
The breed of the month is...

Persian



Overview

The Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) just announced its most popular breeds for 2013, and the Persian has held the top spot for over 30 years!

History

Considered to be an ancient breed, nobody really knows how this cat truly began. There are references of longhaired cats on hieroglyphs dating to 1684 B.C. It is known that longhaired cats were first introduced to Europe in 1520 A.D. Credit is usually given to this 1520 date to be the first record of the Persian, however it is recorded in that 1621 an explorer & nobleman brought back cats from the Middle East to Europe. It is from the Middle East (Persia/Iran) that the Persian originated from. Once brought to Europe, a great love affair with this cat began. It was the cat of nobles and aristocrats. The Persian even adorned the palace of Queen Victoria. The first recorded cat show at the Crystal Palace of London in the 1800 really introduced this exotic and rare breed to the general public. And the public responded. No one would have guessed how popular this breed would become, back then as well as today!

Selective breeding of the Persian that we know today didn't start until the late 1800's. When the Middle Eastern cats were introduced into Europe, people didn't pay attention to who was breeding what. The Persians were often interbred with other longhaired cats, mostly the Turkish Angoras. But as people began to pay attention to breeding of these exotic cats, the more Persian type predominated. Even after the breed had been established, it continued to change due to fashion and refinement to the ideal standard. Over the last few centuries since the Crystal Palace Cat show of London, the Persian has evolved the shorter nose, rounder head, smaller ears, and larger eyes. So a picture of a Persian cat from the first cat show of 1871 will look much different than one of today.





Blue Persian "Gentian" owed by Lady Marcus Beresford. Prize-winner at Westminster in 1899.

Personality

The Persian has a sweet and gentle personality. They are a quiet, laid back, low key breed that enjoys a calm atmosphere. They are quite affectionate and enjoy the company of their human family members, either snuggling up into your lap or curled up contently purring next to you. The Persian will not demand your undivided attention, but will delight in the affection that you lavish on them. Persians do enjoy being petted, combed, and the gentle handling of children but are unlikely to play in the energetic games of children. They are just as keen to play with toys and teasers as they are to lie in their favorite sun bathed location. Persians also prefer to keep their feet planted on the ground. It is unlikely for a Persian to go off exploring in high places, i.e. the tops of bookshelves. This may be due to their stocky build. The Persian communicates through its large expressive eyes, and quiet pleasant-sounding trill of their voices.

Traits

The Persian is a medium to large sized cat with a muscular body. Much of what is used to describe the Persian, is short, round, and stocky. They have a short and stocky body on little legs. The Persians head shape and facial features has them described as a beautiful pansy. Their heads are round with large open sweet eyed expressions. Those eyes should be large and round, with their snub nose fitting right between. The dome of their head and their round chin should be equally distanced from the break of their face. The break should be the center of the face. The Persian's ears should also be short and rounded, fitting low on the head into the rounded contour of the head and not distorting it. Their bodies should be square balanced by a short thick tail.



There are two types of Persians, the Traditional Doll Faced and the Extreme Faced. The Traditional Dolled Faced Persian has a short but normal nose. The Extreme Faced has the exaggerated flat face nose associated with the breed.

But the hallmark of the Persian is its long luscious coat. Around the head should be a thick ruff or mane, leading into a long and flowing coat covering the body that in ideal Persians can reach to the floor, to a thick pluming tail. This gorgeous coat comes in a wide range of colors, patterns, and textures. Different color, pattern,

texture combination requires its own special care.

No matter what the coat, the Persian coat requires a great deal of maintenance. Daily combing is absolutely necessary, along with regular bathing, to remove the loose hair that can result in hairballs and mats. A metal comb should be used

to remove loose hair, and bathing should include the use of a conditioner to keep the coat from drying out. When started routinely as a kitten, most Persians will enjoy a bath. Also the eyes need to be wiped daily as well. The Persians large wide eyes catch dust, allergens, and other irritants much easier causing their eyes to “run” more frequently.

Health Concerns

Due to the Persians short noses and flat faces, they are prone to some breathing issues, snoring, and coughing. Breathing issues are a result of the nares or nostrils being too narrow, an elongated soft palate, or a small trachea. Surgery can be performed help correct these issues. However a reputable breeder breeds to avoid these issues.

With the Persian there are a few diseases and disorders to be aware of. Of particular concern are two genetic conditions that Persians are predisposed to, Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM) and Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD). The additional conditions to be aware of include idiopathic facial dermatitis, entropion, blocked tear ducts, dental disorders, and wry mouth.

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.

Polycystic Kidney Disease is another progressive disease that has cysts developing in the kidneys. These cysts are present at birth and gradually grow, leading to decline of the kidney function and eventually kidney failure. Cats are usually young adults when symptoms start to appear, typically between 3 to 10 years old. There is no cure for PKD. But with various treatment options, proper management can ease the burden on the kidneys making the cat feel better and extending the quality of life. There is not direct “kidney” medication that helps decrease the work load of the kidneys. Treatments often include special formulated diets that do not put as much of a workload on the kidneys, fluid therapy to help balance electrolytes and correct dehydration, appetite stimulants, phosphorus binders if phosphorus levels are too high, and hormone therapy to balance calcium and phosphorus levels.

Reputable breeds do breed to minimize to occurrence of many of these diseases and disorders. It may be unreasonable to genetically test every kitten for all of these issues. 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.