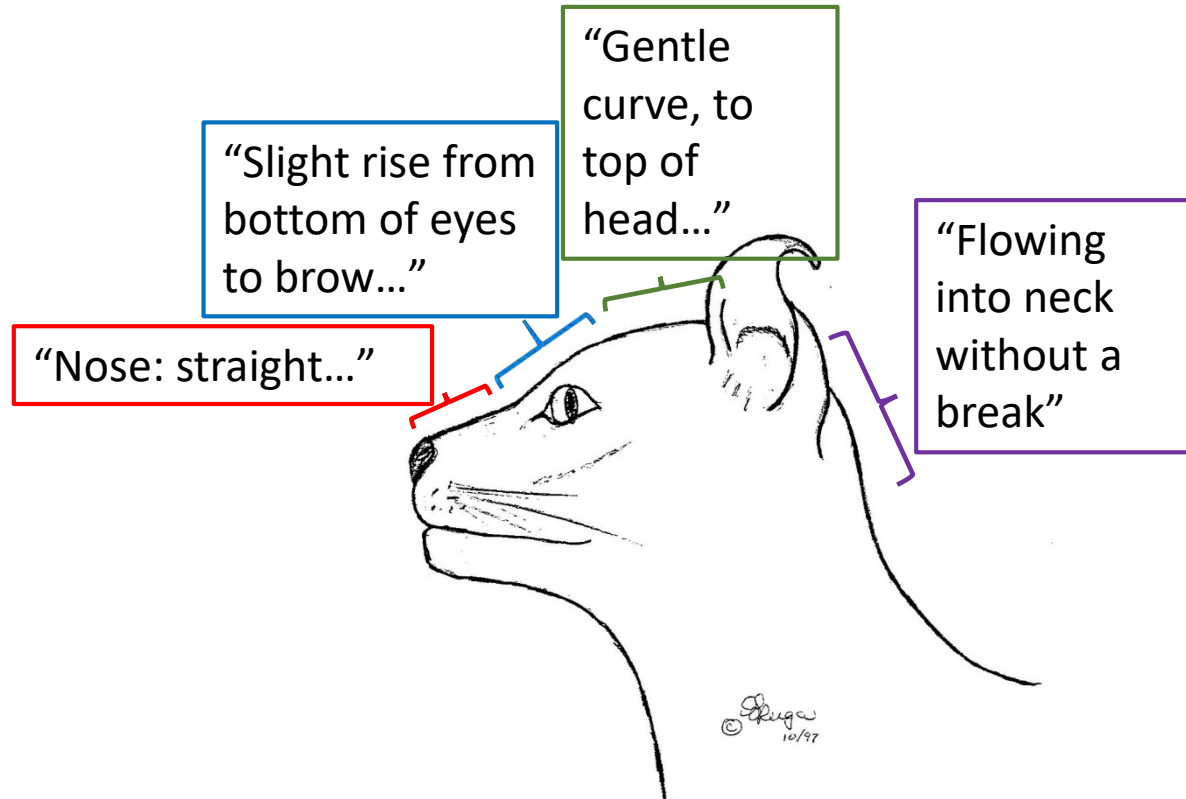
"...gentle transition, no
whisker break"

"Head shape: modified wedge"

"Muzzle: rounded"

Eyes:
"Walnut",
"Moderately
large"





PROFILE



Profile Comparison



Incorrect Profile
Weak Chin

Profile: Nose moderate in length, slight rise from bottom of eyes to forehead, gentle curve to top of head flowing into neck without a break.



Correct Profile

*Longhair gives impression of a 'scoop'; bone is actually two straight lines meeting at the bottom of the eye. From the brow, it should be a gently curving line over the top of the head.

Good Chin

Correct Profile

Incorrect Profile



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Body:

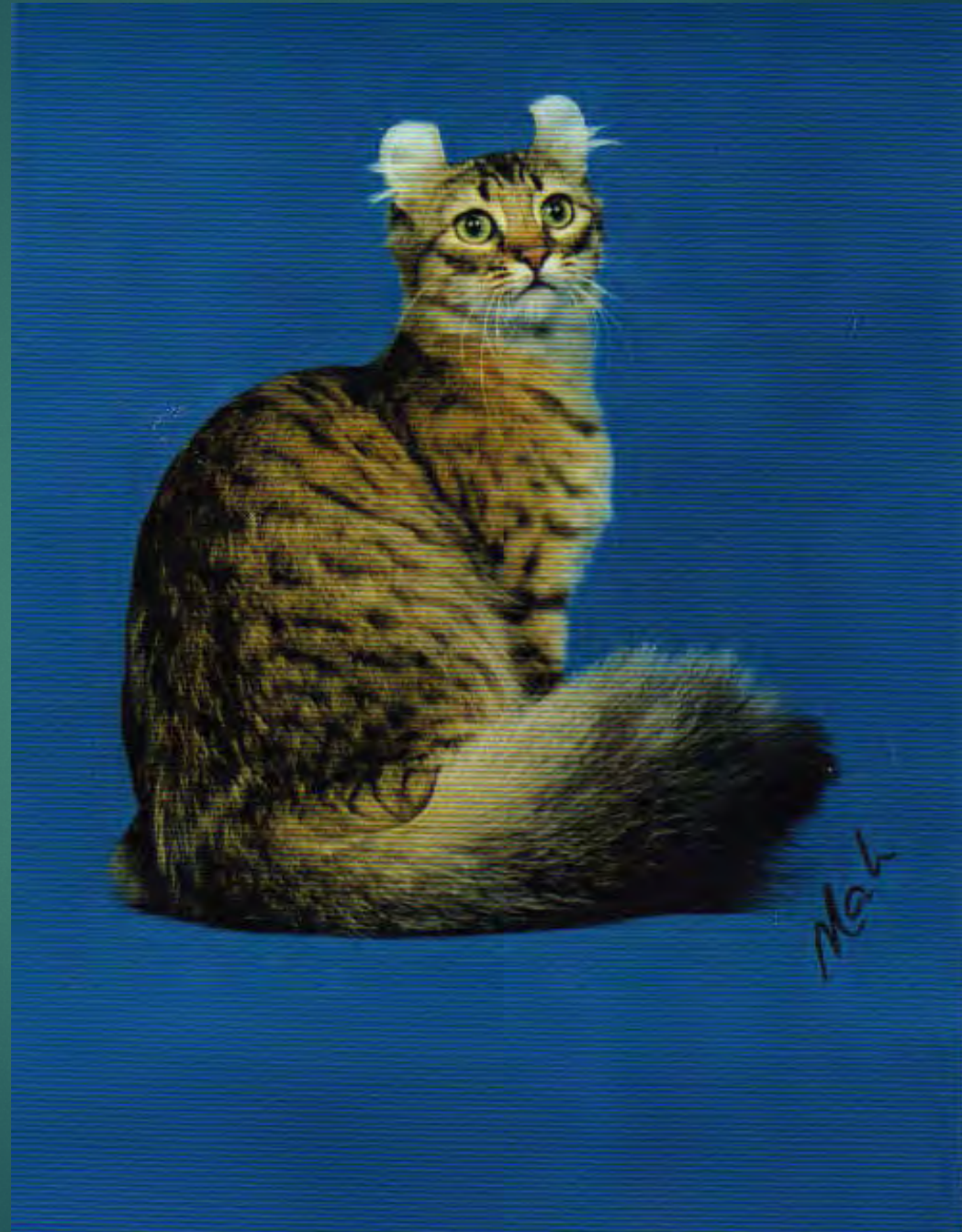
**“Semi-foreign” (1-1/2 x’s height at shoulder), “intermediate”,
“5-10 pounds”**






Body: Rectangle, Length...1-1/2 times height at shoulder.

Coat – Longhair:
“semi-long”,
”minimal undercoat”,
“silky”, “Tail full and
plumed”



Coat – Shorthair:
“short”,
“minimal undercoat”,
“silky”





BALANCE (ACL): Proportionate in all physical aspects with a graceful, slender appearance. The combination of the long body, legs and tail, with neck, head and ears, should look like they fit together and give an impression of gentle flowing motion.

Correct Balance and Proportion, semi-foreign,
slender, elegant, modified wedge head,

Walnut eyes

Flaw: Ears have
Horizontal Crimp





Head length, Body length, Tail equals body, Semi-Long coat

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The Ears!

- ▶ Appropriate, specific, handling of the ears is essential to the evaluation of every American Curl in competition.
- ▶ Assessing the ears
- ▶ Correct curvature vs. incorrect curvature
- ▶ Size
- ▶ Cartilage texture
- ▶ Cartilage thickness
- ▶ Cartilage flexibility

How to appropriately handle AC/ACL ears for evaluation



Ears are 20 points

Fifty percent of the points on the head are the ears.

This requires accurate evaluation. This is done by letting the ear slip between the thumb and fore finger, without using pressure, from the base of the ear to the tip. All American Curls should be accustomed to this procedure. Correct AC/ACL ears are hardly thicker than non-curled ears. AC/ACL ears feel very similar to human ears; firm, but, flexible. This simple action will confirm, “firm cartilage from ear base to one third of height...smooth tips, rounded and flexible. Wide at base and open.”

How to appropriately handle AC/ACL ears for evaluation



PROPER EVALUATION

To correctly identify a number of Penalty and Disqualify Traits listed in the American Curl Standard, appropriate touching is required. This is done by letting the ear slip between the thumb and forefinger without using pressure, from the base to the tip. All American Curls should be accustomed to this procedure.

Photo to right:
Checking for Penalized Traits – Vertical Crimp, Horizontal Crimp, “depressions or ripples in the cartilage,” “abrupt changes of direction” (any cartilage that isn’t smooth).



Photo to left:
Checking for Disqualifying Traits – “Lack of firm cartilage in base of ear” Severely mismatched ears, Ear tips that are not flexible, Ears in which the lower portion of the ear is abnormally flattened, has compressed ridges of cartilage, does not have a normal visible ear cavity.



EAR PLACEMENT:

“....NOTE: When Curls are alert with ears swiveled toward front, lines following curve of ear through tips should point to center of base of skull.”

INCORRECT EAR SET:

Because the ear placement on the head is not correctly facing slightly outward, the “tips” (or any other part of the ear) cannot create a Vee with the lines meeting at the base of the skull.

PROPER EVALUATION:

This photo displays proper method of handling the ears. Without using pressure, this check is to confirm there are no listed DQ or Penalize traits. Most Horizontal Crimps must be identified in this way, as well as corrugated cartilage. DQ Trait of “Thick cartilage” must be identified in this way.



Checking for Mismatched Ears

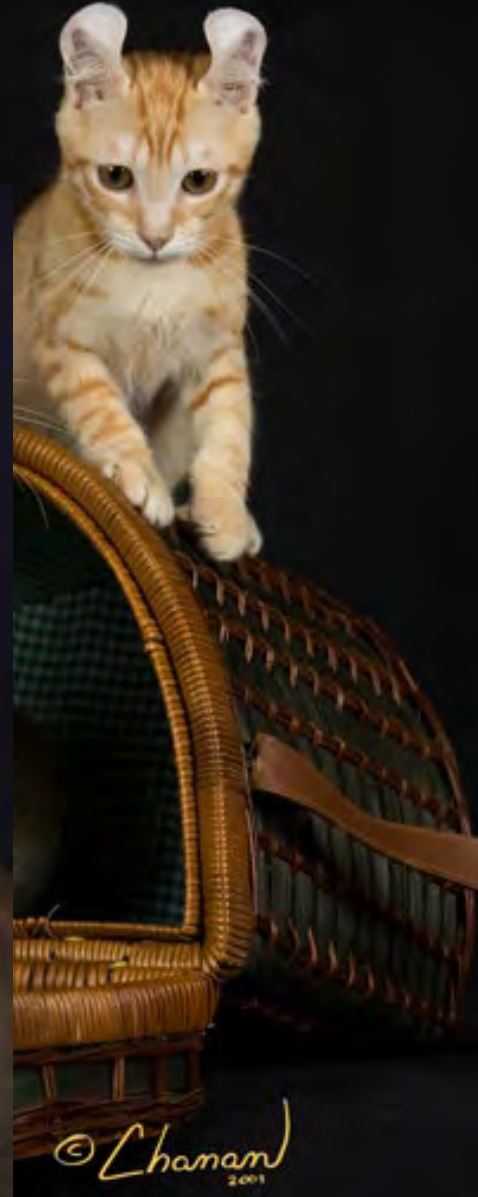


PENALIZE

“Ears...Vertical Crimps”

A Vertical Crimp is seen when the outer edge of the ear (near the jaw) appears to have been folded forward, as if trying to close the ear canal opening. This gives a stronger vertical line of cartilage, sometimes interfering with the correct curvature of the ear. This trait is also one that is commonly masked by long hair, but, is blatantly visible on a shorthair cat.

Vertical Crimp





American Curl Longhair: Vertical Crimp

Vertical Crimp

Abrupt Change
of Direction

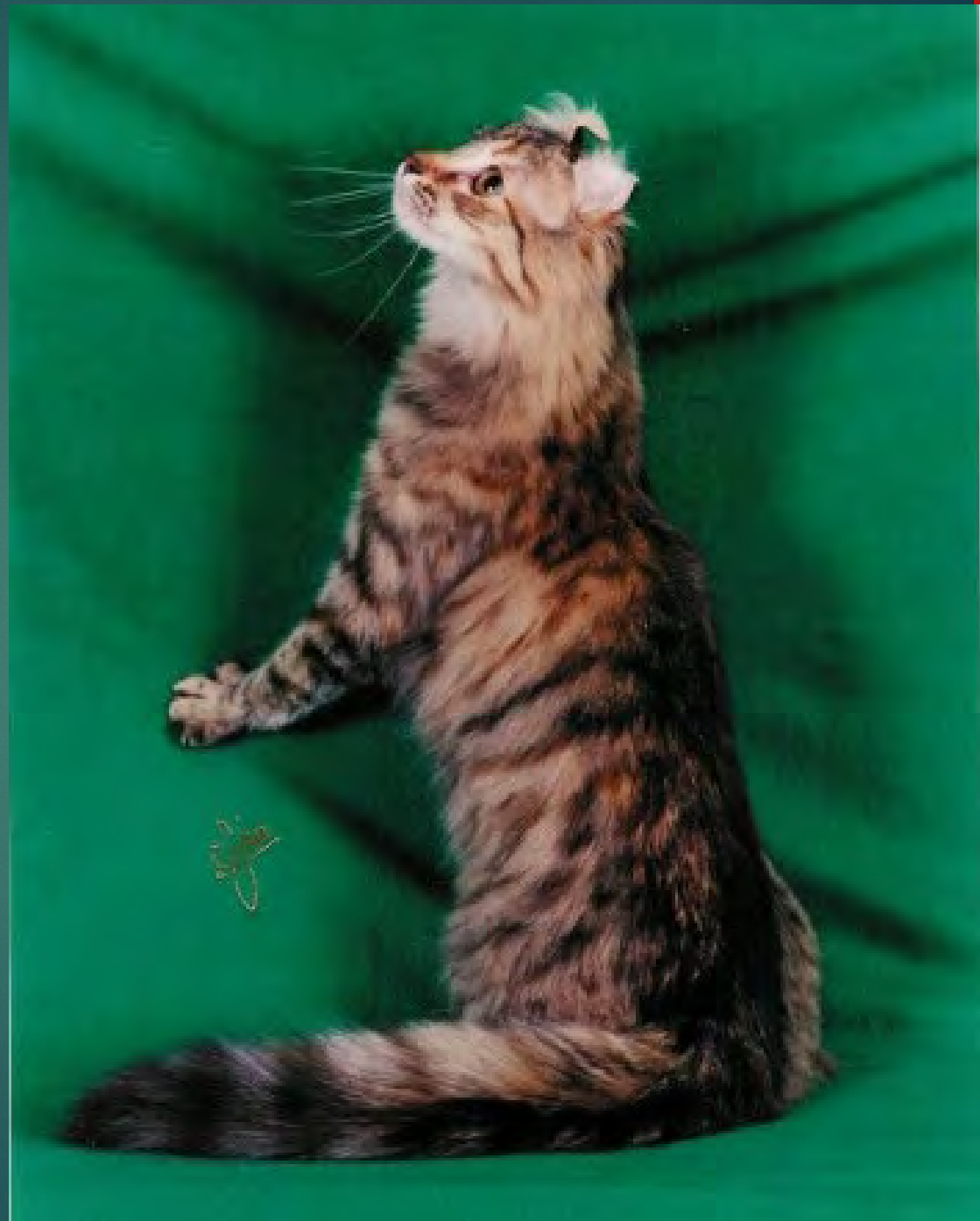


LH01_149.jpg

Abrupt change of direction

Displays a 'Flat Top' - "ABRUPT CHANGE OF DIRECTION".

The ear bends abruptly and then stays 'flat' rather than curving in a smooth arc. This ear type does not conform to the "90 degree ARC OF CURL..." required in the Breed Standard





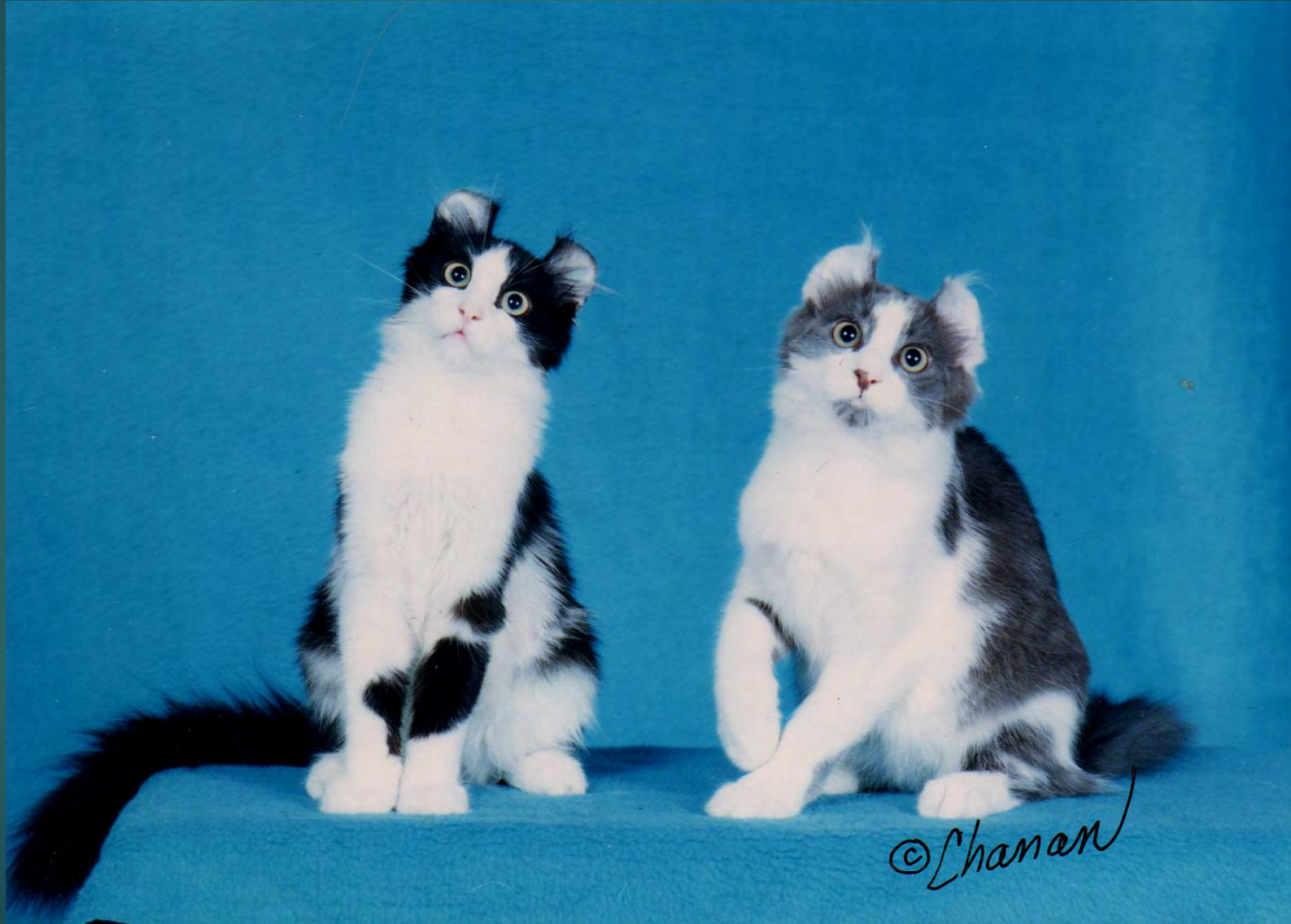
PENALIZE:

“Ears...Horizontal Crimp”

A Horizontal Crimp is located near the base of the ear, usually just below the hairline. As the cartilage comes out of the skull, it forms a heavy horizontal ridge going totally across the width of the ear. This opens the ear, flattening it out, so the natural cupping of the ear base is deformed, giving the ear a very wide, inside-out appearance. The ear begins its curvature from this unpleasant ridge, rather than the normal base of the ear. Often the cartilage is uneven or bumpy.

Severe expressions of Horizontal Crimp can be bent back, so the back of the ear is almost against the head. Sometimes this trait can affect the curvature of the ear. Sometimes the cartilage texture is so rough and thick the opening of the ear canal is affected.

Normal Ear vs. Horizontal Crimp



Severe Horizontal Crimp






Mild Horizontal Crimp

**Can be hidden under
long hair**





It has also been suggested that Horizontal Crimps be moved from Penalize to a Disqualification in the interest of genetic protection for the future of the American Curl.

Some breeders with cats displaying the mild expression of this undesirable ear trait object since longhair usually hides the trait, they have been able to title many cats with this ear type.

Looking back, to the time judges were suddenly instructed to stop handling American Curl ears in their evaluations, we see a pattern that potentially certain breeders did not want this trait identified on their cats. AC/ACL ears must be correctly handled to confirm mild expressions of HORIZONTAL CRIMP.

As many of you know this is a topic being addressed currently. The current AC/ACL Breed standard, lists HORIZONTAL CRIMP under Penalize.

Then, the last item listed under Disqualify, describes a Severe HORIZONTAL CRIMP.

Straight ears – American Curl ears,
if not curled need to be LARGE!



Boning:





American Curl LH

1 year old male

Excellent "semi-foreign" structure

Great "semi-long" coat length with
"minimal undercoat"

Excellent bone size – to maintain mature
weight under 10 pounds.

Straight legs

BONING

With American Curl Body Structure identified as “Semi-Foreign”, “Elegant...slender rather than Massive...” Size: “Intermediate”, Females weigh 5-8 pounds, males weigh 7-10 pounds.”

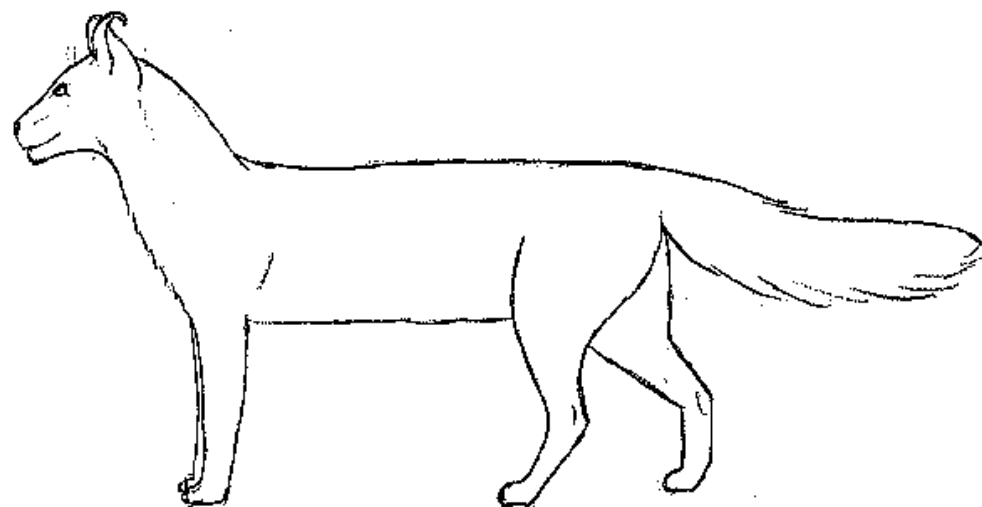
Breeders are using bone measurements at home to insure consistency in the Show hall, to present only the cats that as adults will meet the above criteria and stay within the stated weight guidelines of no adult American Curl being above 10 pounds at maturity.

Right: LH Female 1 yr

Below left: LH Female 1 yr

Below right: LH Male 1 yr





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