

SOME HELP FOR BREEDERS

Until recently, diagnosis of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) could be achieved only by a scan of the heart or by a necropsy.

Unfortunately, this also meant that there was no accurate method to determine if a breeding cat was free of HCM until the cat was mature and had already started producing — and possibly passing HCM to the kittens. In recent years, the Ragdoll and Maine Coon breeds have been studied in connection with feline HCM — and finally a major breakthrough occurred when one of the genes for HCM in Ragdolls was identified.

Kathryn M. Meurs, DVM, PhD, board-certified by the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (Cardiology), led the effort to find the HCM gene in the Ragdoll, and also the HCM gene in the Maine Coon. All Ragdolls used for breeding can now be screened with the DNA tests for the Ragdoll Mutation and the Maine Coon mutation. (For more information, visit <http://www.cvm.ncsu.edu/vhc/csds/vcgl/ragdoll-faq.html>).

“There is currently some new genetic testing that can be done for certain breeds of cats, like Ragdoll cats,” says Marc S. Kraus, DVM, senior lecturer in the Section of Cardiology at Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine. “This test is performed to determine if a cat carries a marker for the disease, so it’s certainly important. Every owner wants to know if his or her animal is going to be afflicted. I just want to caution that the test doesn’t necessarily mean that the cat will develop the disease because it’s only one marker that may cause the disease. There’s still work to be done, but it’s on the forefront and very interesting.”