

The Breed of the Month is...

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# Ragdoll



## Overview

According to the Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA), the Ragdoll was the fourth most popular breed of 2013. The Ragdoll is a large, "laidback", affectionate, semi longhaired cat with brilliant blue eyes. The Ragdoll is among the largest cats of the CFA and gets along well with other pets and children, allowing them to blend easily into the busy modern household.

## History

The breed was developed in the 1960s in California by Ann Baker. The Ragdoll was developed almost entirely from free roaming cats. It is believed that "Josephine," a pure white domestic longhaired cat, is the matriarch of the breed. Ann found Josephine runny loose in the neighborhood, and bred her to other cats she owned or found. Josephine's daughters Buckwheat and half-sister Fugianna, along with a "seal mitted male" by the name of Danny Warbucks and a solid black cat named Blackie became the foundation of the breed. Ann insisted that the limp, floppy, loving personality of the Ragdoll came from Josephine's altered genes. Ann believed insistently that her cat's genes had been changed after a visit to the nearby medical center where Josephine had been taken after being hit by a car. Ann noticed that kittens born after Josephine's hospitalization had limp and floppy personalities that the "normal" kittens born prior to Josephine's hospitalization did not have. Ann's breeding program consisted of a handful of breeders, but as time went on Ann became more eccentric and breeders broke away to continue to develop this highly affectionate and consistently patterned cats. Denny and Laura Dayton were among some of the breeders to distance themselves from



Ann. The Dayton's had a major role in helping to make the Ragdoll a legitimate breed recognized by all the major registries.

## Personality

The Ragdoll's personality goes along with its namesake. Just like a ragdoll, this cat goes limp in your arms and flops around like a stuffed doll when cuddled. The Ragdoll has a very "laidback" attitude. It is a very quiet and loving cat. The Ragdoll tends to be more interested in people in that they will follow you from room to room, greet you at the door, lay on you, and general want to be where you are. They also have very tolerant attitudes towards other pets and especially with children. Many Ragdolls allow themselves to be dressed up in dolls clothes and carried around with no resistance. Many Ragdolls have also been taught to play fetch. These are gentle cats, so they tend to play without extending their claws.

## Traits

The Ragdoll is one of the largest cat breeds, taking up to four years to fully mature. Mature males weigh 15-20lbs, while mature females weigh 10-15lbs. They have a long and sturdy body. The main feature of the Ragdoll are their large, full eyes, which should be a beautiful blue for all pointed Ragdolls. The rest of their features are defined by soft curves and transitions, with no extreme or exaggerated traits. The Ragdoll coat consists of medium length



silky hairs that can be compared to being rabbit-like in texture. This soft texture means it is easy to clean up, either by hand or wiping with a damp cloth. Shedding is minimal with the Ragdoll, except during the spring and fall shed seasons. The coat comes in three patterns: color point, mitted, and bicolor. The color point has no white anywhere on the body. The mitted has white front feet that look like mittens, white back legs that look like boots, and possible a white blaze on the face. The bicolor has white extending higher up the legs, with additional areas on the back, a white underside, and an inverted white V on the face. As for color, the Ragdolls coat comes in seal, blue, chocolate, lilac, cinnamon, fawn, red and cream along with the tortoiseshell and lynx (or tabby) variations. For grooming, the silky coat of the Ragdoll requires minimal grooming. Brushing or combing weekly to remove dead hairs and separate any tangles with special attention during the shedding season to under the armpits is advised.

## Health

All cat breeds have the potential to develop health issues. The Ragdoll is generally a healthy breed. Conditions that have been reported with this breed have been bladder stones, and the heart condition 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 between 6 months and 3 years of age. There is no cure for HCM. But with various heart medication options and proper management one can ease the burden on the heart extending the quality of life. An echocardiogram can confirm whether a cat has HCM. Genetic testing allows breeders to screen cats prior to breeding them.



For more information on the Ragdoll visit the CFA website:  
<http://www.cfainc.org/Breeds/BreedsKthruR/Ragdoll.aspx> or the TICA website:  
<http://www.tica.org/cat-breeds/item/254>