

# The Devon Rex



## Overview

The Devon Rex has been referred to as “the pixies of the cat fancy”, “elfin magic”, or as to resembling the “gremlins from the film Star Wars.” Along with their impish features, the Devon Rex sports a short soft velvety wavy coat. They are a cat of impish looks and a mischievous personality to match. The Devon Rex is an intelligent and highly active cat.

## History

The Devon Rex originates from Buckfastleigh, Devon, England. It is here a feral tom cat with a brownish-black curly coat had been observed living in an abandoned tin mine. In 1960, Miss Beryl Cox, who lived near the old mine, gave shelter behind her house to a stray tortoiseshell & white female. The female gave birth to a litter of kittens in her back garden. One of these kittens had the same brownish-black curly coat as the feral tom. It is believed that the mother may have been one of his offspring and that he sired her litter as well. Miss Cox kept the curly coated kitten and named him Kirlee.

Ten years prior, another curly kitten had been discovered in Cornwall, England. This kitten was named Kallibunker and was being used by interested breeders to establish the Rex cat as a breed. Brian Sterling-Webb was one of the breeders trying to preserve this curly coat gene. Miss Cox contacted Brian Sterling-Webb thinking her Kirlee could be able to contribute to that program. Kirlee was sold to Mr. Sterling-Webb and was integrated into the breeding program. It was determined that Kirlee’s Devon curly coat gene was not compatible with the curly coat gene from Cornwall. As a result the gene from the first “Rexed” cats that we now know as the Cornish Rex was referred to as “Gene I Rex”, while the later curly coat cats known as the Devon Rex was referred to as “Gene II Rex.” The breeders worked now to establish both Rex cats as independent breeds. It is from Kirlee that all Devon Rexes can trace their history back to.



## Personality

The Devon Rex is considered to be highly active, playful, mischievous, and intelligent. They want to be involved in everything and need to explore everything. No spot will be left unexplored. Even high reach places are not out of the question; the Devon Rex are very powerful jumpers. The Devon Rex also love their people, so expect them to want to perch on your shoulder, curl in your lap, or crawl under the blankets with you. With such an inquisitive and involved personality, the Devon Rex does not do well when left alone for long periods of time. They can become destructive if left by themselves and get bored. They do get along well with other pets and children, so they are a good family pet.

## Traits

The Devon Rex is a medium sized cat weighing an average 6-9lbs, with the males being heavier than the females. They are a compact, sturdy, well muscled cat. Their hind legs should be longer than their front legs. The Devon Rex has a modified wedge shaped head, large eyes, a strong chin on a short muzzle with broad cheekbones. They have large ears that are set low on the head. But the main trait of the Devon Rex is their soft, short, curly coats. The ideal coat would consist of an even display of loose curls & waves, but coats vary from cat to cat resulting in a tousled look or a thin suede-like coat.



The Devon Rex had the perception of being a hypo-allergenic cat, however they do produce allergens like every other cat. They also still shed; but shed less. So some people with allergies MAY be able to tolerate a Devon Rex. It would be a good idea if you are allergic to spend time with the Devon Rex to see if an allergic reaction develops before actually acquiring one based on the presumption of them being hypo-allergenic.

## Health

The Devon Rex is in general a healthy breed. However, there are some health issues that do affect the breed and those include Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM), patellar luxation, and hereditary myopathy.

Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM) is a heart disease which causes the heart to progressively thicken. This thickening doesn't allow the heart to relax normally. As a result the heart cannot completely fill with blood, thus it doesn't circulate blood normally eventually leading to congestive heart failure. HCM is known as an "old age" disease, but the genetic form can occur in young cats typically between 6 months and 3 years of age. There is no cure for HCM. But with various heart medication options, proper management can ease the burden on the heart extending the quality of life.

Patellar Luxation is a hereditary condition in which the knee cap will occasionally "pop out of place." This may cause the cat to limp or hop on that leg. Usually it will pop back into place by itself, but with severe frequent cases surgery may be required to fix the problem.



Hereditary myopathy is inherited as an autosomal recessive trait. This means two copies of an abnormal gene must be present in order for the disease or trait to develop. Hereditary myopathy can be seen in cats of either sex, and signs usually become apparent between 3 weeks to 6 months. The disease will progress until 6-9 months of age, then may stabilize or decrease to a slow progression. There is no treatment. The severity varies from cat to cat and case to case. Hereditary myopathy expresses itself as: "Generalized muscle weakness. Often marked weakness of the head and neck muscles, with dorsal protrusion of the shoulder blades. A high-stepping forelimb gait. Low exercise tolerance with head bobbing, progressive protrusion of the shoulder blades, shortening of the stride, muscle tremors and eventual collapse. At rest, cats often adopt a 'dog-begging' position, with their forepaws resting on a convenient raised object. Megaoesophagus may be present leading to regurgitation and sometimes aspiration pneumonia. Difficulty in maintaining a normal head position may result in frequent episodes of laryngospasm after obstruction of the pharynx (throat) with food. This is the most usual cause of death in these cats."



Reputable breeders do breed to minimize the occurrence of this disorder. It may be unreasonable to genetically test every kitten. But most breeders know the genetic status of the breeding parents, helping to reduce the odds of subsequent litters developing a genetic disorder. Never be afraid to ask about the breeding parent's genetics, a reputable breeder should be willing to discuss it with you.

## References

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- <http://cfa.org/Breeds/BreedsC/DevonRex.aspx>
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