



# New kittens ensure Roucky's Spirit lives on

BY TRACY BURTON

**Keeping busy during lockdown isn't difficult when you have a houseful of newborns to keep an eye on.**

The arrival of four healthy Maine Coon kittens on 2 May means Rose-Anne Burgunder and her husband Andreas Wolfsteller are now sharing their Lagoa home with nineteen of these beautiful cats – the largest domesticated breed.

The kittens – one female and three males – have been spending their first weeks in the nursery at Maine Coon Cattery of Roucky's Spirit under the watchful eye of first-time mother Olivia. They weighed in between 93g and 122g and are growing fast.

"Olivia is a very good mum with a lot of milk," says Rose-Anne. "However, I like to have contact with the kitties, so I help her by giving them the bottle from time to time."

Maine Coon kittens need to socialise with humans and other cats, so the rest of the feline family – including a street cat called Dalmo – were encouraged to meet them almost immediately.

"On the second day, we opened the door of the nursery and all the other cats went in to see the babies. There was no problem," says Rose-Anne, who is French. "It was only a few days later that Olivia began to be aggressive with another female in order to defend her babies."

Naming the kittens came next. The International Feline Federation's (FIFE) rules state that kittens born in any one year must be given names beginning with a specific letter.

The letter for 2020 is 'L' so the couple have named the female kitten Liloo and the males Lion, Lucky/Lobo and Leo. (The complete pedigree names being Liloo of Roucky's Spirit, etc.)

Maine Coon kittens are usually ready to go to their new homes at around three months, depending on when they have their vaccinations.

Although registered breeders, Rose-Anne and Andreas have never sold their kittens. Sometimes they might keep one; however, the majority go to friends: in France, Germany (Andreas is German), Luxembourg and Portugal. Three of Olivia's litter will remain in the Algarve and one will go to friends in Germany.

Friends or not, the couple impose strict criteria for anyone wanting a kitten, including a written contract to safeguard their future. Maine Coons are big cats – the normal weight range is 6-8kg for females and 8-10kg for males. They need constant company and must be brushed regularly.

"Maine Coons are like dogs," explains Rose-Anne. "They love their family above all, but they need another cat as a friend, even if it is a street cat."

If, for any reason, the new owners cannot look after their Maine Coon properly, they must notify Rose-Anne and Andreas who will take the cat back into their care and find it another home.

For the time being, the kittens are enjoying a fun-filled life in a home complete with a room-sized cat tree, which the couple designed themselves.

Seven-month-old Kito of Roucky's Spirit is certain to enjoy their company. The only kitten in the last litter, he's used to being chased by doting father Iron and the older cats. Now it's his turn to run after someone smaller!

Rose-Anne and Andreas are clearly smitten with Maine Coons; however, it was complete chance she came into contact with the breed twenty years ago. Her first cat had died suddenly and, wanting another ginger one, she contacted FIFE for advice.

"They gave me a list of breeds and, if I wanted a ginger cat, I could only have a Maine Coon. I had to wait two months because the kitten was just one month old. So that was my first and it was Roucky."

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