

Persian Cat Breed Profile

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At a glance

- **Origin:** Persia (Iran)
- **Lifespan:** 12-14 years
- **Energy:** Low
- **Temperament:** Easygoing, quiet, gentle
- **Weight:** Males 5-6 kg (11 – 13 lbs), females 4-5 kg (8.8 – 11 lbs)
- **Colours:** Every colour except pointed or shaded (see Himalayan and Chinchilla)
- **Grooming:** Requires regular grooming
- **Suitable for:** Families, retirees, indoors
- **Also called:** Iranian cat, Shirazi cat, Shiraz cat
- **Cost:** \$1,000 – \$1,400

About



One of the oldest breeds in the cat fancy, the Persian is a medium to large, longhaired cat characterised by its round face and short muzzle. The breed originated in Persia (Iran) where they are known as the Shiraz cat.

History



The Persian is one of the oldest and most popular breeds of cat. The early history isn't entirely known although it is generally accepted that the early cats came from Persia (now Iran) and Turkey. Italian traveller Pietro Della Valle (1586 – 1652) is credited with bringing the first Persian cats back to Europe, arriving in his homeland of Italy in 1620 with them.

By the 1800s the Persian had become a popular breed in Europe, and the first Persians arrived in America in the late 1800s. In the Harpers Weekly supplement dated January 27, 1872, there is an illustration of several feline exhibits from the London Crystal Palace show, including a Persian cat.

Harrison Weir describes the Persian in his book *Our Cats and All About Them* in which he describes the breeds of cat from the first cat show held at Crystal Palace in 1871.

"This differs somewhat from the Angora, the tail being generally longer, more like a table brush in point of form, and is generally slightly turned upwards, the hair being more full and coarser at the end, while at the base it is somewhat longer. The head is rather larger, with less pointed ears, although these should not be devoid of the tuft at the apex, and also well furnished with long hair within, and of moderate size."

Early drawings and photographs of the Persian show quite a different cat to the Persians of today.



Drawing of a Persian cat from the Crystal Palace cat show in 1871

Appearance



Body:

The Persian is a heavy-boned, cobby type with short, thick legs with large paws. Persians are well muscled and medium to large in size. They have a short, thick neck, large shoulders, and a broad chest. The tail is short but in proportion to the body.

Legs:

Short and stocky. The forelegs are straight and hind legs are straight when viewed from behind. Paws are large, round and firm with toes carried close.

Head:

Large and broad head with round, expressive eyes that are set wide apart; small round-tipped tufted ears which are set low on the head and wide apart. The nose is short, with a stop (or break) centred between the cat's eyes. The overall expression is sweet and sometimes described as "*pansy like*".

Some breeders are focusing on breeding Persians who resemble those from the past with less extreme features which are known as *Traditional*, *Doll Face* or *Old Style Persians*.



Doll face



Modern

Coat:

The coat is long and thick, with a plush ruff which continues between the front legs. The ears and feet have tufts.

Colours and patterns:

The following colours and patterns are accepted:

Solid, bi-colour, silver and golden, shaded and smoke, tabby, Himalayan and parti-colour.

Colour used to be of huge importance among Persian breeders and made up 20 points out of 100 in the breed standard. Blues (grey), blacks and whites were favoured and other colours were neglected.

Personality



The Persian is a one of the most placid and laid back breeds, words used to describe them include gentle, docile and sweet.

Persians are well behaved and don't generally get themselves into trouble. While quiet and calm, the Persian does have a playful side also and are always interested in a game but will wait until asked.

Due to their affectionate and placid personality, Persians get on well with other cats, dogs and are extremely good with children. However, if things get too noisy, the Persian will move along to a more peaceful location in the home.

Most Persians have a quiet voice which is not used very often. They are better able to cope with time on their own, whiling away the hours sleeping in a sunny spot, but do appreciate the company of another cat or dog if their human family is out of the house for extended periods.

Choosing a Persian cat



Persians should only be purchased from a registered breeder and should not leave home until they are a minimum of twelve weeks of age and have received at least two of their three F3 vaccinations.

Where possible, visit the breeder and meet the mother cat and her kittens. I recommend kittens who have been raised under-foot, which they grew up in the breeder's home where they have become used to the hustle and bustle of a household.

Always choose healthy looking kittens; they should have no nasal or eye discharge. Always get guarantees in writing from your breeder. This should include a health guarantee and what they will cover if the cat or kitten becomes sick within a set time frame.

Ask the breeder if they will provide the cat's pedigree papers as sometimes the breeder may register an entire litter but not individual kittens. There may be a fee if you do want the registration papers and transfer the cat into your name.

The breeder should also provide you with a *kitten pack*, which will include a sample of cat food and possibly a toy, as well as care instructions.

Care



Cat with clipped coat

- Persians can develop breathing problems in hot weather due to their flat faces which causes a narrowing of the stenotic nares (the external opening of the nose) as well as narrow nasal passages which restricts the amount of air that can flow into the nose.
- One of the most important parts of life with a Persian is caring for their coat. The Persian requires a daily brush to avoid knots and mats developing in their coat. This will only take a few minutes per day with a wire brush and a gentle comb.
- Persians can be prone to watery eyes which can cause dark tear stains in the creases of the face, this is especially apparent in light coloured Persians. Clean the folds of the face and the hair around the eyes every day with a soft tissue and warm water.
- Because the Persian is less active than other breeds, they can be prone to weight gain. Feed a premium-quality diet and pay careful attention to portion sizes. Daily play-therapy can prevent weight gain and keep your Persian occupied and mentally stimulated. Keep a selection of toys including wands, toy mice and other interactive games and rotate regularly so that the cat doesn't become bored.
- Dental care is important with all cats, to keep your Persian's teeth in good condition regularly brush with a cat toothbrush and toothpaste (never use human toothpaste) or feed raw chicken necks or chunks of human-grade steak two to three times a week.
- Monthly flea and worming treatment, even for indoor-only cats.

- Persian cats should not be allowed to roam outdoors; their trusting nature puts them at risk. If possible, give them access to a cat enclosure where they can enjoy the great outdoors but in a safe environment.

Health



Persian cats are a *brachycephalic breed*, which means they have a short, flat face, this can lead to problems such as excessive tearing of the eyes, dental problems, eye ulcers and breathing difficulties.

Do your homework when selecting a Persian cat, they have a higher incidence of the following conditions:

- Polycystic kidney disease – A slowly progressive disease, which causes multiple fluid-filled cysts in the kidneys.
- Epiphora – Tears which run onto the face.
- Ringworm – Persians may be more predisposed to infection.
- Entropion – Turning in of the eyelid which can result in corneal ulcers.
- Malocclusion of the jaw.
- Myelodysplasia – A group of diseases caused by a dysfunction of blood cell production in the bone marrow. It can affect red or white blood cells and platelets.
- Breathing difficulties.

When choosing a Persian cat, ask your breeder if he comes with a health guarantee and what inherited diseases the breeder screens for.

Suitable for



With their gentle and laid-back temperament, the Persian is suited most families. If you have young children, try to find a breeder whose kittens have been raised in a family setting.

There is also a shorthaired *version* of the Persian, known as the Exotic.

Related breeds



Exotic shorthair

- [Exotic shorthair](#)
- [Himalayan](#)
- [Chinchilla](#)
- [Burmilla](#)

Frequently asked questions

How big does the Persian get?

Persians are one a medium to large cat, their long, plush coat makes them look even bigger than they actually are. Adult Persians weigh between 5-6 kg.

Are Persian cats friendly?

Yes, Persians are friendly towards people in their own unique way, they are not as in your face as other breeds of cat. They love to be close to their human family but are not demanding.

Why are Persian cats called Persian?

Persian cats were named after their country of origin, which was Persia, which changed its name to Iran in 1935.

Are Persian cats rare?

No, the Persian is still one of the most popular cat breeds and is not rare.

Do Persian cats like to be held?

The Persian is an overall loving breed of cat, but every cat has his or her unique likes and dislikes. Many Persians will be happy to be held, but not all. When looking for a Persian kitten or cat, always ask about his or her temperament and where possible, meet the cat yourself.

How to tell if a Persian is a purebred?

The Persian has a unique appearance, which is easy to identify, however, the only way to determine if a cat is a purebred Persian is to buy from a registered cat breeder and receive the cat's registration papers which will provide details on the cat's ancestry, registration number and details of his or her colour.

In a cat with no background, a DNA test from a reputable provider will be able to shed some light on a cat's ancestral background.

Do Persian cats like to play?

Persian cats tend to be less playful than more active breeds, but almost all cats can be encouraged to play with the right toys. Every home with a cat should have a range of toys which include wands, toy mice and interactive games and puzzles.

Some cats are happy to play on their own, but others prefer interactive games with their human family.

What do Persian cats like?

Persians like to be a part of the family, which can differ from cat to cat. Some love to be on your lap, while others would prefer to sit nearby.

The Persian gets along well with people, but as a quieter breed, they can find loud or energetic children a bit too much. It is always recommended that all cats have a quiet place to retreat to where they can be left alone. This may be a cat bed, or preferably somewhere high so that they can feel safe.

How much do Persian cats sleep?

Most cats, which includes the Persian sleep between 16-18 hours a day.

Do Persian cats smell?

Most cats are efficient groomers and don't smell, however, longhaired cats do require more work than short-haired cats, especially in older cats who may have difficulty grooming their rear end.

Any cat can develop bad breath if good oral hygiene isn't maintained. A veterinarian should always assess a cat with bad breath to evaluate for gum disease or other oral diseases.

How much does a Persian cat cost?

The average cost can range from \$1,000 to \$1,400. Factors which affect price include the age of the cat, kittens are more expensive than adult cats, if the Persian is pet or show quality and if you plan to breed from the cat. Registered breeders will only sell a breeding cat to another registered breeder to prevent backyard breeding.

How did Persian cats get flat faces?

As you can see from the image at the end of this section taken from Harpers Weekly dated January 28, 1872, the Persian didn't always have a flat (brachycephalic) face. It is claimed the Peke-faced Persian arose from a red tabby Persians which gave them a more extreme 'peke-faced' appearance similar to the Pekinese dog. However, reference to the Peke Faced Persian is made in *Cats and all About Them* by L. H. Fairchild and Helen D. Fairchild from 1946 where they write:

"The Peke-faced cat should conform in colour, markings and general type, to the standards as set forth for the red and red tabby long-haired cat. The head should resemble as much as possible that of the Pekinese dog from which it gets its name. The nose should be very short and depressed, or indented between the eyes. There should be a decidedly wrinkled muzzle."



FIG. 20

BLUE (PERSIAN) FEMALE
Serena of Wimauma

Bred and Owned by Mrs. Arvid G. Ohlin

Note the "snub nose," full cheeks, wide open eyes, forward tilted ears and ear tufts and the broad chest.



You can see how the snub-nose continues to change from the first photo taken around 1945 to a recent photo of a Persian cat.

The Peke-faced Persian was registered as a separate breed with the CFA and had a more extreme look, however due to health concerns they fell out of favour in the 1990s.

The snub-nose became a desired trait way before the Peke-faced Persians made their appearance. In the book *Fifty Years of Pedigree Cats* by May Eustace and Elizabeth Towe dated 1967, they write:

Since the Frances Simpson era great improvements have taken place in the Blue Persian cat. His coat is now a more pleasing colour, and the contours of the face and nose have altered. The first Blue Persians were rather dark and slatey in colour, but today's cats are really blue, varying in depth according to the breeding.

The long nose, so noticeable on these cats in the old cat books, is a bad feature, for the nose should be short and broad and the cheeks full. The peke-like face, so much fancied in the U.S.A., is not quite right according to our standards, though there are some breeders that applaud it, not fully understanding that the peke-like face is an uncomfortable set-up for cats, sometimes causing running nose and eyes.

Glancing through old advertisements of stud cats, it would seem that in the early twenties the snub-nosed Blue Persian, and the light-coated one had begun to make a hit.

What can be deciphered, the snub-nose became popular in the 1920s, and in the 1940s the Peke-faced red Persians appeared in one line of cats, but that particular variety was abandoned 50 years later due to health and welfare concerns.

Breed standards basically come down to interpretation, what is a snub nose? The British shorthair and Scottish Fold have a snub (short) nose compared to that of the Siamese or Bengal, but British and Scottish noses are nowhere as extreme as the Persian. If cat with a particularly short snub-nose does well on the show bench, his or her lines will be in demand, and the look can gradually become more extreme due to selective breeding for that perfect 'typey' snub nose. It is a shift which can take generations until you have a look which is completely separate to how its ancestors looked just 100 years ago.



PRIZE CATS AT THE LONDON CRYSTAL PALACE.

AN AFTERNOON WITH THE CATS.

NEW OR has been inaugurated for cats. The, however petted and spoiled Puss may come as a good house or a domestic ornament to the hearth-rug, her fond owners never let her get into her paws, care little for figure, variety of marking, paid no attention to her, and unless she was something very out of the common, turned up these attractions in the same terms of "a beauty." As to the examination for such perfection as was never brought until last year, when some energetic men had the feasibility of a cat show, and in the afternoon was acted upon by the man-

agers of the London Crystal Palace. That exhibition succeeded as well as a second and more extensive exhibition was planned, which took place a few weeks since. To judge from the enthusiasm of the spectators, we may expect that the cat show will become as favorite an institution as the equine, canine, and feline exhibitions in which Americans and English profess to take so much delight. We confidently expect that before another year comes round New York will have a grand Cat Exhibition, beside which that of the London Crystal Palace will sink into insignificance.

The success of the London Crystal Palace during the two days of the show is said to have been most lively and successful. It had been pre-

dicted by skeptical persons that Puss, accustomed to roam about at will, would take her confinement with a very bad grace, and the air with pitiful mew, and scratch any unwary stranger who should attempt to cross her. It was quite the contrary, however. Beyond an occasional plaintive cry when spoken to in a tone that reminded them of home, the hearth-rug, and their mistress's lap, the cats were singularly quiet, and having, perhaps, the few wild specimens, and one unfortunate tabby which a visitor would insist upon stirring up with a large thin-bladed fan, the animals appeared of the most friendly possible disposition, and when not asleep, leaped their backs, arched their tails, and rubbed their heads against their inn bars, as though delighted at being the subject of so much

attention. As for the kittens, they appeared to be especially happy, and rolled over and over in chase of the little balls of paper which lady visitors thrust into their eager for their delirium.

The first prize was won by a Persian she-cat of rare violet color, whose portrait is given on this page. The third prize was taken by the Abyssinian cat, shown in the lower right-hand corner of the illustration. She was captured in the late Abyssinian war, and was timely remarkable for her war-begone appearance, seemingly disconcerted by her sudden elevation into petting, and longing for her barbaric freedom as the good old days of King Tassouk. The animal that attracted most attention was "Tortoiseshell Tom." He stood alone in his glory, the admired of all beholders. The bravest keep-