



# AMERICAN WIREHAIR

## General Description

Like its counterpart the American Shorthair, the American Wirehair is one of the most adaptable breeds for any type of household—from being the lap cat curled up with the senior citizen to the energetic cat joining in to play with the children. One of the natural breeds, the American Wirehair is a medium size cat, muscular with a firm, well-balanced body. The wirehair gene originated as a spontaneous coat mutation in upstate New York and changes the hard coat of the American Shorthair to the hard, dense, springy coat of the American Wirehair.

## History

The first American Wirehair was found in a litter of 6 kittens born on Council Rock Farm in Verona, New York. The kitten was a red-and-white male with a sparse, wiry coat—every hair, including his whiskers, was crimped and springy. His parents, Bootsie and Fluffy, were normal-coated domestic shorthairs who lived on the farm owned by Nathan Mosher. Local cat breeder Joan O'Shea saw the kitten and, recognizing him as unique, was able to acquire him. She named him Council Rock Farm Adam of Hi-Fi. He was bred to a female belonging to O'Shea's neighbor and produced kittens with a wiry coat. The female had also come from Mosher's farm so could have carried the wirehair gene. A second breeding to an unrelated female also produced wire-haired kittens thereby establishing it as a dominant gene.

O'Shea sent hair samples for analysis to noted British cat geneticists A.G. Searle and Roy Robinson. Robinson replied to her that the samples of Adam's hair showed the coat was unique and not related to the Cornish or Devon Rexes. All three hair types (down, awn and guard) were twisted and the awn hairs were also hooked at the tip. The cat was closest in type to the American Shorthair and this was the breed used to develop the American Wirehair. Today the only difference between the two breeds is the coat.

## Personality

American Wirehairs are good-natured, easy-going cats, popular with families, as they are known to be very tolerant of children. They are calm but can also be playful even into old age. Female cats tend to be busier than the males; males are more easygoing. In general they are intelligent cats and quite interested in everything around them. Many American Wirehairs retain their hunting instincts with any insects that should venture into the house. They also like to watch birds and other activity from a windowsill. They enjoy the company of their people but retain their independence. Many are lap cats, while some prefer just to be nearby.



## Traits

The American Wirehair is a medium sized cat with no exaggerated features. It is not a large, heavy boned cat as is the British. It is a very balanced medium size, medium boned cat, with a firm muscular feel to the body, well proportioned in all parts. The head is slightly longer than wide and with an open, sweet expression. Eyes are wide-set, medium to large in size proportionate with the size of head, rounded, which means the upper lid is shaped like half an almond and the lower lid is a fully rounded curve. The muzzle is medium-short with a full strong chin giving it a squarish appearance like a matchbox; ears are medium in size and slightly rounded at the tip set twice the distance between eyes. There are a number of different looks found in the Americans that are acceptable by the standard. Females are smaller than males with the balance of the cat being of most importance. Americans do not mature until they are around three or four years old. The features of the breed are then at their best.

The wiry coat like steel wool defines the American Wirehair as distinct from all other cat breeds. It comes in all colors and patterns but the wiriness itself has several degrees varying from spiked to curly with the individual hairs being crimped, hooked or bent. The ideal coat, including the whiskers, is dense, coarse and crimped over the whole body. Some coats are completely wired but very hard and sparse making them break easily. The coat is relatively soft to the touch but springs back into place when stroked.

Some American Wirehairs have sensitive skin that can be susceptible to outside influences resulting in an allergic reaction. To reduce any potential problems, the skin and coat should be kept clean with regular bathing to remove loose dead hooked hairs that could initiate some irritation. The coat can be a little greasy from the oil secreted by the skin and regular bathing removes this grease too. Gently clean earwax out with a cotton swab when bathing the cat.