

The Scottish Fold



Overview

The Scottish Fold may be among one of the most unique looking of the cat breeds. The trait that gives them their unique appearance are the folded down ears. The ears fold tightly and closely to the skull, which results in a “cap” look. This tends to give them the appearance that has been described as that of an “owl,” “pixie” or “teddy bears.” The folded ear is a spontaneous mutation which comes from an incomplete dominant gene, this does result in both folded and straight eared cats.



History

All Scottish Folds can trace their ancestry back to the first documented and recognized ancestor called “Susie.” Susie was found in 1961 by a shepherd named William Ross on the McRae farm at Coupar Angus in the Tayside Region of Scotland. She was a solid white long haired barn cat with folded ears. She was bred to various different breeds such as Persians, American Shorthairs, Exotic Shorthairs, and Burmese to establish the round look we know today.

Personality

The Scottish Fold is a great family pet. They are very loyal to their family. They are not a shy breed that would hide around the house; they prefer always being around and following owners from room to room. Scottish Folds are very intelligent and inquisitive. They learn to open cabinets, play fetch, sit up, and some like



to eat & drink with their paws. Most love to drink from running water! Most Scottish Folds also “sit up” like a prairie dog when they hear something to get a look around. They are not a very vocal breed and have small soft tiny voices. The Scottish Fold tends not to panic and adapts well to most situations, making them a great family pet that does well with children as well as other pets once properly introduced.

Traits

The Scottish Fold comes as both a long hair and short hair version. The long hair version is sometimes referred to as the Highland Fold. They also come in a wide variety of colors and patterns found in the Traditional and Pointed Divisions. The most common eye color is copper, but all eye colors can be found with the Scottish Fold. The trait used to describe the Scottish Fold is round...they have round faces, round eyes, and round bodies. They are a medium sized cat ranging from 8 to 13 lbs. Of course, they have little flat folded ears that fold forward tight to fit the cap of their heads. Not all Scottish Folds have flat folded ears. Due to the nature of the incomplete dominant gene, 50% of the litter will develop folded ears while the others will have straight ears. Scottish fold kittens look just like any other kitten when they are born, it is not until between 18-24 days that their ears will fold...if they fold. Straight-ear Scottish Folds are just as sweet and wonderful, just usually not as expensive.



Health

The Scottish Fold breed has a few diseases and disorders to be aware of. Of particular concern are two genetic conditions that they are predisposed to: Osteochondrodystrophy, and Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD).

Osteochondrodystrophy is a genetic mutation which affects the development of cartilage. It is this same mutation that is responsible for the classic folded ears. As a result all Scottish Folds with folded ears have, to varying degrees, a defective mutation and function of cartilage. This is particularly seen in the limbs, ears, and tail. This leads to varying degrees of arthritis in the Scottish Fold. There is no treatment for the disease, but may be managed in the same was as



osteoarthritis with anti-inflammatory medications, environmental modification, and nutraceuticals. Proper breeding programs also play an important role in managing the disease. Straight-ear Scottish Folds are vital to keeping a healthy breeding stock along with allowed outcrossing with the British & American Shorthairs. Osteochondrodystrophy in its severe form is seen when breeding folded eared to folded eared Scottish Folds.

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 no 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.

References

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