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**The Scottish  
Fold and the  
American Curl**



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# Folds and Curls



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**Quadruple Grand Champion Suncurl Zachary of Contrycousin is a brown classic tabby American Curl. His owner is Anne Vytlačil of Illinois.**

## The Scottish Fold

*By Gretchen Norgren*

"WHAT HAPPENED TO your cat's ears?" "Does your cat have ears?"

These are the two questions I am most frequently asked about my cats. The cats are Scottish Folds, and their most distinguishing feature—their folded ears—can be spotted with even a casual glance.

The Scottish Fold is one breed that is suited to anyone's taste. Folds are as interesting to own as they are to look at. They spend their waking hours investigating everything around them. A Scottish Fold can be found on the page of the newspaper or magazine you are trying to read, behind the door you have just closed, under your feet as you are trying to walk, hidden in the basket of laundry you are trying to fold and in the middle of the bed you are trying to make.

## How the Fun Began

The Scottish Fold story began in 1961 in the hills of Perthshire, Scotland. William Ross, a shepherd, was strolling by a neighbor's farm and saw a white barn cat that looked different from other cats. The cat had ears that folded forward and downward on its head, making it look similar to a snowy owl.

William ran to get his wife, Mary. The two then asked the neighbor about the cat and learned that the cat's name was Susie. A year later the Rosses were given one of Susie's kittens, a white female who looked just like her mother. The Rosses named the kitten Snooks. All Scottish Folds can trace their pedigrees to Snooks or to one of her three kittens that were brought to the United States in

*The Scottish Fold and the American Curl are known for their unusual ears.*

**T**hanks to Mother Nature, the world of domestic cats includes some wonderful anomalies. Because of genetic mutations, several breeds of cats with unusual features have developed. Two such breeds—the Scottish Fold and the American Curl—are distinctive because of their ears. No other cats in the world have ears as interesting as the Fold or the Curl.

Each breed can trace its origins to one foundation queen and to a group of devoted cat lovers who recognized the cat's uniqueness and developed a breeding program to perpetuate her special features. Also in each case, the new breed attracted attention immediately and soon became popular at cat shows as well as in cat owners' homes.

Read on to learn about Susie, the first Scottish Fold, and Shulamith, the first American Curl, and how two breeds with unusual ears won over the hearts of cat lovers everywhere.



## FOLDS AND CURLS

*continued*

### People-Oriented Pet

The Scottish Fold is as sweet as it looks. This cat is an outgoing, fun-loving and loyal pet that will gravitate to the center of your home. Because Folds are people-oriented, they readily adapt themselves to the needs of their humans. They love to be loved and will do almost anything to please their people.

By the time most Scottish Folds reach adulthood, they become easy-going lap cats that purr all the time. In fact, the older a Fold gets, the more mellow it becomes. One of its favorite pastimes is lying on its back, enjoying a sunbeam.

Although the following statement can be made about many cats, it is especially true for this breed: You do not own a Scottish Fold—a Scottish Fold owns you.

### The American Curl

*By Michael J. Valentine*

AT A RECENT cat show in Southern California, a young couple approached a cage occupied by an American Curl cat. Pausing to take a better look, the woman peered in and exclaimed, "Look at its ears—they're curly! How do you get them like that?"

Sitting nearby, the cat's owner, tired and a little impatient after two days of competition, smiled wearily and replied, "Oh, I just use my curling iron. Some people use starch." She was joking, of course; the curl in the cat's ears is entirely natural.

Even though this new breed's ears bring it a great deal of attention, it possesses other qualities that make it an outstanding choice for pet lovers and breeders alike. Appearing on the scene just nine years ago, the American Curl has become known not only as an up-and-coming show cat but as a congenial pet as well. It has gained a reputation for having a mild, sunny disposition and a great tolerance for children—even toddlers—which is making it increasingly popular in younger households.

And why not? The ears of a Curl lend its overall appearance a special appeal and a uniqueness that is catching on with cat fanciers nationwide.

### Spontaneous Mutation

The history of the American Curl can be traced to June 1981 in Lakewood, California, where the first known Curly appeared on the doorstep of Joe and Grace Ruga. Joe had gone out to investigate two cats sunning themselves in the parking space next to the Rugas' condominium. After looking closely at the cats, he called out to Grace, "There's something different

about these cats' ears." One of the cats, a black and white longhair, disappeared a short time later, but the other cat, a black longhair who was later named Shulamith (from a Hebrew word meaning "black and comely"), gradually became part of the Ruga household.

Fascinated by her curled ears and impressed with her gentleness, the Rugas decided to breed Shulamith to see if the ears were a genetic trait. Three separate breedings were undertaken at the Rugas' Curlniques Cattery, and in every instance curly-eared kittens were produced, verifying that the curled ears were indeed genetic in origin. At the same time, the Rugas searched through cat books, talked to pet shop owners and showed their discovery to other cat lovers. No one had ever before seen or heard about a curly-eared cat.

The American Curl was presented to the cat fancy for the first time in 1983 at a CFA show in Palm Springs, California. The breed was not allowed to be shown for competition at that time; it was on exhibition only. Seven years and many cat shows later, the American Curl is today receiving the acceptance of a wide circle of cat owners, breeders and fanciers alike. The breed now has championship status in The International Cat Association and can be shown in the new breed or color class or in the miscellaneous class in several other associations.

### To Curl or Not to Curl

The most distinctive feature of this breed is its unique, attractively curled ears. These ears are quite firm to the touch, erect and open, and curve up in a gentle curl. Set on the corners of the head, the ears curl away from the face and toward the center of the back of the skull. The degree of curl varies substantially from one cat to another, but a graceful curve like a crescent is most desirable. Breeders describe this as a third-degree curl; a somewhat less pronounced curl is described as a second-degree curl. A first-degree curl means the ears are only slightly curved. This is considered the least desirable for show or breeding purposes.

The Curl's coat is moderately long with a minimal undercoat. It should lie flat and should not be bushy. The coat is silky with a lustrous sheen and has a very pleasing texture. Any color of coat is acceptable.

When viewed in profile, the nose is ➔



Allstar's Ear Jordan shows why Scottish Fold kittens are in such demand. Jordan's owner is Wendy Lane of Illinois.

Photo: Hillstrom Stock Photo



1970—most often to a kitten named Denisla Hester.

Hester was placed with Salle Wolf Peters of Wyola Cattery in Pennsylvania, the foundation cattery for Scottish Folds in the United States. Salle's cattery produced a cat named Wyola Jed Gallant, the first Fold to be registered in this country.

About the same time Hester was placed with Salle, Hester's "niece," Martina Shona, was acquired by Briony Silverwright of Utah. Shona, a daughter of Denisla Hester, Hester's littermate, was exhibited at a cat show in Salt Lake City. Karen Votava of Bryric Cattery attended the show and saw her first Scottish Fold there. She soon became a Fold breeder and today is the only one of the original American Fold breeders still actively breeding. Bryric cats have formed the foundation for many U.S. Scottish Fold catteries.

The Scottish Fold was granted championship status by the Cat Fanciers' Association during the 1978-79 show season. Since then, many Folds have won national and regional awards in CFA and in other associations.

### Folded or Straight?

Despite the name of the breed, not all Scottish Folds have folded ears. In fact, all Scottish Fold kittens are born with straight ears. Within about 21 days after birth, some kittens' ears will have folded naturally, while other kittens' ears will have remained straight. Straight-eared Folds (sometimes called perk-eared Folds) still possess the beauty and wonderful personality of the breed—they just do not have the folded ears.

In cats with folded ears, the ears can have one of two distinctive looks. With a single fold, the ear gently folds in the middle. It does not really "cap" the head, so the head is not able to retain its well-rounded shape. With a double fold, the ear has a crimp in the middle and then tucks and folds forward and downward, resulting in a caplike appearance and a well-rounded head. Breeders consider the double fold more desirable. To me, the most appealing look is when the ears are set as wide as possible. This gives the cat the appearance of having almost no ears at all.

As stated before, the head of a Scottish Fold should be nicely rounded. It should have rounded, well-padded whisker pads. The head should blend into a short, almost nonexistent neck.

The eyes are one of the breed's most breathtaking characteristics. They should be large and well-rounded, with a wide open and sweet expression. The tips of the ears should be rounded, not pointed.

A Scottish Fold's body is medium in size and well-padded, and the tail should be medium to long. The coat is short, dense and resilient. All colors except pointed colors (as in the Siamese-related colors) are accepted.

In recent years, the Longhaired Scottish Fold has appeared on the show scene. The length of its coat is similar to that of the Maine Coon Cat. The Longhaired Fold, however, is not yet accepted for championship status in CFA, although it is accepted in some other associations.

### A Wait for Kittens

Because of the increasing popularity of this breed, most breeders have a waiting list for kittens. The best advice I can give to someone wanting to buy a Scottish Fold for a pet is to be open-minded about the choice of coat colors. This is especially true if you prefer a folded-eared kitten to a perk-eared kitten. Remember that usually two to three kittens in a litter of five will have folded ears, so coat-color choices are limited.

When people come to my cattery to look at Scottish Fold kittens old enough to go to new homes, they are often surprised that the kittens run out to greet them. Scottish Folds love being handled by small children and

cuddled by adults. They are very affectionate, playful and easygoing.

Once when I had seven kittens for sale, a family came to buy one. The family included two children under the age of 5, and the kittens amazed them. The children sat in the middle of the floor and let the kittens crawl all over them. Kittens were sitting on the children's heads and shoulders, and all the time the kids were laughing and giggling. The family left with two kittens and called back later to reserve a third.

A reputable breeder will sell a kitten only under the right conditions. A kitten intended to be a pet is generally sold with a contract stating that the buyer agrees to have the kitten neutered or spayed by a certain date. Often the contract also stipulates that the kitten not be allowed to roam freely outdoors.

If you decide to bring a Scottish Fold into your home, your kitten should come to you only after it has received all its kitten vaccinations from the breeder or the breeder's veterinarian. The breeder should also give you a guarantee that the kitten has no birth defects. In the past, the breed had a reputation, especially in Europe, for having birth defects, but proper breeding programs and an enlargement of the gene pool have led to the birth today of healthy, hardy Scottish Fold kittens. Reputable breeders think of the health and welfare of their kittens before selling them. ➔

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## FOLDS AND CURLS

continued

straight, with a slight rise from the bottom of the eyes to the forehead. The eyes are moderately large and should have an alert, pleasant expression. The American Curl Short-hair, less common than its longhaired counterpart, is structurally identical, but its coat is much shorter, and its tail is not plumed.

The American Curl is a well-balanced, medium-sized cat. In male Curls, allowances are made for normal male characteristics, such as moderate jowls, heavier body weight and stronger shoulders. The conformation of the cat is more important than the size. A Curl takes two to three years to reach maturity, when it will weigh about 5 to 10 pounds.

When a litter of American Curls is born, the breeder watches the development of each kitten's ears with keen anticipation. At birth, a Curl kitten's ears usually appear straight. If the ears are going to curl, a noticeable curl begins to develop by about the third day after birth and gradually becomes more pronounced during the next five to six weeks. From age 6 weeks to about 4 months, the degree of the kitten's curl may remain the same, or the ears may begin to uncurl, sometimes quite dramatically.

According to breeder Glenda Koppenhaver, a third-degree curl could change to a first-degree curl almost overnight, abruptly converting a would-be show-quality kitten to a breeder- or pet-quality Curl. When the kitten is about 4 months old, the degree of curl takes on its final form, although some alteration and smoothing of the ear may continue into the cat's fifth or sixth month. Because of the time necessary for the ears to develop, someone wishing to purchase a Curl for show purposes should not buy a kitten until it is about 4 months old.

### An Up-And-Coming Breed

American Curls have become a popular breed in a short time, in part because of the efforts of the American Curl Enthusiasts. Founded in July 1986, ACE was established as the first "unaffiliated breed club for the preservation and advancement of the American Curl cat."

ACE is headed by president Armando "Shorty" Camarena, who, along with his wife, Jeane, became

interested in the Curl in 1987 when he saw one pictured in a newspaper advertisement promoting a local cat show. The Camarenas had been wanting a pedigreed cat, and they were attracted by the Curl's unique ears. They purchased their first Curl, nicknamed A.C., that September, and their AbraCURLdabra Cattery has since produced several very fine Curls.

One of the Curls coming out of AbraCURLdabra was a pretty torbie and white kitten that caught the eye of Debbie MacInnes, who had just begun to take an interest in Curls. Debbie acquired the kitten, named Talulah of Alizara, and showed her at several cat shows, where she drew raves from judges. As an adult, Talulah went on to win the Best American Curl in Show award at the December 1989 INCATS exhibition in San Francisco. More recently, she became the first American Curl to achieve the status of Supreme Grand Champion in TICA.

### Best of Friends

While the American Curl has a long way to go before it seriously challenges more established show breeds, its continued development as both a show cat and a household pet seems assured. This is, of course, contingent upon responsible breeding programs that improve and refine the Curl's best qualities. Such programs are largely planned on the basis of the breed standard, which, at this writing, is still not uniform among the various cat associations.

"The standard by which curls are judged must be uniform," says ACE president Camarena. This standard, he contends, should follow the standard established by ACE, which was subsequently adopted by TICA in its judging policies. Happily, breeding programs are consistently producing healthy Curls that have no apparent genetic abnormalities.

Despite the work yet to be done in this area, Shorty Camarena sees a bright future ahead for the American Curl, which he envisions as the cat of the 1990s. "The American Curl," he predicts (only half seriously), "will replace the dog as man's best friend!"

*For more information on the American Curl, contact the American Curl Enthusiasts, Dept. CF, 1038 N. Alameda Ave., Azusa, CA 91702.*

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known  
for.

Scottish Folds can have straight ears, ears with single folds (as this beautiful dilute calico has) or ears with double folds.



Photo Chanani

By the time American Curl kittens are 4 months old, the degree of curl in their ears should reach its final form.



Scottish Folds, such as Grand Champion Allstar's Chrissie Evert, make people-oriented pets. Chrissie is owned by Gayle Johnson and Pat Wasik.



Photo: Hillstrom Stock Photo

American Curls can come in any color. This brown spotted torbie is Curliniques Tawny Mirage, owned by Grace Ruga and Paul Koppenhaver.



Photo: Chanan