



AMERICAN CURL

General Description

One of America's native breeds, the American Curl is a medium-sized cat with unique ears that curl out and back in a graceful arc giving a unique alert appearance to the cat. The swept-back ears give the cat a happy, perky expression that quickly brings a smile to the face of everyone who sees them. The sophisticated head combined with the graceful body provide the American Curl with a stylish, dynamic presence.



History

The American Curl story begins on a hot sunny day in June 1981 in Lakewood, California when Joe and Grace Ruga found a stray black kitten with a long-haired silky coat and unusual ears on their doorstep. The affectionate kitten quickly endeared herself to the Ruga's and was named Shulamith and all American Curls trace back to her. In December 1981, Shulamith had her first litter of kittens and two of the four kittens had the same curly ears as their mother beginning a worldwide discussion on the genetics of the unusual ears. 1983 saw cat fanciers developing selective breeding programs to conserve the gene and to develop a breed based on it. At the same time, the unique cats were presented to the cat fancy to showcase this rare new addition to the feline world.



Roy Robinson, the renowned English feline geneticist, worked with the breeders and analyzed the data on 383 kittens from 81 litters. He confirmed that ear-curling gene was unique and that it was an autosomal dominant gene - that means any cat with even one copy of the gene will show the trait. In an article published in the December 1989 issue of the Journal of Heredity, he reported that he had found no defects in any of the crosses that he had analyzed and this laid the foundation for a new and healthy breed.

Personality

Curls are curious, exuberant and loving companions that greet each day with joy as they look for new challenges and adventures. They are exceedingly people-oriented and pat you to get your attention as they want to include you in all their activities. They want to be with you all the time whether sleeping in your bed at night or curled on your lap to watch their favorite TV show. They adore children and adapt well to other pets and new situations. When introduced to their new homes, they are alert and inquisitive but respect the earlier occupants. These even-tempered intelligent companions are devoted to their owners and follow them around so as to be sure they are part of everything! Expect their help with all your projects. They have quiet voices and are not overly talkative however they make their wants known with gentle trilling and cooing sounds. Their kitten-like personalities have earned them the nickname of the Peter Pan of cats.



Traits

American Curls come in longhair and shorthair-and a myriad of colors. The coat is a silky, flat-lying coat with little undercoat. Consequently there is little shedding and the coat requires little grooming. While the curled ears are the major feature of this special breed, other key characteristics of the American Curl are its large walnut shaped eyes and a medium-sized rectangular body.

All American Curls are born with straight ears. They start to curl back into a rosebud position at 3-5 days gently unfolding like a rose petal until they reach their final shape at about 16 weeks. The degree of curl in the ear can vary greatly ranging from almost straight to an arc of 90-180 degrees. To ensure the health and genetic diversity of the breed, breeders do outcross breedings to cats without curled ears. At least 50% of the kittens from these breedings will have curled ears. 100% of the kittens in a Curl to Curl breeding will have curled ears. The straight-eared cats still have all the personality of their curled ear brethren and make equally delightful pets. The gene to curl the ear affects the cartilage of the ear which remains firm to the touch - it should never be stiff or floppy. However care should be taken with the ears so as not to break the cartilage and the ears should never be forced into unnatural positions.



American Curls are well-balanced, medium sized cats with a rounded head, a substantial muzzle and distinct whisker pads. They have an elegant, alert appearance with a sweet, open expression and their remarkable ears. While both have soft silky coats, the longhaired American Curl also has a beautifully plumed tail.