

The American Shorthair



Overview

According to the Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA), the American Shorthair was the 7th most popular breed of 2013, and the 6th most popular breed of 2014. The American Shorthair is not the barn cat, street cat, nor the cat seen at humane societies today. The American Shorthair is not to be confused with these Domestic Shorthairs of unknown random breeding. The American Shorthair is a pedigreed breed with years of selective breeding and recorded registered generations. The American Shorthair was carefully bred to preserve the native North American working cat.

History

Cats first came over to the Americas as working cats aboard the ships bringing settlers to the "New World." Records indicate that cats may have even been aboard the Mayflower when it sailed to America.



Their job was to protect the ship's food supply by hunting the ship's rats. These cats were strong and hardy, and valued for their hunting skills. But they were soon noticed for their beauty due to variety of colors and patterns along with their intelligence as well. This established them as the native North American shorthaired cat for centuries. In the 1900s, the early cat exhibitions had them originally termed as the Domestic Shorthair. But as more cats and cat breeds continued to be imported, breeders began careful selective breeding of these Domestic Cats to develop, represent, and preserve the native North American working cat. In 1966 the breed was then renamed the "American Shorthair."

Personality

The American Shorthair is a very versatile and adaptable breed, great for any household. For the single person, the American is an excellent companion; for the senior citizen, they are the quiet devoted pet; for the family with children, they are playful and good natured; for the busy family, the American is self-entertained and non-demanding. The American is a calm yet playful cat even into old age. They still retain their hunting instincts and will practice them on any insects that happen to wander into the house. They also enjoy watching birds and anything else of interest from the perch of the windowsill. Many of the American cats are lap cats while others are not and just prefer the nearby company of their owners.

Traits

Medium is the term used to define this cat. Everything is based on medium and well proportioned...medium size, medium boning, medium-short muzzle, medium-large eyes, and medium sized ears. Males are average between 11-15lbs, while females will average 6-12lbs. They take 3-4 years to fully develop, and can live 15-20 years. The body should have a firm and muscular feel to it. The head should be slightly longer than it is wide, and have an open sweet expression. The eyes are to be wide set, and rounded but not round. The chin should have a squarish appearance to give it a full looking chin. The ears should be slightly rounded on the tips and set apart by twice the distance between the eyes. The coat should be short and dense with a lustrous and hard textured look. Tabby patterns and the clarity of the tabby markings are the most desirable, with the Classic "Bulls Eye" pattern being the most popular. These cats require very little maintenance. A weekly combing to reduce and remove dead hairs is all that is really needed.



Health

The American Shorthair is in general a healthy breed. There is one health issue that does affect the breed and that is Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM).

Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM) is a heart disease which causes the heart to progressively thicken. This thickening doesn't allow the heart to relax normally. As a result the heart cannot completely fill with blood, thus it doesn't circulate blood normally eventually leading to congestive heart failure. HCM is known as an "old age" disease, but the genetic form can occur in young cats typically between 6 months and 3 years of age. There is no cure for HCM. But with various heart medication options, proper management can ease the burden on the heart extending the quality of life.



Reputable breeders do breed to minimize to occurrence of many of this disorder. It may be unreasonable to genetically test every kitten. 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 quality breeder should be willing to discuss it with you.