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# Cats

*THE magazine for all cat lovers*



# THE RUSSIAN BLUE

By Florence Laugher



Both pictures are of JENNYMAY TANYA, bred by Miss F. Laugher, owners, Mr. and Mrs. Adam Parry, of Newhaven, Connecticut, USA. (Sire—Jennymay Erling. Dam—Jennymay Hedvig).



To write about the Russian Blue is rather like setting a match to a firework—one is never dead certain what will happen. Yet there are many of us who have loved this breed for a very long time, and as it becomes increasingly obvious that little headway will be made by present-day breeders unless the true facts and history are made known. I am attempting, within the compass of a comparatively short article to do that very thing. To the many established breeders of this lovely cat I make my apologies if it falls short of their ideals.

One of the first writers ever to publish a book on Cats was Harrison Weir, and it is to him that we owe the first mention of the 'Archangel Blue' as it was then known. Nowadays we know that on the continent two basic types of bone structure are to be found in the cat—the short, thick-set type, with cobby body and round head, and the longer, fine-boned type with a triangular shaped head. The basic coat pattern of all cats is tabby, even black is tabby without the patterning factor, and blue is a sport or dilution of black, which, when mated blue to blue produces a blue offspring. So sometimes one sees Blue Tabbies as well as the Self-Blue, and in fact, some of the earliest short-haired blues in England were Blue Tabbies, which came from the North of Norway and were known as 'Canon Girdlestone's Breed'. Blues of both types were imported and the fine boned type generally had green or greenish yellow eyes, whilst the cobby type had orange eyes, and in those days breeders preferred the latter type, which came to be known as the British type. At shows, both types of cat had to be shown in the same classes, and the standard for eye-colour for both was the same—orange. There is little doubt however, that the natural eye-colour of some of the imports was green, for a noted authority on cats of the time, Miss Frances Simpson, remarks that the Blues being shown at that time appeared to fail in eye-colour, being yellow, and even greenish yellow.

Still, a few of the breeders liked the more foreign type, with its long, pale-coated body, small head, and green eyes, and they persisted in their efforts to maintain this cat, although it never became popular on the show bench, and on the few occasions when they were shown they were known as Blue Foreign, to indicate that it was the imported type, not the native British type.

One of the pioneer breeders of these cats was Mrs. Carew-Cox of Saffron-Walden, in Essex, and in Miss Simpson's book are copious notes on the cats she owned and bred. Space forbids me to mention more than a few, but we illustrate one of her stud cats—'Bayard'. He was the son of an imported cat—Olga, and his sire was 'King Vladimar'. Another of her studs was 'Moscow'—well-known in his day, and yet another was 'Muchacho'. Among her queens were 'Dwina', Lingpopo, who came from Archangel, Odessa, and Fashoda. Other breeders at that time were Mrs. Herring, who owned some of the blue tabbies, Lady Alexander of Ballochmyle, and Mrs. MacLaren Morrison. Through the years, until the war, the breed was maintained by various breeders, of whom one of the best known was Lady Coryton. During the war, however, in common with many other breeds, the Russian suffered heavily, but when it was over, Miss Marie Rochford started breeding her Dunloe Russian Blues, and these became world famous, many of them going to the USA and founding a breed there.

By that time the breed was officially known as Russian Blue. In 1944 the Scandinavians also decided to attempt to breed them, and started with a little cat named 'Pierette'. She was the only one they had, and after much thought, choice of a male descended on a Siamese 'Longfellow of Annam' and he carried a factor for blues. News of the cross was brought to England by interested judges of the day, and rather unfortunately was the cause of an outbreak of hybrid breeding which nearly proved fatal to this breed. To fit the standard, which was then re-written, we have seen the emergence of the present-day Foreign Blue, or Blue Siamese—an all-blue version of a Siamese cat. It is this title which has added to the confusion of new breeders of today—the Foreign Blue is not the Blue Foreign of the 1900s.

Now, in an attempt to heal our differences, and to put our lovely cat first, breeders who are seriously concerned for the future of this breed are crossing the English and Scandinavian lines, attempting to preserve not only their beauty of coat and colouring, and type, but also their established ancestry. The coat should be a true Lavender Blue, which shines like silver in a strong light, and the eyes a brilliant green. There will be considerable difficulties at first, as we struggle with the mixture of types and coat-textures. Very careful selection of only the healthiest stock will be necessary. But so far, results have exceeded our hopes. To illustrate this article I have, with the kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. Adam Parry of New Haven, Connecticut, chosen two of their photographs, to show how the head of the same cat can look completely different from various angles, and to show the similarity to one of the original cats—Bayard. Also the portrait study illustrates clearly all the essential characteristics of the breed and shows the small whisker-pads forming the characteristically shaped triangular muzzle. This feature is very well shown in a drawing in Harrison Weir's book.

With some lines, in particular those based on an early Siamese cross, on both sides of the pedigree, back-crossing has tended to produce a type of head which, when photographed in certain positions appears to have whisker-pads, but in fact does not have them properly developed. This kind of head is sometimes referred to as the 'pinched muzzle'. It is mainly found in Scandinavian lines, but it does occur in certain English lines. I myself have found that the fully developed whisker-pad can be a dominant character, and I hope to introduce it



Mrs. Carew Cox's Blue male stud BAYARD. (Sorry the reproduction is so poor, but this seems to be the only existing picture of this important cat).

into the Scandinavian type as I think it certainly improves the general appearance of the head, rendering it more like the original cat. The slanting ears is also a recessive, it should not be too difficult to eradicate.

Another problem concerns the coat. The Swedish lines have a light undercoat, but also have lovely silver tipping on the winter coat. Although I would like to see the silver tipping maintained as it increases the beauty of the coat to a marked degree, I would certainly prefer to see a solid colour underneath 'sound to roots', as judges say. The eyes of some of the Swedish lines too, are too round—or they were. Scandinavian breeders are working hard to correct this.



**RUSSIAN BLUE MALE**

CH. RAELYN BLUE HANS. Sire,  
 Ch. Sylphides Talmudovsky (Imp.  
 Eng.). Dam, GD. CH. Sylphides  
 Mazanka (Imp. Eng.). Breeder/  
 Owner—Mrs. C. H. Chambers, 2,  
 Montgomery Street, East Brighton,  
 Victoria 3187, Australia.

Photograph—

Dr. CYRIL H. CHAMBERS.

The photograph of Mrs. Chambers' cat shows the correct body shape very well indeed and also, in particular, the correct profile of the skull and head generally, with a nice square muzzle. Sometimes one finds weak chins cropping up in some litters. Cats showing this feature should not be bred from, as this is an hereditary feature which is almost certain to be passed on, and to become even more pronounced in succeeding generations. The coat should be very thick, short, and upright, with a silky texture to it, resembling sealskin—the sort grandmother's muff was made of—not the imitation kind! Avoid, too, if possible, using cats that are too short in the body or too high in the shoulders. Both these features can become more pronounced through bad breeding. The ears should be large and upright. Avoid ears that set forward, or 'poke bonnet ears' as they are sometimes called.

To intending breeders I would offer one small warning. The Russian Blue presents an exciting challenge, but—it is NOT an easy cat to breed. Blue is one of the most difficult colours of all to maintain, and a good Russian must be a good blue. Where lines have a Siamese cross carrying only the blue factor, colour is not, or it need not, be a big problem, but where the chocolate or lilac factor is present, colour, from the point of view of a 'blue' fanatic such as I am, can be very poor. But with these new crosses there should in future be no need for any further hybrid crossings. To some extent the blue colour can be dependant on climate—which is why the best blues were found in Northern Europe, and breeders in some parts of the country may find themselves unable to get a really good, intense blue, they may have to settle for a cat excelling in type or eye-colour, rather than coat. But temperamentally and aesthetically, they are wonderful cats—I think I should know—I have been owned by them for twenty years.

**STANDARD OF POINTS—RUSSIAN BLUE  
 SHORT-HAIRS BREED 16a**

**Colour :** Clear Blue, even throughout and in maturity free from tabby markings or shading. Medium blue is preferred.

**Coat :** Short, thick and very fine, standing up soft and silky like seal skin. Very different from any other breed. Coat is double so that it has a distinct silvery sheen. The texture and appearance of the coat is the truest criterion of the Russian Blue.

**Body :** Body long and graceful in outline and carriage. Medium strong bone.

**Tail :** Tail fairly long and tapering.

**Head :** Short wedge, with flat skull : forehead and nose straight, forming an angle. Prominent whisker pads.

**Eyes :** Vivid green, set rather wide apart, almond in shape.

**Ears :** Large and pointed, wide at base and set vertically to the head. Skin of ears thin and transparent, with very little inside furnishing.

**Faults :** White or tabby markings. Cobby or heavy build. Square head. Yellow in eyes. Siamese type is undesirable.

**Scale of Points**

Colour	...	...	...	20
Coat and Condition	...	...	...	25
Body, Build and Tail	...	...	...	25
Eyes	...	...	...	15
Head and Ears	...	...	...	15
			Total	100