



WHAT IS PRA?

PRA (*Progressive Retinal Atrophy*) is an inherited disease of the retina that can be found in some cat's bloodlines. It affects the cat's eyes and they can be genetically programmed to lose their sight over a period of time.

This particular disease can cause various degrees of eye sight loss and can result in some cases with total loss of sight. Unfortunately, at this time, there is no effective treatment or cure.

This disease is caused by what is termed a recessive gene and some cats can just be carriers only.

There is a simple genetic test that is available to test parents as to whether they are carriers before breeding with them.

Background:

The retina of the eye contains cells called '*photoreceptors*' that absorb the light focused on them by the eye lenses and then they convert these into electric signals. These electric signals are then passed through the optic nerve to the brain. The brain will then interpret these signals and they are then perceived as vision.

If a cat has PRA, the '*photoreceptors*' degenerate over time and ultimately cause blindness. The sight then of a cat with PRA can gradually get worse and eventually can lead to blindness. This has even been known to happen at around 4 to 5 years but there are even reports of total blindness not being diagnosed until much later in the cat's life.

A simple DNA test is now available for PRA.

PRA is not something new with *Siamese* (and this is also within the lineage of other cat breeds) but now there is a simple genetic test to identify affected, carrier and clear lineage cats.

These tests are based on DNA collected from the cats cheek swabs and can be used as a '*tool*' by breeders to make informed breeding decisions and also by owners and vets to confirm a diagnosis of PRA in cats showing signs of the disease.

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