Devon Rex
Hereditary Myopathy

SUSAN LITTLE DVM
http://catvet.homestead.com/

Ever since the mid-1970s, a neuromuscular disease was known to exist in the Devon Rex breed. The disease first appeared in Britain, Australia and New Zealand, then other parts of the world, including Canada and the United States. Despite the length of time this disease has been known, there are few reports or articles about it in the veterinary literature.

The disease was christened "spasticity" by the first breeders that encountered it, but this has proven to be an incorrect term. Research has shown that the disease is most likely a muscular dystrophy.

What are the signs of hereditary myopathy?
Clinical signs of hereditary myopathy can first appear in affected cats any time between 3 and 23 weeks of age. There is considerable variation in the severity of the clinical signs and the degree at which they progress. The most common clinical signs are:

1. **passive ventroflexion of the head and neck**: The neck muscles weaken so that the cat is unable to hold its head up normally and the chin drops toward the chest. This clinical sign can also be seen with other diseases, most notably the hypokalemic polymyopathies. Some cats may adapt to the ventroflexion by adopting a "dog-begging" stance, where they sit up with their front legs resting on a convenient object.

2. **generalized muscle weakness**: Affected cats tire easily, develop a peculiar gait with high-stepping front legs and head bobbing, shoulder blades high and prominent, and sometimes tremors

3. **difficulty prehending and swallowing food**: This is due to the lowered