

The Abyssinian



Overview

According to the Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA), the Abyssinian is the sixth popular breed of 2013. Although the Abyssinian's origins remain somewhat of a mystery, it is no mystery why once you've owned an Aby you wouldn't want anything else. The Abyssinian is a mischievous, independent, playful, and iridescent cat that can provide amusement to any household.

History

The origins of the Abyssinian remain much of a mystery. The record books do not help shed light on the subject due to poor record keeping around the end of the 19th century. Its appearance suggests an ancient Egyptian origin. Its long legs, arched neck, muscular body, graceful figure, and alert stance so it resembles the paintings and statues of ancient Egypt. However it has been reported that the Abyssinian may have come from Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), where the English army had been fighting and brought a ticked coated cat with no discernible tabby markings back with them at the end of the war. But a more likely origin may be determined from the genetic studies done on the Abyssinian which seem to indicate that the Aby came from the coast of the Indian Ocean and parts of Southeast Asia. So it appears the Abyssinian may have been introduced to England from India by way of colonists or merchants who frequented between India and England.



Personality

There is one word to describe the Abyssinian – BUSY! There are very intelligent, great problem solvers, and full of curiosity. The Aby also likes to do things on their own terms. These traits along with their athletic build make for a potentially challenging combination for pet owners who do not understand them. They are almost constantly on the move unless they are eating or sleeping. Or if something has caught the Abyssinian's attention, then they can intensely focus on whatever is happening until the next thing catches their attention. Aby's can amuse themselves with a bottle cap just as easily as with an elaborate cat toy, which may amuse them for months on end before they decide not to play with it ever again. Mechanical toys therefore pose a problem, for as soon as the toy winds down you may have to wind it up again or the Aby may totally ignore it. They are very good at playing fetch. The Abyssinian also likes to make use of its vertical space. They have no fear of heights, and can get to just about any place imaginable. Although the Aby is fairly cautious walking on those upper shelves of the book case or on top of the kitchen cupboards, their playfulness may still get the better of some of those knickknacks. It is best to keep breakables out of the Abyssinian's reach in an enclosed curio cabinet. Attention should be given to make sure adequate vertical and horizontal spaces are provided for the Abyssinian, tall scratching posts and scratching trees would benefit these cats.



The Abyssinian is a fairly low maintenance cat. Hand rubbing to remove excess and dead hairs is all that is really needed. A bath once a year during the shedding season may not be a bad idea with these cats. Bathing an Aby simply requires a good pet shampoo, a quick toweling off, and then allowing them to air dry.

Traits

The most defining characteristic of the Abyssinian is by far its coat. The Aby has a ticked tabby coat whose markings are only exhibited in the face. The rest of the body, legs, tail, and neck should be free of tabby markings. The coat color comes in four colors; Ruddy, Red, Blue, and Fawn. The facial markings exhibited on the Abyssinian consist of dark lines extending from the eyes and the brow. The eyes are outlined by fine dark lines encircled with lighter colored areas. Dots and shading on the cheekbone, and shading on the whisker pads are also desirable facial markings. The Abyssinian has a modified wedge shaped head, or a head that is triangular shaped but not as extreme as a wedge, with ears that are large, alert, and somewhat pointed. The ears should give the appearance of always "listening." Everything should fit nicely and proportionally on this cat, nothing should be too long or too short. Extremes are not desirable, this cat should strike a nice medium, proportional, and be generally balanced.



Health

The Abyssinian is among the breeds prone to Pyruvate Kinase deficiency. Pyruvate Kinase deficiency is a hereditary condition that impairs the red blood cell function. Pyruvate Kinase is a regulatory enzyme that is required by the red blood cells to metabolize energy. It can appear in cats of any age, from cats as young as 6 months to those over 12 years. Cats with Pyruvate Kinase deficiency typically have episodes of intermittent anemia, but other symptoms include lethargy, jaundice, pale gums, and an enlarged abdomen. However, not every Pyruvate Kinase deficient cat will exhibit clinical signs. Treatment for Pyruvate Kinase deficiency is limited to a bone marrow transplant, which is both expensive and potentially life threatening. Cats that undergo a bone marrow transplant may have a normal lifespan, while those left untreated may only live 4 years after diagnosis. Reputable breeders will be working to remove this recessive gene from their breeding pool with DNA screening of their breeding cats.

