

ANCESTRY OF THE BRITISH SHORTHAIR CAT

The historical lineage of the British Shorthair cat abounds with the legends. We cannot be truly certain whether this cat originated centuries ago from cats that were bred by French monks who attempted to find a way to control a rat plague, or whether these cats arrived as "stowaway passengers" on ships from the Far East. Certain only is the fact that a hardy breed of shorthaired cats was bred in France under the name of "Chartreux." At about the same time in England, an almost identical breed was being developed called the "British Shorthair."

The British Shorthair appeared in France during the eighteenth century under the name, *Chat des Chartreux*. During the early half of that century, the Leger sisters worked hard to receive and breed the local breed of blue cats, which they developed as purebreds under the breeder name, *De Gueurveur*. The French Chartreux cats were first recognised as purebreds in 1935; however, the breed stock was too small, and the gene pool too small to sustain continued purebreds of the Chartreux breed without the risks of inbreeding.

To remedy this dilemma, potential breed stock was imported from England. Fanciers selected a similar cat breed that had been bred in that country since the end of the nineteenth century. This breed's round head and compact body were a better match for the current breed standards than those of the Chartreux. The leaner bodies of the French cats, which had been crossed with Persian and Russian Blue bloodlines, became less and less popular. As a result, England is credited as being the home and origin of the British Shorthair cat. The breed suffered a severe setback in Britain during World War 1, and breeders were forced to outcross to other stock in order to increase the gene pool and save the breed. Today, of course, to maintain its purity, the British Shorthair has no allowance outcross breeds.

BRITISH SHORTHAIR PROFILE

The British cat is compact, well balanced and powerful, medium to large in size, showing good depth of body. Tail thick at base with a rounded tip. The head is round with good width between the ears, round cheeks, firm chin, large round and well-opened eyes. The coat is short and dense.

CHARACTER

The British Shorthair is a particularly strong, high-endurance cat breed. It tends to adapt easily to new situations without giving up its own interests. Given the opportunity from an early age, most will gladly accompany you on all types of errands, visits, and travels. The British Shorthair is highly adaptable, loves children, is easy to care for, and loves to be close to humans without clinging, yet it is as devoted as a dog.

This cat makes a quiet, even tempered house companion. Should the need arise, it will assert itself without resorting to tricks. This breed shows no grumpiness or bad humour and holds no grudges. Both sexes generally get along fine with dogs and other house pets when proper introductions are made.

In short, this cat is quieter than the average house cat, yet it is more agile and active than the Persian cat, which is known for its passive, gentle nature. British Shorthairs are perhaps best described by providing examples of their characteristic behaviour.

SEEKING HUMAN CONTACT

British Shorthairs have a knack for checking out new visitors by intensive scent investigation and, in the course of doing so, getting their share of pats and cuddles. After satisfying this need to check things out, the cat will make a royal retreat, sit back, relax, and watch the goings-on from a respectable distance.

LEARNING

British Shorthairs are known for their intelligence, high learning ability, and excellent memory retention. Once they learn how to open a door, they will not forget.

INSISTING ON ROUTINE

Once these cats have adopted a daily routine, they will insist that you consistently provide it

STANDING THEIR GROUND

As a rule, adult British Shorthairs are courageous and fearless. When precarious situations arise, they seldom panic; they remain level headed, coolly assessing the situation.

LIFE WITH A BRITISH SHORTHAIR

A British Shorthair adapts easily to a new environment and may, by nature, become extremely attached and dependent on its owner. At the same time, you may find this breed capable of keeping its distance, quite and aristocrat, independent and aloof.

The British Shorthair is not a lap cat that can be cuddled on command. Quite the contrary-this cat will take the high road and regard you good-naturedly from a distance, but soon it will reconsider its position and voluntarily decide to approach you. At this point, it will expect, even **demand**, intense affection and attention from you.

HOW TO PICK UP A BRITISH SHORTHAIR

When picking up your kitten / cat, do not grab it under the belly. A kitten / cat feels safer and more comfortable when you pick it up by placing one hand flat under its rear end while placing your other hand between the front legs.

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BRITISH SHORTHAIRES & CHILDREN

Cats are a natural source of happiness and serenity for adults; the same is true for children. Research has clearly established that the companionship of cats is especially beneficial for sensitive children and therapeutic for those with some psychological problems.

Because of the particularly even temper and gentle nature of the British Shorthairs, their relationship with children commonly turn out to be inseparable. This breed of cat is ready to participate in any activity while it is in the mood to play, yet it will let you know in no uncertain terms when it wants to be left undisturbed.

Children must be taught how to properly hold and handle cats because their unintentional roughness can injure a kitten or result in the child being clawed by a defensive feline. Always supervise contact among cats and kids, especially very young children.

Let the child know that a cat is not a toy, but a living creature with feelings and a will of its own. While it's important to teach a child how to care for a cat, under no circumstances should a child be expected to take full responsibility without adult supervision, for the maintenance of a cat or any other animal.