

DATE: 03/26/2025
BALLOT NUMBER: BB25-01
SUBJECT: Injunction pursuant to By-Law 122.3
REQUESTED BY: Vicki Jo Harrison

BALLOT: Pursuant to By-Law 122.3 and following the complaint filed by Donna Maddox the Board of Directors enjoins Chris Unangst from exhibiting any cats living in her household pending the determination of the complaint.

***By-Law 122.3 Injunction.** The Board of Directors may enjoin the accused and any member or club involved to cease and desist from any alleged misconduct until a decision is rendered in the matter.*

RATIONALE: There are allegations and documentation that cats living in Unangst household have a transmittable contagious illness that could possibly be transmitted at shows and such action is taken to protect other cats present at the shows.

YES: Cherau, Faccioli, Harrison, Hawksworth-Weitz, Maddox, Patton, Russo, Schiff, Shi, Shon, Tasaki, Toriggia

NO: Armel, Naumenko, van Mullem, Vlach

This Board Ballot has passed.

COMMENTS FOR THE TREND: Armel: I voted No on this ballot for one simple reason. While I find it impossible to accept or condone the fact that any exhibitor could possibly bring an unhealthy cat to a show knowing their feline is sick, and more importantly a TICA judge, it does and has happen. While this needs to be stopped, we already have rules for this which have been used this current season and in the past.

My No vote is also due to the inconsistency of TICA on feline health matters. While we (TICA) in my opinion do honestly care, our stances are not consistent. We refuse to get involved in health issues between breeders, or kitten buyers versus breeders due to the fact stated numerous times that we are simply a registry. We recommend the courts as a solution for complaints filed. We have always taken the stance that we can't get involved in shows as they are a clubs issues not TICA's and clubs have the ability to refuse entries and exhibitors from their show. Now I'm being asked to make a decision about something that we've always refused to become involved in and already have show rules against.

It's time for the Association to make the decision on which way we wish to proceed. Will we become more involved or stay in the background. At that time I would be happy to make that stand for our felines against anyone, as it is currently we don't get involved.

Cherau: The board was presented with a complaint that offered evidence of a violation of show rule 23.6.2.1, which I found compelling enough to warrant this emergency Board Ballot action for the well-being of the cats in question and other cats present at shows.

Harrison: The purpose of this ballot (and my yes vote) is to protect the health and welfare of all the cats entered in TICA shows, including those from the Unangst household, until such time that the complaint filed against Unangst for violating TICA SR 23.6 can be heard by the TICA Board of Directors at the Spring Board Meeting.

Naumenko: I do agree with Kurt that we should have informed concerned clubs to apply Show Rule 23.6.5 whilst waiting for official hearing on this complaint. Whilst there is a risk, in my opinion, it is way less significant than chances of catching airborne viruses in our show halls.

I do have massive issue that anyone, especially TICA judge, can find it acceptable to even think bringing cats to show when there is a known health issue in their household, however I do not believe this is correct way to action on this. This Ballot and this decision now will serve as example and will be general expectation from our members to be applied in all similar cases. Are we ready for this?

I can see progress being made working towards TICA's stance on cat welfare issues, so we do finally take actions listed on our Mission Statement, however... In cases of breeders selling sick/ dying kittens with TICA paperwork, as RD's we are still instructed to send everyone to small claims courts or animal health groups, as we do not interfere or punish - we are just a registry.

Therefore, in this case as "just a registry" we want to use emergency powers to target one exhibitor prior official hearing (even if it is a judge); this is hypocritical, extreme and very inconsistent to our previous actions.

Patton: I believe they were and I believe as a board with that mission statement; we, as the new board need to act to prevent any harm to the cats we have agreed to protect.

Due to the scope of this complaint, I feel the need to act and stop the entry/entries of any cat/cats that were in a contagious household, hold a hearing and decide if further actions are needed.

Per our Mission Statement and rules:

102.1.1 To encourage its members to be caring, responsible owners and breeders of cats who work together to promote the preservation of pedigreed cats and the health and welfare of all domestic cats.

Rule 23.6.2.1, which states that any house or cattery with fungus or any infectious or contagious disease should be addressed accordingly.

Russo: I have voted Yes on this injunction, guided by the principles outlined in rule 23.6.2.1, which states that any house or cattery with fungus or any INFECTIOUS or contagious disease should be addressed accordingly. According to the definition provided by Cornell University of Veterinary Medicine, "FIV is one of the most common and consequential infectious diseases of cats around the world. In infected cats, FIV attacks the immune system, leaving the cat vulnerable to many other infections." Additionally, I believe this decision is in strong alignment with our mission statement, which emphasizes members to be caring, responsible owners and breeders of cats who work together to promote the preservation of pedigreed cats and the health and welfare of all domestic cats.

More importantly, I was guided to my conclusion by the fact that Chris has not voluntarily chosen to refrain from participating, especially given her awareness of the serious implications that FIV can have on her cats' welfare and health. It is disheartening that, despite understanding the potential risks and consequences, a decision was not made proactively to safeguard the well-being of her animals as well as potentially others.

Shon: I am saddened that this situation has escalated to this degree and believe the welfare of all cats must be at the forefront of our decisions at all times. I trust that as a board, we will exercise consistency of action if a similar situation arises in the future no matter who the involved parties may be.

van Mullem: In this Ballot, the Board is being asked by our President to take immediate action on a complaint filed by Regional Director Donna Maddox against Chris Unangst. The urgency of this request is based on the claim that cats in the show hall are at risk of contracting a highly contagious illness from cats

in the Unangst household. However, the complaint specifically refers to Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) – a virus that is not highly contagious and can only be transmitted through deep bite wounds.

Understanding Contagious Feline Diseases

There are several feline illnesses that spread in different ways, including:

- Upper Respiratory Infections, caused by viruses such as the Feline Calicivirus and Feline Herpes. They can also be caused by bacteria as Chlamydia, Mycoplasmas and Bordetella bronchiseptica. These are all predominately spread by nasal secretion and saliva of cats.
- Feline Panleukopenia, a severe and highly contagious disease caused by the cat parvovirus. It causes vomiting, diarrhea, along with blood disorders and neurological signs. Feline Panleukopenia virus is shed in bodily fluids of infected cats, including saliva, urine and feces. It can also be spread via fleas that have bitten an infected cat. The virus can live up for a year in the environment and is often fatal in kittens.
- Feline Corona virus, a very common virus, transmitted via the feces of infected cats and can cause mild diarrhea. In rare cases this virus can mutate into Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP).
- Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV). This virus is transmitted through saliva, blood, urine, feces and milk, leading to cancer, blood disorders, immunodeficiency and can be fatal.
- Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), which weakens the immune system of infected cats making them more susceptible to other diseases. It is spread through a deep bite wound from an infected cat. Therefore, the cats most at risk are un-neutered male cats that are prone to fighting. FIV can also be transmitted to an infected mother's cat's kittens although this is less common.

This ballot suggests that FIV poses an immediate threat to cats in the show hall, which is incorrect. Unlike truly highly contagious diseases such as Upper Respiratory Infections or Feline Panleukopenia, FIV cannot be transmitted through casual contact. The only way a cat could contract FIV at a show would be through a deep bite wound, which is virtually impossible in a controlled show environment.

Additionally, a FIV-negative cat that lives with a FIV-positive cat does not pose a risk to other cats in the show hall. The fear that FIV could spread in this setting is based on misinformation, and instead of using this situation as an opportunity to educate breeders and owners about FIV, this ballot reinforces harmful misconceptions.

In my work I come across cats with FIV. Most of them were stray cats who were fortunate enough to be adopted by caring owners. Unfortunately, in general it is very difficult for FIV cats to get adopted, because of these common misconceptions about the disease.

By voting in favor of this ballot, the Board would be wrongfully banning owners of FIV cats from participating in cat shows, sending the damaging message that FIV-positive cats are a danger simply by existing. This will have several negative effects:

- It will discourage people from adopting FIV-positive cats, reducing their chances of finding loving homes and condemning many to a life in shelters – or worse, euthanasia due to lack of space.
- It perpetuates the false belief that FIV is highly contagious, when in reality, it requires specific conditions to spread.
- It shifts focus away from real threats to feline health in the show hall.

A more effective approach would be, instead of unjustly targeting an individual without a proper hearing, to focus on real measures to protect cats in the show hall. This includes:

- Implementing mandatory vetted shows to prevent sick cats, cats with fleas or under-vaccinated cats from entering the show hall.

- Educating breeders and owners on the true risks of FIV and FeLV rather than fueling unnecessary fear.
- Continuous promoting early spaying and neutering so that the changes of FIV transmission in the general cat population will reduce.

I am voting NO on this Ballot and I am hoping that maybe a handful of people will take the time to read my comment and learn more about which infectious feline diseases to really fear, instead of believing misinformation and fear, leading to condemn someone without a hearing.

Vlach: While I absolutely believe that the behavior of Chris Unangst is far from correct I have problems in taking actions right away. Many times the TICA Boards ruled that TICA is nothing more than a registry and that it will not interfere in breeders' disputes or anything which lies within the rights of clubs which organize shows. In my opinion this is exactly what will happen if this proposal passes.

Yes, it is very sad that a person appears to care more about a win at a cat-show than about the health of her felines, but again I feel that this matter should have been resolved in a different way. In my opinion the correct way should have been to refer to article 23.6.5 of our Show Rules where the organizing club is given the right to decide if they accept an entry or not - and not to overrule the club. The Board could have shared all evidence with the clubs.

It also appears that this action is pointed at a person who fell out of favor and not so much in the first place about the healthcare of cats, because in the past several proposals which could improve the health of cats at shows failed (for example to have vetted shows) - so this is really inconsistent. I don't want to say that TICA does not care about the health of cats, please don't get me wrong, but again - the inconsistency is obvious.

I also don't think that Chris Unangst should be allowed until further notice to show or agent any of her cats (nor should it be allowed that cats from her should be agented by another person), but I believe that the Board is overstepping its rights, the final decision should lie with organizing clubs.