



General Description

The Oriental is a member of the Siamese breed group and comes in two coat lengths: the Oriental Shorthair and the Oriental Longhair. Like all of the group members (Siamese, Balinese, Oriental Shorthairs and Oriental Longhairs), Orientals are long, slender, stylized cats. They are lively, talkative and intelligent and are very attached to their people. All of the members of the breed group have the same physical standard except for coat length and color. What makes the Oriental Shorthair distinct from the rest of the Siamese group is their wide array of colors combined with a short sleek coat while the Oriental Longhair has a semi-long coat draping the elegant body.

History

Orientals are a man-made breed that originated in the 1950s in England. After World War II the number of breeders and breeding cats was reduced. Some of the remaining breeders became quite creative as they rebuilt their breeding programs. Many modern breeds developed from the crosses done at that time. One such breed is the Oriental Shorthair/Longhair. Russian Blues, British Shorthairs, Abyssinians, and regular domestic cats were crossed to Siamese. The resulting cats were not pointed and were crossed back to Siamese. In surprisingly few generations, there were cats that were indistinguishable from Siamese in all ways except color. As the Siamese pointed color is genetically recessive, pointed kittens were also produced. The best Siamese-colored cats from these crosses went back into the Siamese breed, enlarging and strengthening the Siamese gene pool. The non-pointed cats were the ancestors of our modern Orientals. Initially, each color was developed and named as a separate breed: such as Foreign White, Havana (chocolate), and the Oriental Spotted Tabby. Soon it became apparent that there were too many possible colors to have a breed for each. All the non-pointed cats were grouped into one breed, the Oriental Shorthair/Longhair. Orientals were imported into the United States in the 1970s. New crosses between American Shorthairs to top show Siamese created yet more colors. Interestingly, "Havanas" were imported into America early on but evolved into a distinct breed called the Havana Brown, which are quite different from solid chocolate Orientals.

Personality

Orientals, like the entire Siamese breed group, are lively, intelligent, sociable cats who love to play. Many of them are fetchers, returning their favorite fetch toy tirelessly to the hands of their human. They each have their favorite toys, this one loves catnip sacks; that one, rattle mice; another adores wads of crumpled paper. They can amuse themselves for hours with an empty cardboard box. They do not grow out of their love of play, remaining kitten-like all their lives. No cupboard or high shelf is safe from these inquisitive, high jumping cats. Many Orientals are talkative cats, telling you about their whole day and commenting on what you are doing. They have strong and distinctive personalities. Do not let their fine bones and slender appearance fool you! They are athletic and confident.



They hold their own against much larger cats and dogs, often ruling the roost. Orientals are devoted to their people and need companionship. Some Orientals are "one person" cats, avoiding visitors or even some members of a family. More commonly they love everyone and love a party, happily jumping from lap to lap, purring and asking for pets. In general, an Oriental does not do well as an only cat. They do well with kids, other cats, dogs, and lots of activity and commotion. They love attention and like to snuggle and sleep in a heap with their buddies or under the covers with you. They wilt when ignored. These are not cats for people who want to live a quiet life, have undisturbed knick-knacks, and a cat content to sit still and look pretty. Orientals are wonderful for people who want an interactive and amusing pet and a true and devoted companion.

Traits

The breed standard for the Siamese group is one of extremes. The overall impression of these cats is that they are elegant, slender, and graceful. Like all the members of the group, Orientals are long and lean, and yet, they are natural athletes with a surprising weight of muscle on their narrow frame. They are generally not large cats, though they are long and tall. They are built like runners or dancers. Their head and neck, like the rest of the cat, is extraordinarily long. In side view, the head of all the members of the Siamese group should have a straight profile and a chin that lines up with the nose. The front view of the head is triangular. The head itself is wedge-shaped and smooth, tapering smoothly to a fine muzzle. The ears are strikingly large and wide-based, the eyes are almond shaped, and both are set at an angle following the wedge. The preferred eye-color is green. In the ideal cat, you could draw a line from the tip of the nose through the inside and outside corners the eyes, then through the center of the ears to the ear tips in one straight line per side, then a third line from ear tip to ear tip to complete the triangle. The angles of the cheekbones and jaw should follow the same angles as those made from nose to ear tips. Oriental Shorthairs, like all the Siamese group breeds, have fine bones and a long tubular body, even in width from shoulder to hip. Their legs, tail, and even toes are long and slender. They should be muscular and firm, neither bony nor fat. The Oriental Shorthair has a very short, glossy, close-lying coat. The coat comes in all traditional colors, solids, tabbies, torties, torbies, silvers, smokes, and particolours. Currently there are 281 different colors of Oriental, each of which comes in either Shorthair or Longhair. Oriental Shorthairs are a very lively, elegant and colorful cat, in every sense.