

TICA Sphynx Breed Presentation

Updated Summer 2021

Originally presented for TICA judges CEU 2019 by
Emily Greene, with input from Breed Chair Alessio
Pasquini



Photo Credit: Helmi Flick

Overview



- ▶ Provide a Sphynx breeder's perspective on the Sphynx standard using real-life examples.
- ▶ I have been involved in showing & breeding Sphynx since 2003. I showed Sphynx in TICA & CFA until 2008. In 2008, I chose to show exclusively in TICA. In 2008, In that year, I had the breed winning Sphynx alter. Since 2008, I have had Regional Winners every year, 6 International Wins, 3 Lifetime Achievement Awards and many Supreme Grand Champions.
- ▶ *Most of my comments on breed standard are italicized and in yellow or black depending on the slide*
- ▶ *The key word in the Sphynx standard is "medium".*
- ▶ *All of the "Not Ideal" examples are my cats*
- ▶ *Most of the "Ideal" cats used in this presentation are Supreme Grand Champions, Regional Winners or International Winners.*

Historical Sphynx



Amenophis Cocoon
& Amenophis Clone



Rinkurl Qwytkhamun



DGC Britanya's Kaiakson of Lencuts



Clockwise from top; Winnie Wrinkle of Rinkurl and Winlet; Safram Alien, Safram Pierrette, Safram Pinkerton, Safram Kaleidoscope; Yogi Bare (l) and Hale Bop (r), Jen Jude Girlie; Jen Jude Yoda II, Brenda's Nefertiti and Brenda's Bathsheba; Gunzhof Easter Sunrise

Historical Sphynx continued



GENERAL DESCRIPTION



Photo Credit: Helmi Flick

The Sphynx appears to be a hairless cat, although it is not truly hairless.

The skin should have the texture of chamois

Varying amounts of down each have their own feel.

On the ears, muzzle, tail, feet, and scrotum, short, soft, fine hair is allowed.

This is very different than fully coated. Fully coated is not desirable!

Lack of coat makes the cat quite warm to the touch

Very different temperature feel than a coated cat

General Description

- ▶ This cat should not be small or dainty. Males may be up to 25% bigger.
- ▶ *Males being larger is true in most breeds. Bigger does not mean better. The TICA guidelines for medium cat are varied, but generally a female should be 7-9 pounds, males 9-12 pounds.*
- ▶ The Sphynx is sweet-tempered, lively, intelligent and above all amenable to handling.
- ▶ *Newer breeders may not know that their cat, sweet at home, may be unmanageable at a show. It is best to get kittens out at 4 months of age for experience and positive imprinting.*
- ▶ *With that being said, show temperament is moderately genetic.*





Shape (Head)

(Judging point value = 10 of 40)

- ▶ Medium-sized, modified wedge with rounded contours, slightly longer than wide
- ▶ *Must be wide head to accommodate more than one width of large eye between eyes.*
- ▶ *Should not be triangular or oriental in appearance*
- ▶ *Narrow or long head should be considered faulty*
- ▶ *Short, Devon like heads should be considered faulty as well.*
- ▶ Skull is slightly rounded with a rather flat forehead and prominent cheekbones and a distinct whisker break
- ▶ *Whisker break should be prominent*
- ▶ *Cat should appear like kissing a window.*

Ideal Sphynx Head Examples

These are examples of Sphynx with excellent head type.

Females



Photo Credit: Blue Sky



Photo Credit: Jim Child



Photo Credit: Nancy Cordell Anderson

Males



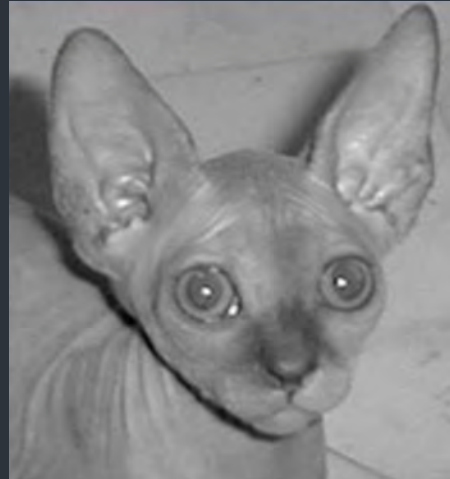
Sphynx Head Examples Not Ideal



INCORRECT

Somewhat narrow triangular head, its muzzle is pronounced but still narrow and pointy.

This cat does have pleasing facial boning.



INCORRECT

Very narrow triangular head, its muzzle is narrow and pointy.

Weak facial boning & cheekbones



INCORRECT

Head width is not as bad but the muzzle is weak



INCORRECT

Impression of being Devon-like, extreme head type, including the belled ears.

This type may appear "cute"; but it does not make it correct.

Cheekbone Examples

These cats have pronounced cheekbones



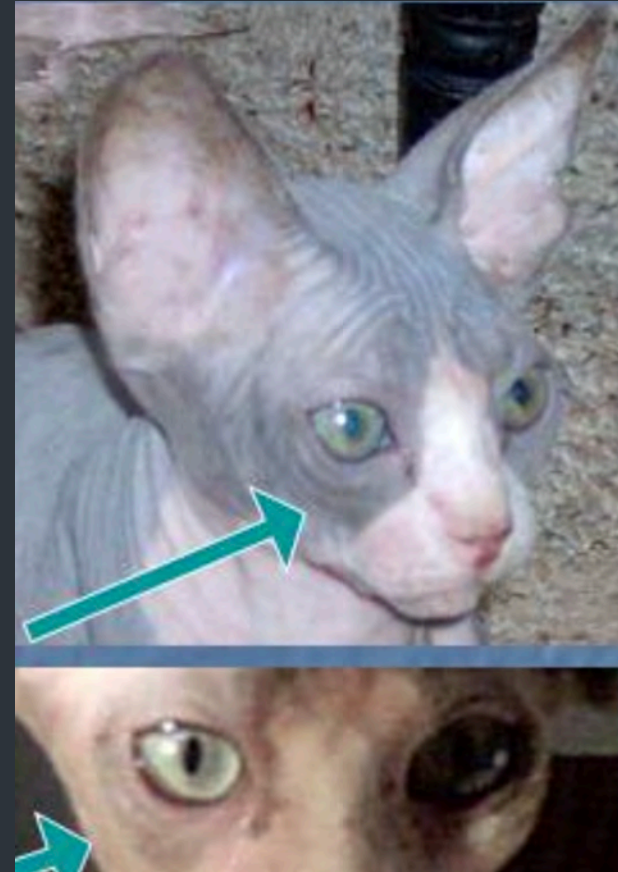
Cheekbone Examples

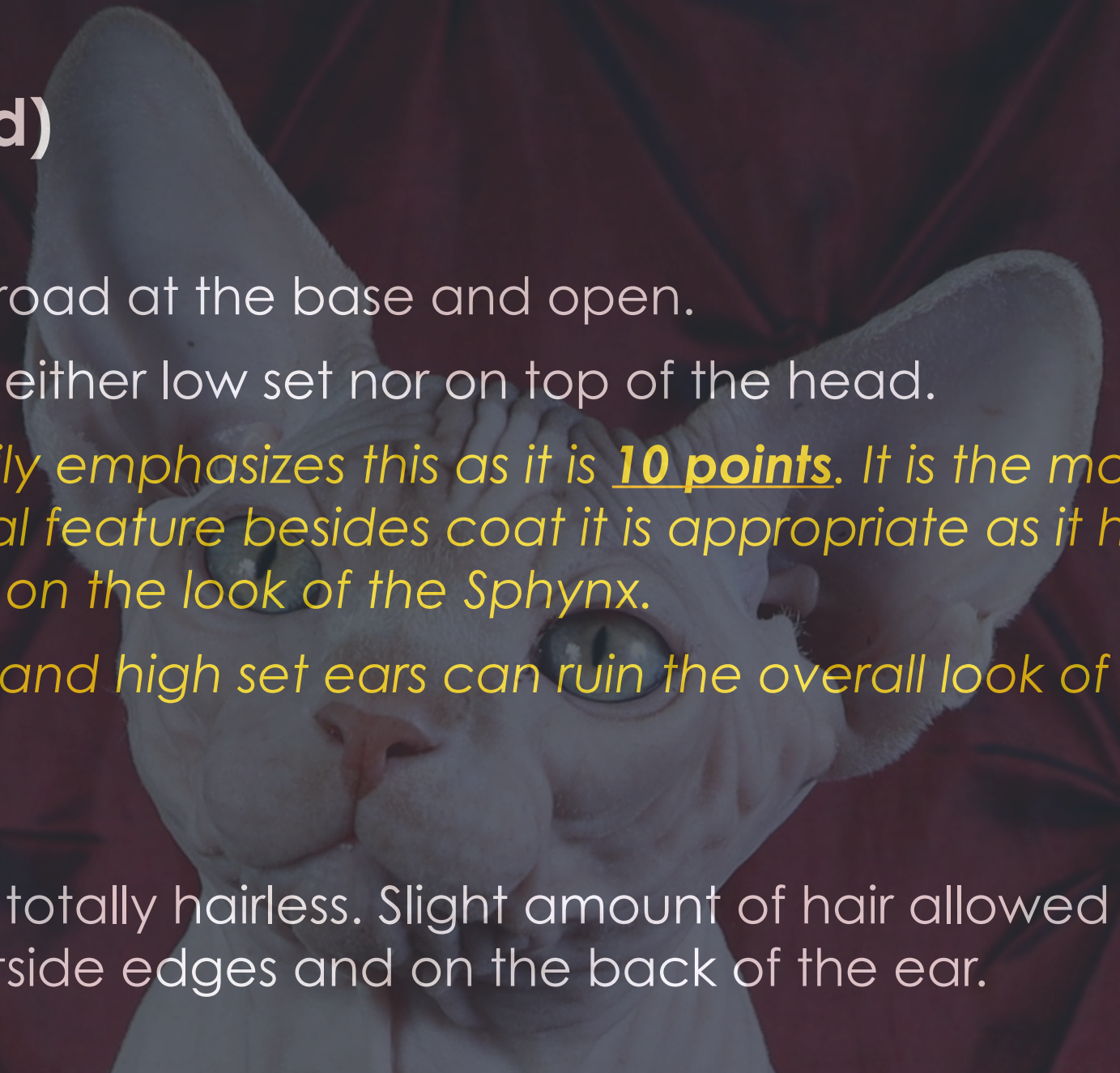
Not Ideal



Above Cat: Really pretty sphynx, however, she does lack pronounced cheekbones.

Right: Again, boing is not pronounced above or below the eye.





Ears (Head)

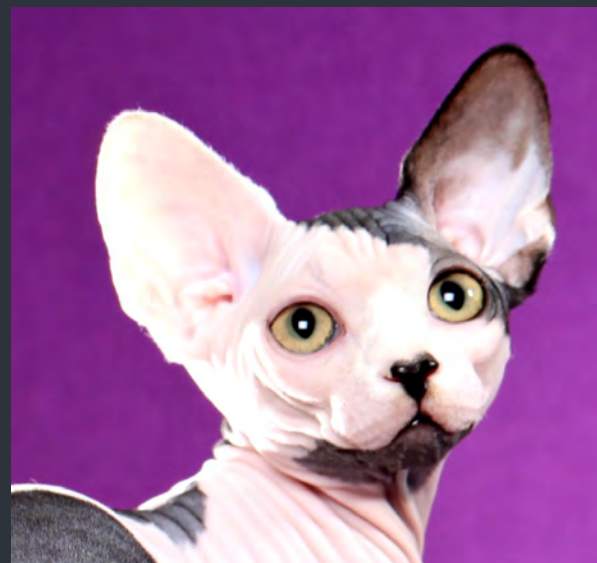
- Very large, broad at the base and open.
- Set upright, neither low set nor on top of the head.

*Standard heavily emphasizes this as it is **10 points**. It is the most of any individual feature besides coat it is appropriate as it has a large impact on the look of the Sphynx.*

Narrow, pointy and high set ears can ruin the overall look of the head.

- The interior is totally hairless. Slight amount of hair allowed on the lower outside edges and on the back of the ear.

Ideal Ear Examples



Not Ideal Ear Examples



Narrow & High



Proper large size
However, ears are set
way too high. Look
like rocketship taking
off

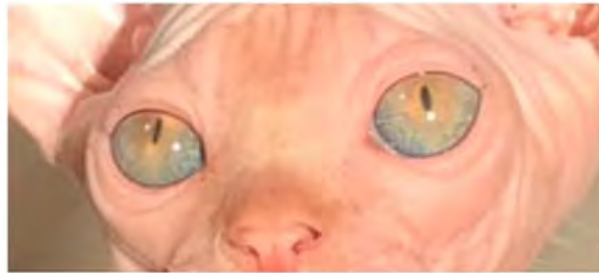


Ears are belled, gives
Devon appearance.
Set is a little low.

Eyes (Head)

Sphynx - Ideal Eye Examples

Eyes: Large, rounded lemon shape. Slanting to outer corner of ear. Slightly more than an eye width between eyes.

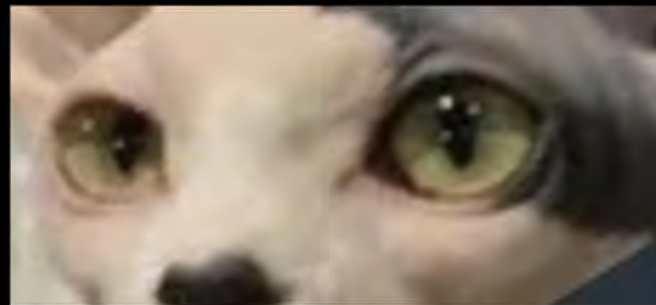


Eyes

Correct lemon eyes are extremely important to the sweet expression.

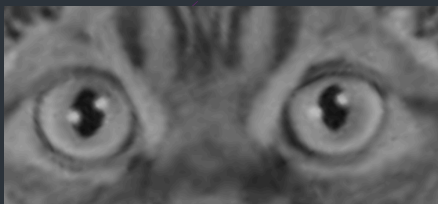
If the eye is too round, it gives a surprised look, an oval eye leans towards a Devon look.

A MEMORY TRICK!
Sphynx are a
“Fruit cat”: peach skin,
slightly pear-shaped
with a lemon-shaped
eye.



Eyes – Not Ideal Examples

INCORRECT: Eyes are large but oval.



INCORRECT: Eyes are incorrect shape and hooding. Hooding is not correct for sphynx.

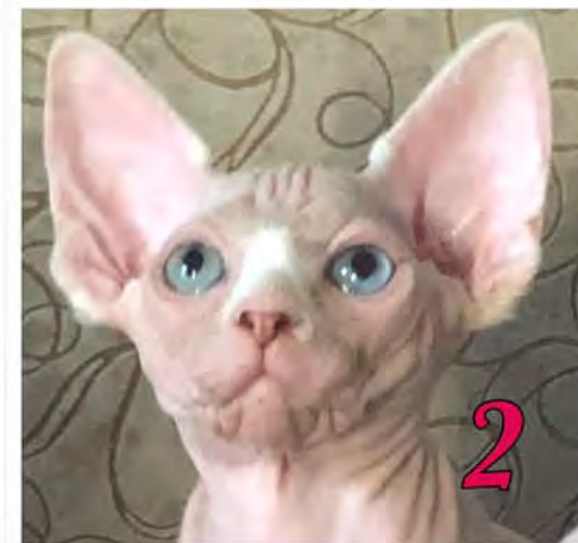
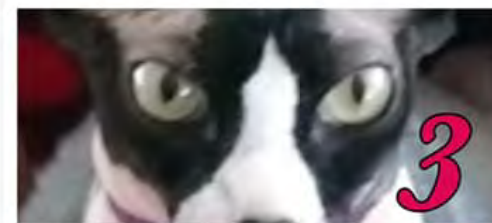


INCORRECT: Eyes are large but too round. Should be lemon-shaped.



Sphynx Incorrect Eye Shape

- 1) Large, but too round
- 2) Not quite as round but still not lemon
- 3) Upper lid leans towards hooding, not ideal
- 4) Slightly too round, more of a medium size rather than large.



Eyes: Large, rounded lemon shape. Slanting to outer corner of ear.
Slightly more than an eye width between eyes.

****The fact the eyes are large, combined and this standard statement "More than one eye width" means that an ideal Sphynx should have a broad head and it should not be narrow.**

Ideal

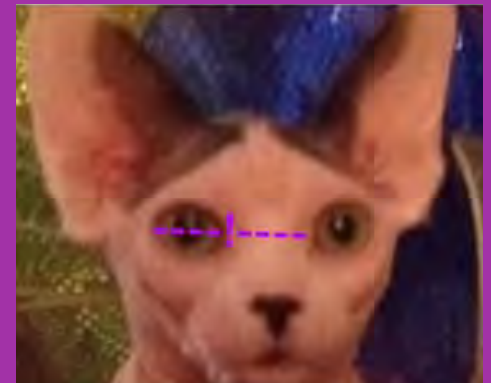


The lines drawn on these photos help measure the width of the head.

It is hard to do with photos and curves and angles, but it gives the general idea

Not Ideal

Below, both cats have nice breed features, but could use some more head width.



Muzzle & Chin (Head)

- Strong rounded muzzle with distinct whisker break and firm chin.

Implicitly, a narrow muzzle cannot make for a strong muzzle that is required for a Sphynx.

Also, an extremely wide muzzle cannot make for rounded.



Muzzle & Chin

- ▶ **NOT IDEAL** These are some examples of what muzzles should not look like.



Pointy muzzle, lacks whisker break, muzzle not "puffy"



Pointy muzzle, lacks whisker break, muzzle is more "puffy" (which is good), but it is still not correct

There are muzzles that are too boxy and more like Burmese or Persian that are incorrect but I do not have examples with permission to use.



Profile (Head)

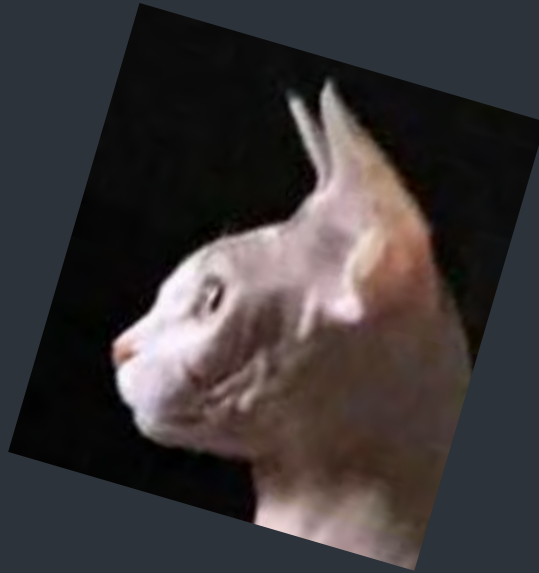
- ▶ Slight to moderate change of direction at bridge of nose. Some degree of fuzz on bridge of nose.

*This feature is only 5 points. Some may have a preference of slight and some moderate. However, **both** still meet the standard. Slight versus moderate does not change the overall look of the Sphynx, so, the standard is correct in not emphasizing this and having this allowance.*

An extreme Devon-like, Burmese-like break would be faulty. The way of thinking “more is better” is incorrect. This more extreme change actually does change the appearance and makes it extreme.

Hair on the bridge of the nose can give the impression of no stop or make it seem like there is a stop. It is important to use your fingers, rather than just your eye, to verify the extent of the stop.

Profile Examples Ideal



- When viewed from the side the profile proceeds from a flat plane in front of the ears
- A slight to moderate, palpable stop at the bridge of the nose
- A straight nose
- The nose and chin line up

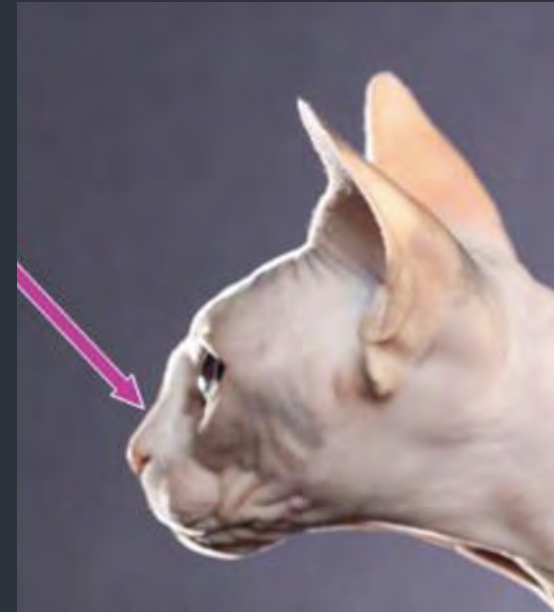
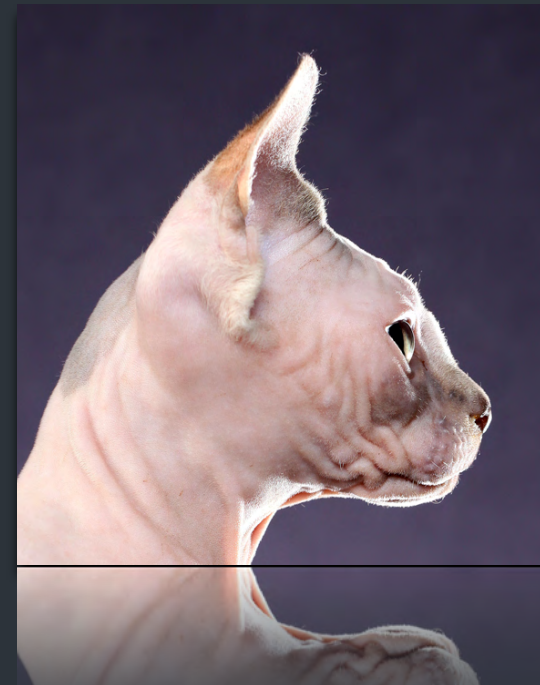


Photo Credit: Helmi Flick

↑
Proper stop (break).
Visible but not extreme.
(Hard to see in photo).
Slight is just as correct
as moderate per the
standard.



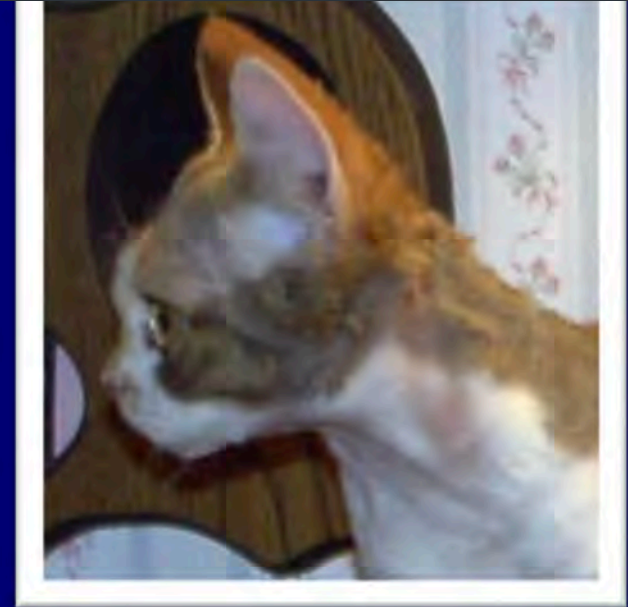
Profile examples

Too straight, plus weak chin



TOO EXTREME

From the Devon presentation. This is the ideal break for a Devon, but NOT a Sphynx, this profile is too extreme.



Outstanding profile showing a strongly marked stop, the curve from the stop to the forehead and the flat skull. Also shows good depth of muzzle, and very nice chin

Torso (Body)



- ▶ Medium in size, medium to medium long in length.
- ▶ The chest is broad, may tend toward barrel chested. The abdomen is well-rounded, having the appearance of having eaten a large meal, but not fat.

Note the “not fat”- unfortunately, even with stating this, sometimes people misinterpret this to mean sx should be fat.

Having a broad chest is extremely important to the look of the Sphynx.

Narrow chests make them look frail and not as powerful.

Torso examples



Pretty cat but slightly too refined in the torso. Still could be a show cat, but breeder should work on stronger torso.

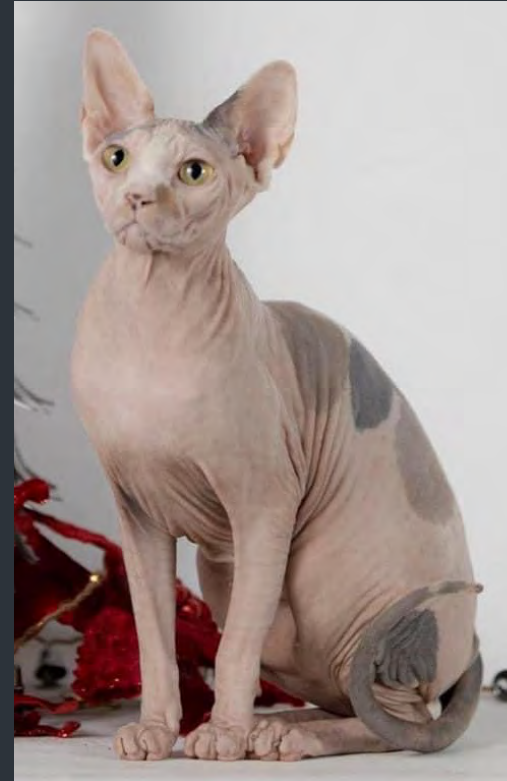


1st Left, 16 year old SX, a bit overweight, correct torso
2nd From Left, very **incorrect**, long & tubular
3rd from left, correct
4th from left, correct

Chest – Female Ideal Examples

The chest is broad, may tend toward barrel chested. The abdomen is well-rounded, having the appearance of having eaten a large meal, but not fat.

Females may be smaller but they should still have wide chests. They do not need to “look like a boy”



Above, father / daughter both have wide chests but also highlight the differences between the genders.

Chest – Male Ideal Examples

The chest is broad, may tend toward barrel chested. The abdomen is well-rounded, having the appearance of having eaten a large meal, but not fat.

Males, should not be refined in any way in the chest.

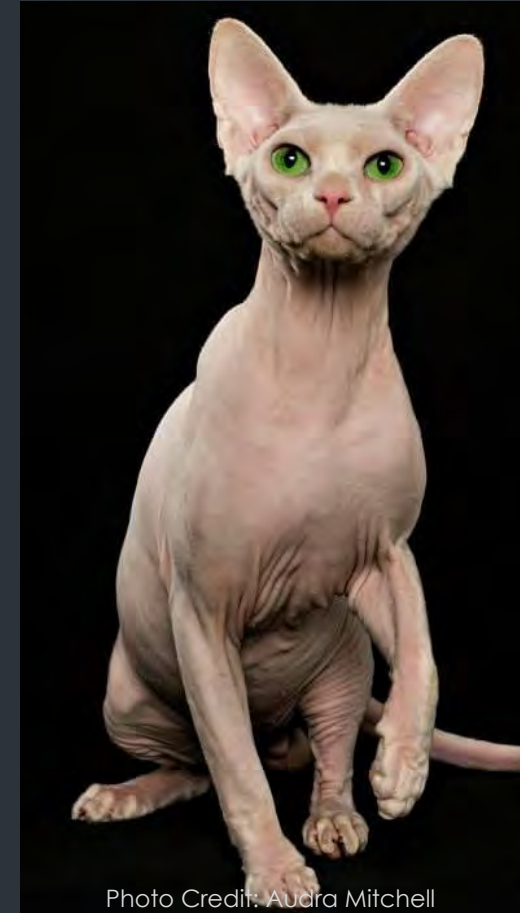


Photo Credit: Audra Mitchell

Legs (Body)

- Length is in proportion with the body, medium boning and firm musculature. Hind legs slightly longer than the front. Front legs widely set. Females may have slightly finer boning.

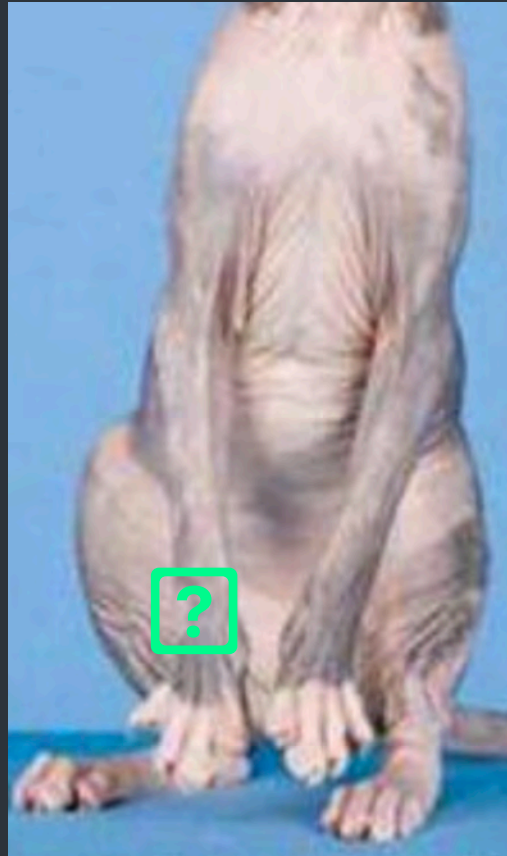
SX are supposed to have wide chests, this would demand legs be set wide apart.

“Looks like a boy”; It is ok for females to look like females. They should not be penalized for being slightly smaller.



Legs- (Body)

*Incorrect:
These examples are fine boned.
Boning should be medium.*



*Looking at where the
foot meets the ankle
can help make
determination.*

*Also, the base of the
tail is another good
indicator*

Musculature (Body)

- ▶ Hard and muscular, not delicate
- ▶ This means a medium sized, but substantial cat.



Feet (Body)

- ▶ Medium in size, oval shape with long slender toes.
- ▶ The paw pads are thicker than in other breeds, giving the cat the appearance of walking on “air cushions”
- ▶ The toes are long, slender and prominent.



Tail (Body)

- ▶ Whippy, tapering from body to tip (rat-tailed)
- ▶ Length in is proportion to body
- ▶ A lion tail (puff of hair on tip) acceptable



nancy anderson cordell photography

Coat/Color/Pattern

TEXTURE:
Chamois-like

A feeling of resistance may be felt when stroking the skin of some cats

Coat textures vary a lot, from silk to peach to velvet. I have my favorites but as long as it is not sticky or rubbery, that is ok.

Usually cats with thicker skin will feel nicer to touch than those with thin or no wrinkles.



Color is not important in Sphynx. The standard has zero points assigned to color as of May 2021.

However, it is still important to try to register and show with correct color information.

Color on hairless cats can be hard to determine. Creams can look blue, reds and creams can be hard to differentiate. Tabby marking generally do not stay on the skin. Sometimes you can see tabby markings on the inside legs.

DNA testing is recommended to assist in determining correct color.

Without DNA testing, looking at the cat's pawpads and nose pads can help.

Texture (Coat, Color, Pattern cont)

- ▶ The skin is very wrinkled in kittens.
- ▶ Adults should retain as many wrinkles as possible, especially on the head, although wrinkling should not be so pronounced that it affects the cat's normal functions

Wrinkles contribute to the special look of the sphynx that no other breed of cat really has. Not even the other hairless breeds.



Penalizations

- ▶ Overall small cat
- ▶ Body is too thin, frail-appearing or delicate or fine-boned; too cobby or too foreign
- ▶ Lack of wrinkles on the head
- ▶ Straight profile, narrow head
- ▶ Non-amenable disposition
- ▶ Significant amounts of hair above the ankle

Withhold All Awards

Any indication of wavy hair or suggestion of the Devon Rex, or Cornish Rex in molt.

ALLOWANCES:

Lockets



Disqualify (DQ)

Any evidence of depilating, plucking, shaving or clipping or any other means of hair removal.

It is hard for a judge to enforce this. It is nearly impossible to tell. Different coats have different feels. This will usually have to be done on the honor of the exhibitor.

Exhibitors who have not removed any hair and wrongly been accused of doing so. It is not pleasant and hurtful. In one incident, the cat had rubbed his head on the cage, the judge wrongly assumed the red marks were the result of a bad shave job. Then, I have literally witnessed people shaving Sphynx in the showhall.

Where is the line between grooming and shaving? Is plucking one whisker a DQ? Meanwhile many other breeds are encouraged to trim around eyes, shave ears etc.

Inability to handle

This applies to all breeds in Article Sixteen.

SUMMARY: This illustrated presentation will help everyone understand the TICA Sphynx standard.

However, it is important to state that there are few perfect cats. You may feel your cat has an attribute that does not quite meet the standard. This does not mean your cat is not a show cat.

This is an example of a cat that has an attribute that needs to be improved, but still had a successful show career because he had other amazing attributes.

Please come out to the shows, it is the best way to learn the standard and improve.

Few cats are perfect!!

This cat is a Supreme Grand Champion and Regional Winning Kitten & Adult.

He could use some more ear size. Set is correct. It is important to know you can still show cats even with some things that need improvement. He meets the standard in every other way.

Overall balance is important- having a few things that are less than ideal does not mean your cat is not a show cat. We are pursuing the ideal cat, and even cats with some less than ideal areas are still beautiful.

Also- his ears are actually larger than they appear in photo but still not huge like we all want.

Not ideal;
but still
beautiful, high
winning cat

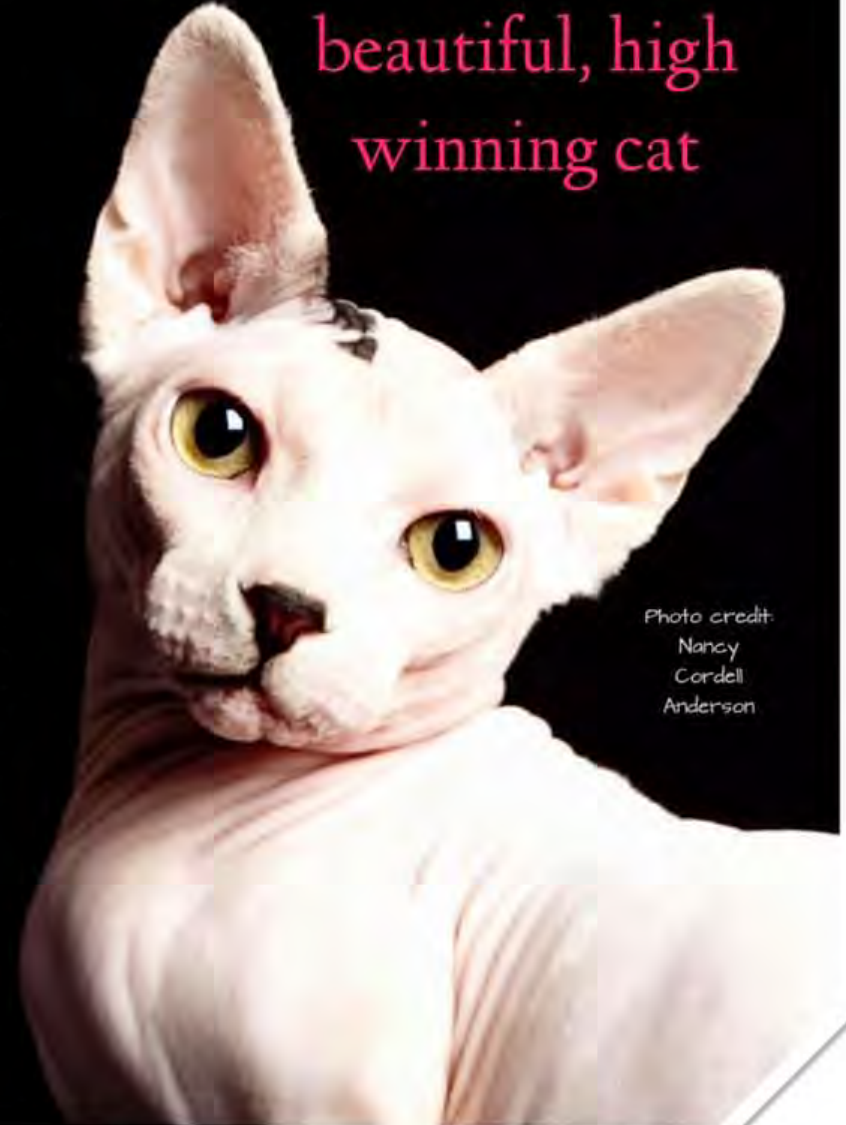


Photo credit:
Nancy
Cordell
Anderson

The background of the slide features two white Sphynx cats. One cat is in the foreground, looking upwards with its large, expressive blue eyes. Another cat is slightly behind and to the left, also looking up. The lighting is soft, highlighting the cats' hairless skin and large ears. The overall tone is dark, with the cats' white fur providing a strong contrast.

Things to know

Allergies: Some with cat allergies tolerate Sphynx better than other breeds and can therefore enjoy owning one. This does not mean this will be true for every person.

- ▶ Those with cat allergies should contact a breeder who is willing to work with allergy sufferers in a fair manner. I have had several pet buyers with cat allergies who are able to have Sphynx. On the other hand, I have had a few returned as the person could not tolerate the allergies.
- ▶ Pet buyers should meet the exact cat they are considering purchasing. Each cat will emit a different amount of allergens and it is important to test with the specific cat. My retired breeding partner has cat allergies and she could tolerate Sphynx, but there definitely was a difference between the cats.
- ▶ Tolerance to Sphynx are very individual thing among allergy sufferers.

Things to know

► **Grooming:** The majority of Sphynx get a wax build-up in their ears and their toe nails. They should be free of this at the show. Recommend washing Sphynx every morning before a show.

► **Skin Scratches:** Some judges penalize for skin scratches, some do not. Both sides can be correct, however, cats with hair can hide their scratches, so I think judges should lean towards being benevolent about one or two scratches.



Head rubbing: One of the dreaded things that Sphynx do is rub their heads on carriers, this can make their heads red and raw, eyes swollen and watery and nearly unshowable. A hard carrier can prevent this, but it is much more difficult if the exhibitor is flying as usually that means you need a soft carrier to fit under the seat.

Photo Credit: Nancy Cordell Anderson

Things to know:

Health

Diet: Sphynx, being hairless, eat about 1.5x more than coated coats.

Ears: Sphynx ears need to be assessed weekly. Being hairless, they do more dirt in their ears, which produces more wax. Ear infections are not an epidemic, but it is something to watch carefully.

Temperature: They feel warmer to the touch, but their body temperature is the same as other breeds.

Teeth: Kittens sometimes have stained teeth. This is due to picking up the oils while nursing.

Heart: Cardiac disease is an issue found in all cats, including Sphynx. It can be mitigated to some extent with health screenings. It is not a perfect tool but it does help. Heart scans by a board certified cardiologist can almost eliminate early onset HCM.

As of December 2021, there is an DNA test for one HCM gene in SX. There is still at least one more major HCM gene in SX. This test only shows the cat has the gene, not if it has clinical HCM. Regular heart scans are still recommended for this breed.

Other diseases: Sphynx do not seem to have issues with any of the other DNA tested diseases. It is recommended to test to ensure no CMS. (aka spasticity)

Blood type: B blood type is not rare in Sphynx. All breeding cats should be tested to ensure kittens do not suffer from blood type issues.



Animal Rights Issues

Sphynx are constantly under siege for being hairless.

One of the most important things is the ability to discuss with the public how and why Sphynx have the “right to exist”. Some people may just not be educated about Sphynx.

Lack of whiskers: In some countries, animal rights & some legislators have concerns because Sphynx do not have whiskers or if they do, they are broken. They claim, without any fact based or empirical evidence that cats need them in order to function.

Sphynx have balance and depth perception and are able to function completely normally.



No whiskers? No problem!
Kitten easily navigating this narrow railing and keeping her balance.

Animal Rights Issues

Hairlessness can be perceived as a defect since it is unusual.

Many animals exist without hair- humans are generally hairless, elephants, hippos. Some claim that hairless cats would not be able to survive in the cold. The same is actually true of humans. Most animals have areas that they thrive in and areas they would not.

For example; one would not put an iguana in Antarctica and expect it to survive. You would not expect a polar bear to thrive in the tropics.





Questions?

Photo Credit: Nancy Cordell Anderson