

A few months ago, just after CFA released the breed popularity rankings, there was a bit of consternation among Siamese breeders. We all tend to think of our Siamese as the most popular shorthair breed. Over the time I've been in CFA, the Siamese was always the 3rd or 4th most popular breed. It was Persians, Maine Coons, and then either Siamese or Abys. This year, our beloved breed was 9th – NINTH! So I decided to take a closer look at what is going on with our stats, and what I found was interesting on several levels, or disturbing depending on whether you want the breed to last or not. I gathered the annual stats reports from CFA for as far back as they went online, also gathered stats articles from Monte Phillips, and Lorraine Shelton contributed stats about other associations. I started plugging things into spreadsheets, and what I found was enough to make me ask Virginia if I could speak about this at the annual breed council breakfast.

We have to be careful anytime someone presents statistics and their own interpretation. They may be cherry picking the data to make it fit a preconceived purpose. Instead, I didn't just look at one chart and make a conclusion, I looked at this from many angles as I could if I could find the data. I'm going to show you several different sets of data, and I readily admit I'm just scratching the surface here.`

So let's look at some numbers. This first chart shows you the popularity rankings from the year 2012 vs. 2009, 2009 is the last time the Siamese was the most popular shorthair breed. I looked at many more years of data but for today let's use this as a starting point.

Rank	Breed	2012
1	Persians	8302
2	Exotic Shorthairs	4576
3	Maine Coons	3268
4	Ragdolls	995
5	Abyssinians	873
6	Sphynx	820
7	American Shorthairs	782
8	British Shorthairs	713
9	Siamese	643
10	Devon Rex	596
11	Oriental	544
12	Cornish Rex	537
13	NFC	472
14	Scottish Folds	452
15	Birmans	415

Rank	Breed	2009
1	Persians	10490
2	Exotic Shorthairs	3323
3	Maine Coons	3144
4	Siamese	1029
5	Ragdolls	979
6	Abyssinians	904
7	Sphynx	858
8	American Shorthairs	711
9	Birmans	602
10	Oriental	578
11	Cornish Rex	566
12	Norway Forest Cat	548
13	Devon Rex	507
14	British Shorthairs	453
15	Scottish Folds	377

Three years ago, the Siamese was the 4th most popular breed, behind only the big 3 – Persians, Exotics, and Maine Coons. We dropped to 9th last year. This may have been an off year for us, but I think it is a sign of a larger problem.

Now I have nothing personal against the breeds that passed us, but this just doesn't seem right. Three years ago the Siamese was the **most popular shorthair** breed and 4th most popular overall, how could we drop to 9th in three years? And look at the shorthair breeds that passed us. British Shorthairs? I've

been accepting the plain fact that we're not going to pass the big three anytime soon, they are too far ahead of us in every possible measure. But Ragdolls?

This just doesn't make sense in light of what we see in the show hall. Most of the Siamese classes that I see are larger than Sphynx and British Shorthairs, and certainly much larger than the rarely seen Ragdoll which came in 4th in popularity. Ragdolls? FOURTH?

Let's look at another angle and consider our ranking among cats shown. Every year, Monte Phillips releases a statistics article that includes the number of entries per division per class. I got this year's data from Monte and summed the categories, and also summed the division so that the next table shows you the total number of entries per breed for each of the past 5 seasons, for the top 22 breeds. Remember, these are total entries, not unique entries, which means if you entered your Siamese as a kitten in 5 shows and as an adult in 5, that one cat contributes 10 to the total. This means that we should not fixate on the actual numbers and instead pay more attention to the ranking of the breeds.

Last season, the Siamese was 6th in number shown, behind Persians, Exotics and Maine Coons, American Shorthairs and Orientals (by one entry). Ragdoll, British Shorthair and Sphynx are well below. The Ragdoll did better this past season than the one prior, jumping from 22nd to 20th, but still far below the Siamese. After the top 3 breeds, there are 6 breeds trading off for 4 thru 9 – the Siamese, American Shorthair, Oriental, Abyssinian, Birman and Cornish Rex. Now that pretty much looks like a spread we would see at any show. Siamese are often the largest or 2nd largest shorthair class in a show.

I want to point out one more thing to consider about this table. If a breed has a lot of campaigned cats, it's going to place higher because of all the extra entries, including double entries. One cat campaigned for a NW that is double entered frequently could account for over 50 entries. Breeds that have lots of NWs are somewhat inflated. Yet the Siamese, which does not normally have many NWs, this year having just one, is high up in the rankings, which I believe is a significant point but I need more data to figure out what it really means.

Cats Shown in Kittens, Championship and Premiership per Breed										
	2012-2013		2011-2012		2010-2011		2009-2010		2008-2009	
1	Persian	9255	Persian	10605	Persian	11336	Persian	11521	Persian	11728
2	Maine Coon	4051	Maine Coon	4682	Maine Coon	5374	Maine Coon	5169	Maine Coon	5528
3	Exotic Shorthair	3417	Exotic Shorthair	3674	Exotic Shorthair	3564	Exotic Shorthair	3765	Exotic Shorthair	3791
4	American Shorthair	1812	American Shorthair	2095	Siamese	2087	Siamese	2188	Abyssinian	2286
5	Oriental	1665	Siamese	1964	American Shorthair	2077	American Shorthair	2010	American Shorthair	2211
6	Siamese	1664	Oriental	1907	Oriental	2005	Abyssinian	1998	Birman	2190
7	Abyssinian	1599	Abyssinian	1666	Abyssinian	1874	Birman	1938	Siamese	2054
8	Birman	1567	Cornish Rex	1650	Birman	1730	Oriental	1908	Cornish Rex	1972
9	Cornish Rex	1399	Birman	1614	Cornish Rex	1560	Cornish Rex	1639	Oriental	1888
10	Japanese Bobtail	1394	Tonkinese	1481	Tonkinese	1500	Tonkinese	1541	Tonkinese	1651
11	British Shorthair	1243	Japanese Bobtail	1453	Japanese Bobtail	1360	Japanese Bobtail	1207	Japanese Bobtail	1296
12	Tonkinese	1122	British Shorthair	1187	British Shorthair	1173	Ragdoll	1194	British Shorthair	1220
13	NFC	914	Sphynx	1023	Sphynx	1086	British Shorthair	1182	Sphynx	1213
14	Sphynx	905	NFC	946	Ragdoll	1067	Sphynx	1062	Ragdoll	1093
15	Burmese	787	Burmese	816	NFC	1034	NFC	1060	Russian Blue	1011
16	Egyptian Mau	772	Egyptian Mau	792	Egyptian Mau	869	Burmese	988	Burmese	1002
17	Devon Rex	739	Devon Rex	778	Burmese	823	Somali	984	Somali	987
18	Ocicat	662	Ocicat	729	Devon Rex	801	Russian Blue	862	NFC	963
19	Russian Blue	655	Siberian	722	Ocicat	754	Devon Rex	820	Ocicat	876
20	Ragdoll	605	Scottish Fold	687	Russian Blue	729	Egyptian Mau	796	Devon Rex	828
21	Colorpoint Shorthair	595	Colorpoint Shorthair	633	Manx	668	Ocicat	772	Scottish Fold	763
22	Manx	569	Ragdoll	625	Somali	626	Manx	685	Manx	711

If the Siamese accounts for more entries than the Sphynx, British Shorthairs and the Ragdolls, why then is CFA promoting these other breeds as more popular than Siamese? We rank higher than some of these in every measure but 1 – **registrations**.

CFA's breed popularity is based on registrations, that's it. It's not based on litters, or how many kittens were actually born during a year, nor on how many cats are shown – just on how many were registered. So the answer to why the Siamese dropped below the other shorthair breeds in the top 9 is simple – **other breeders register more of their kittens!** We produce more kittens than 4 of the breeds that were ranked in popularity above us, we show more cats than some of the more popular breeds. But we just do not register enough of our kittens. I do not like that CFA uses a single data point to determine breed popularity, but it is easy enough for us to fix – **register more Siamese kittens!**

Here's a table showing the percentage of kittens that are born that actually get registered per breed. This is not really a fair thing for me to do because kittens registered may not have been born that year, I'd like you to think of this percentage as a comparison ratio rather than a true percentage. This table shows just the top 15 breeds of kittens reported born during the year, but I did calculate for all of them.

2012 Breed	Kittens Reported	Kittens Registered	% of reported kittens registered
Persians	16183	8302	51%
Exotic Shorthairs	5530	4576	83%
Maine Coons	4819	3268	68%
Ragdolls	1679	995	59%
Siamese	1469	643	44%
Sphynx	1232	820	67%
Abyssinians	1175	873	74%
Devon Rex	988	596	60%
American Shorthairs	791	782	99%
British Shorthairs	749	713	95%
Cornish Rex	734	537	73%
Scottish Folds	691	452	65%
Oriental	676	544	80%
Birmans	655	415	63%
Tonkinese	589	401	68%

Siamese breeders, while declaring the 5th highest number of actual births only registered 643 kittens, which is 44% ratio, the lowest of the 15 breeds in the table. Of **all** the breeds, only two breeds have a lower percentage than the Siamese – the Manx and the American Bobtail. Look at the American Shorthairs – about half of the kittens born compared to Siamese, but their ratio is 99%. Oriental breeders managed 80% ratio, they are registering a very high number of the kittens that they report. And doesn't the Ragdoll stat surprise you? Ragdolls reported 200 more kittens than the Siamese last year, yet they rank 20th in the number of cats shown. Think about it – if we had registered just 353 more kittens, the Siamese would have ranked 4th in popularity, and we most certainly do have the kittens to register!

This is somewhat embarrassing for us since at one time, Siamese breeders were praised for having a high percentage of our litters turn into registrations. If we want to increase the popularity of the breed compared to other breeds, it's simple. **We need to register more of our kittens.** It's not enough to hand a slip to the pet buyer, we need to turn those in ourselves. This is going to take a concerted effort from all of us to push all Siamese breeders to increase this percentage. We need to get our popularity ranking

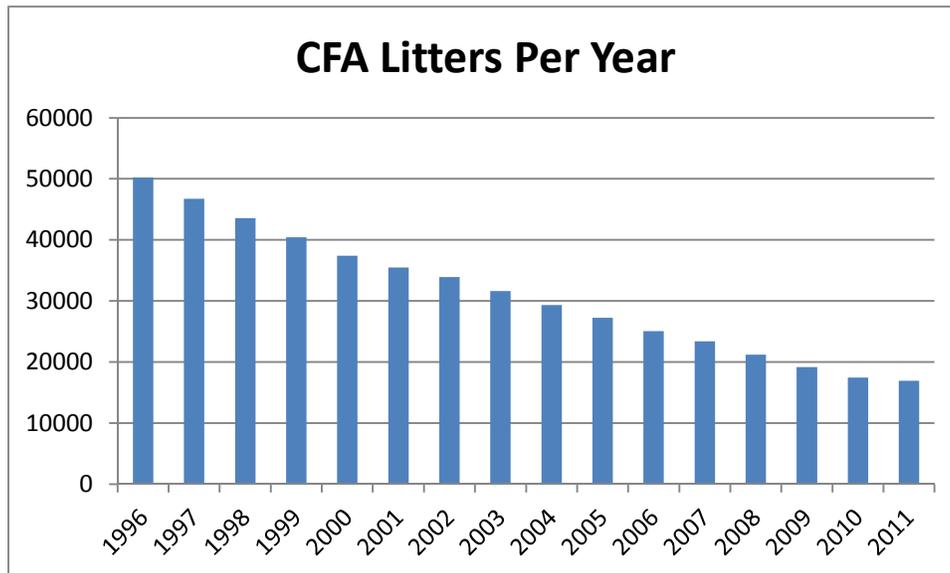
back up, and barring some miracle of getting CFA to change how it figures out popularity, registering more kittens is the only way to do it.

You may be wondering why popularity matters so much, why we need to be concerned with how popular the Siamese breed is. It's not about ego, but it is about how our breed is viewed by others. When kitten buyers are researching breeds and read CFA's website, what do you think impresses them more "The Siamese, our 9th most popular breed ..." or "The Siamese, our most popular shorthair breed ..."? The higher the popularity ranking, the better the breed appears to prospective pet owners and more importantly, prospective breeders. This drop in ranking is because many breeders are not registering the kittens that they have, it is a **self-inflicted** wound for our breed.

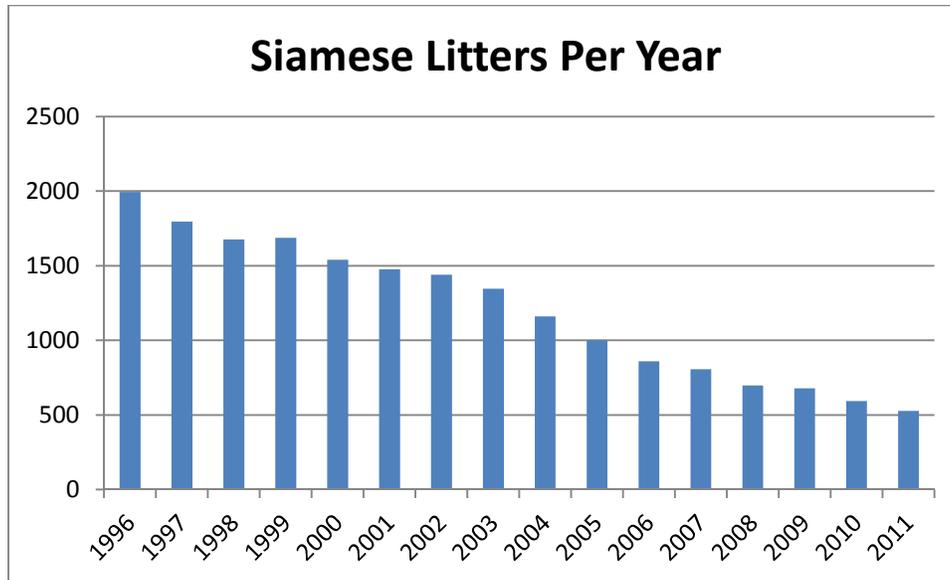
However, there is worse news in the stats. Even if Siamese breeders did register 99% of our kittens, the Siamese is still in severe decline! Almost all breeds are in decline. Some of the other breeds that looked like they passed the Siamese in popularity rankings – they really are not growing. Those breeders just didn't suck as bad as us at registering kittens. They too are declining. But we need to look at a different set of numbers to better understand the true decline.

I want to show you the stats on litter applications instead of registrations, this time I'll use graphs to make the trend clearer. Litter applications to me is the more important number since we have such variance in litter sizes and so many factors affect actual registrations. The number of litter applications each year is an indicator of how actively people are breeding the breed. In 2012, the Siamese ranked 5th in litter applications, the highest shorthair breed (behind the Persian, Exotic, Maine Coon and Ragdoll).

This next graph shows the decline in litter applications in CFA overall from 1996 through 2011. During that time CFA sustained a 66% drop in litter applications. That is pretty substantial. We can try to blame CFA's woes on the economy of the past decade, but CFA was declining rapidly during a time of economic growth in the 90s. CFA did a horrible job of reacting to the decline waiting too long to take action.



Now let's look at the Siamese over the same time:

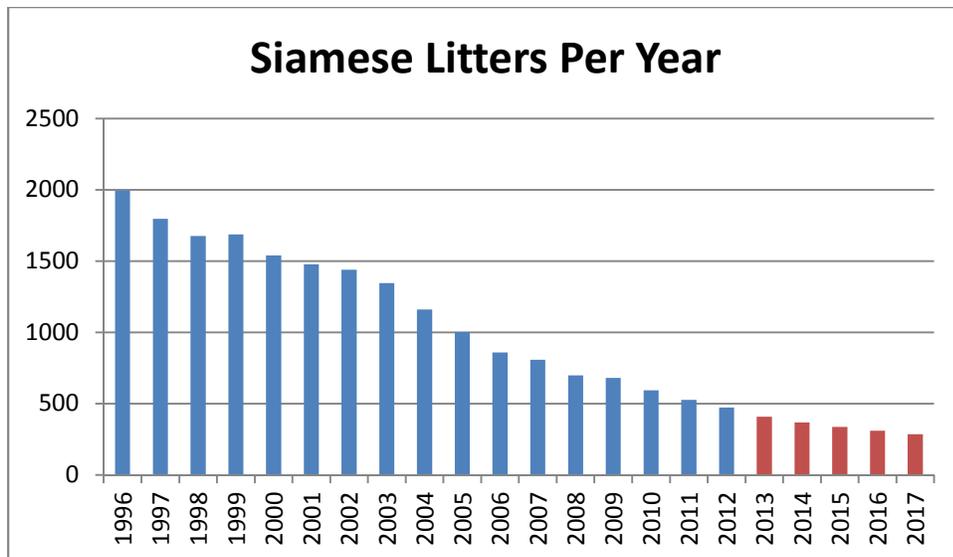


This graph shows a 74% drop in litters over this 16 year period, significantly greater than CFA's overall drop of 66%. The sharpest part of the decline has been since 2003. Over this same period, Persians showed an 80% decline, Abys 70%. Most breeds show declines while a few have shown rapid growth, such as the Ragdolls and Exotics. Some of the newer breeds, such as the Sphynx, had sharp increases at first, but have been showing decline over recent years.

Before anybody even thinks to suggest that perhaps the Siamese is losing breeders to TICA, the TICA registration stats do not bear that out, TICA has not been picking up all of what we have lost. Another tempting thing to blame the Siamese drop on is the addition of the newer breeds giving new breeders more choices when they start out. That is a tough case to make. The Siamese litters as a percentage of all of CFA litters hovers in the 3 to 4% range over the past 16 years. I would have to dig deeper on this to figure out if the addition of newer breeds had the kind of impact that would cause such a huge decline in the Siamese litters.

I think we might attribute much of the Siamese decline to the loss of registrations from people who breed Siamese to sell as pets but do not show. The economy is hitting the pet market very hard, as we all know too well. But I would need much more data to make that argument stick. Our own eyes tell us we are losing show breeders as well.

Now I want to show you the scariest chart of all, as though the 74% decline of our Siamese wasn't scary enough. This is the same as the last chart with the next five years projected as though the rate of decline continues:



Five years from now in 2017, if things keep going the way they are, there will be fewer than 300 litters of Siamese registered in CFA. From 2000 litters in 1996 to less than 300 in 21 years. This is not a sustainable path for our breed. I think we can say officially that our breed is rapidly approaching a crisis point, if we haven't already reached it.

While most of us here have enough breeding stock ourselves or have friends that will share so that we can continue to breed cats, that's just not good enough. We are the caretakers of the Siamese, we must consider the future of the breed and work to keep it viable for generations to come. **It is our job to reverse this graph.**

The first thing we need to do is gather whatever data we can to spot trends. We're hampered here because right now, CFA will not release all of the numbers that it has that we need. When I asked for the registration totals for all of the breeds over the past decade, our president denied this request. I asked Virginia to request the data, and CFA would only give her the Siamese data. We need the data on all of the breeds to perform any reasonable analysis.

I got the numbers I used for this talk from Monte Phillips and Lorraine Shelton who every year total up the registration data that CFA does release. But there are so many more factors we need to consider. CFA is not being open and transparent with us about registrations. Our current president is afraid of the corporate partners finding out that CFA is in such decline, although how can they not know? I have argued with him about this, but lost.

If CFA won't give us the data they have and help us collect what we need, then we have to use what we do have and figure out how to get more data ourselves. I've been considering a survey, anonymous of course, that would collect things like how many kittens are actually born, including still births, how many live to day 1, day 14, day 30, etc. Also information such as how many queens the breeder has, how many litters and their sizes that each queen has had, etc. If we can get a good sampling of breeders to participate, then we'll have enough information to make some informed guesses about the shape of our breeding stock and the trends in our population of cats.

Next, we need a way to share information about our breeding stock. I've started a facebook group for breeders to post pictures and pedigrees of available stock. I'm hoping to grow this into a world-wide

group, but this group will only be as good as the people that use it. It will take time to be effective. I hope you will all join and post photos your breeding cats.

To increase our popularity ranking, as I said before all we need to do is improve our registrations. We have the kittens to rank much higher in popularity, we just need to follow through with the registrations. Many people hand the blue or yellow slip to the kitten buyer, but we need to take responsibility for the registration ourselves since pet buyers notoriously don't follow through. One thing you can do is instead of handing the slip to the buyer, hold it and tell them they have a week to pick a name. When they pick a name, YOU register the kitten. The visibility of the popularity rankings is essential to promoting the Siamese to the public.

But the biggest thing that we need to do is to increase the number of Siamese breeders! Really, this is our only hope. We must find ways to attract new breeders. So let's think about that for a bit. How can we attract more breeders?

We know what to do when a new person comes to the door. We help that person get started with Siamese, help them acquire healthy winning breeding stock or get started showing and breeding Siamese, we put new people together with good cats and give them our expertise on how to show their cats. You don't have to hand cats to new people to help them, sometimes all they need is encouragement and information. When you see a new person at a show, ask if they need help understanding CFA's scoring, offer your expertise about the association and about shows. Some of our new people are starving for direction and information, and we all have a wealth of experience we can share before we even get to breeding stock.

But what about how to get that new person to come to the door in the first place. One way is to make our cats more visible.

Why or how do breeders choose their breed? I think a big reason for some is that they see a breed at shows and like them, they see them making finals and might think "wow, I love that Aby that I just saw in a final, I want to breed them." Some people will gravitate toward the breeds that win. **We need to show our cats, and we need to win.** We need more Siamese national and regional winners, more grands and DMs. But that's not all.

This year, there were no Siamese that qualified for the regional breed spots for the Gulf Shore region. Imagine that – the GSR was once a hotbed of fierce Siamese competition, and this past year nobody qualified for a breed win! What seems like a little thing makes the breed look like it has weak show potential. Siamese breeders need to fill these slots. I'm not saying that we should start the season out thinking "I'm trying for 3rd best of breed Siamese kitten in the Southern Region," but look at the standings before the end of the season, and if there is an opening that you could get with a little more effort, go for it. We need to grand more cats, get more DMs, and get more cats into the standings at every level. We need to push our cats into the public eye at shows.

There are other things that we can do, I'm sure that you all can think of ways to promote the Siamese and attract breeders. But we need to start doing something now to turn this graph around. We have to stop doing what we've always done and use our collective power to change the path of this breed for the better.