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# EARS to YOU

The rounded appearance and sweet temperament of the Scottish Fold prompt many people to compare them with teddy bears.

## The **SCOTTISH FOLD** and **AMERICAN CURL** have attention-getting ears in common, but each possesses a character all its own.

BY THERESA MEYERS

**"D**id it hurt?" The question from yet another surprised cat lover made Lisa Aring grin. She is used to the stares, delighted exclamations and true devotion engendered by the unusual ears of her cats. "No, we don't make them that way, Mother Nature does," says Aring, a member of the American Curl breed councils of the Cat Fanciers' Association and The International Cat Association, and owner of Sarcenet cattery near Austin, Texas. Both Scottish Folds and American Curls stem from natural genetic mutations that fold the ears forward or curl them back, but the differences between the breeds go well beyond the direction of their ears.

### FROM SCOTLAND, WITH LOVE

According to Fold lovers, the Scottish Fold's even, tolerant personality makes them great lounging companions.

"I like them because they're lazy enough to just sack out with me on the couch," says Marilee Griswold, MD, owner of Amber Snow cattery in San Diego, Calif. "There are just some evenings I want to lie around, drink hot tea and cuddle up with my Scottish Folds."

Folds tend to be the strong, silent type, talking only occasionally in chirps and squeaks, and they are very affectionate, but not pushy, says Patrick Sartz, DC, CFA breed-council secretary and owner

of Earmark Cattery in Chandler, Arizona. "The majority of time they'll sit at my feet and look at me until I invite them into my lap," he says.

Owners find the low-key charms of the Fold endearing. "When my cats hear noise, they raise up on their haunches like prairie dogs and stare down the haunches sometimes for as long as a minute or more," Griswold says.

"Folds are very trusting and, many times, if they're spread-eagled sound asleep on their backs, you have to step over them, because they're not going to move," says Carol Merrill of Katom Cattery in San Diego, Calif.



The Scottish Fold has grown rapidly in popularity since a Scottish shepherd and his wife introduced the breed in 1961. William and Mary Ross noticed the down-turned ears of Susie, a white barn cat belonging to a neighbor in the town of Coupar Angus. They asked for a folded-ear kitten; Snooks, a white female, was born two years later. The Rosses consulted geneticists and bred Snooks carefully — first with a red tabby domestic male and later with a blue British Shorthair. They discovered the mutated gene responsible for folding had incomplete dominance and only some of the kittens in each litter possess the desired fold.

The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy in Great Britain accepted the new breed initially, but closed the registry in 1971 amid controversy regarding health issues. Some of the early concerns regarding deafness and ear cleanliness

were easily put to rest. An important early study proved that a crippling arthritic condition could be avoided by breeding folded cats to straight-eared cats. An easy test to screen for this disease is to check the tail for length and flexibility, a requirement written into the breed standard.

American breeders showed interest in the new breed from the very beginning and were more than willing to give the endearing little cats a chance. The CFA recognized the breed in 1977, welcoming Susie's Scottish descendants as a unique and valuable addition to the existing breeds.

American or British Shorthairs are the only allowed outcrosses. However, breeders once used other breeds to provide genetic diversity; the breed consequently comes in both longhair and shorthair versions and a multitude of colors. Newborn kittens have straight ears that may begin

to fold at 2 to 3 weeks of age, says Susan Martin, CFA breed council member and owner of Loch Lomond Cattery in Canyonlake, Calif. While not all kittens will fold, they will have all the other characteristics of the breed.

In addition to their unique ears, Scottish Folds have a rounded appearance that reminds some of owls and others of teddy bears.

"When you pick up a Fold it should be heavy and well-padded, but not fat," Martin says. "They are substantial cats and heavily muscled, but soft." Their coats are also plush and soft, standing away from the body.

Folds enjoy regular attention and easily tolerate kids and dogs.

"We placed a kitten about a month ago with a family that had a 9-year-old girl," Sartz says. "She walked around holding him like a baby for three hours and he never tried to get away."

## SCOTTISH FOLD

**APPEARANCE:** Often described as owl-like, the Scottish Fold features include large, round eyes, and small ears that fold forward, lying close and caplike against the round head. Folds are round in their overall appearance and often seem pleasantly padded, but not fat. The tail should be flexible and tapering, with a longer tail preferred. The breed comes in both short and long hair. The shorthair coat is plush, standing away from the body; a longhair Fold should have britches, a tail plume, toe tufts, ear furnishings and a ruff.

**COLOR:** All, except for those showing evidence of hybridization resulting in the colors chocolate, lavender and the pointed pattern, or any combination of these and white.

**PERSONALITY:** Incredibly tolerant, sweet and affectionate, Scottish Folds enjoy interacting with families and will follow family members around the house. They are very sociable. While dependent on their people, Folds are not pushy cats but can effectively stare at you until you feel guilty if you don't pick them up or play with them. Folds rarely speak unless they have something important to say, expressing it in chirps and chatters. They enjoy company and playtime, and are laid-back enough to snooze happily through a movie with you on the couch or while you read the paper.

**ASSOCIATIONS THAT ACCEPT IT:** All

**ACCEPTED FOR SHOW:** Originally accepted for show in Europe by the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy in 1966; registration was later withdrawn. Accepted for show in North America by the CFA in 1977. Granted



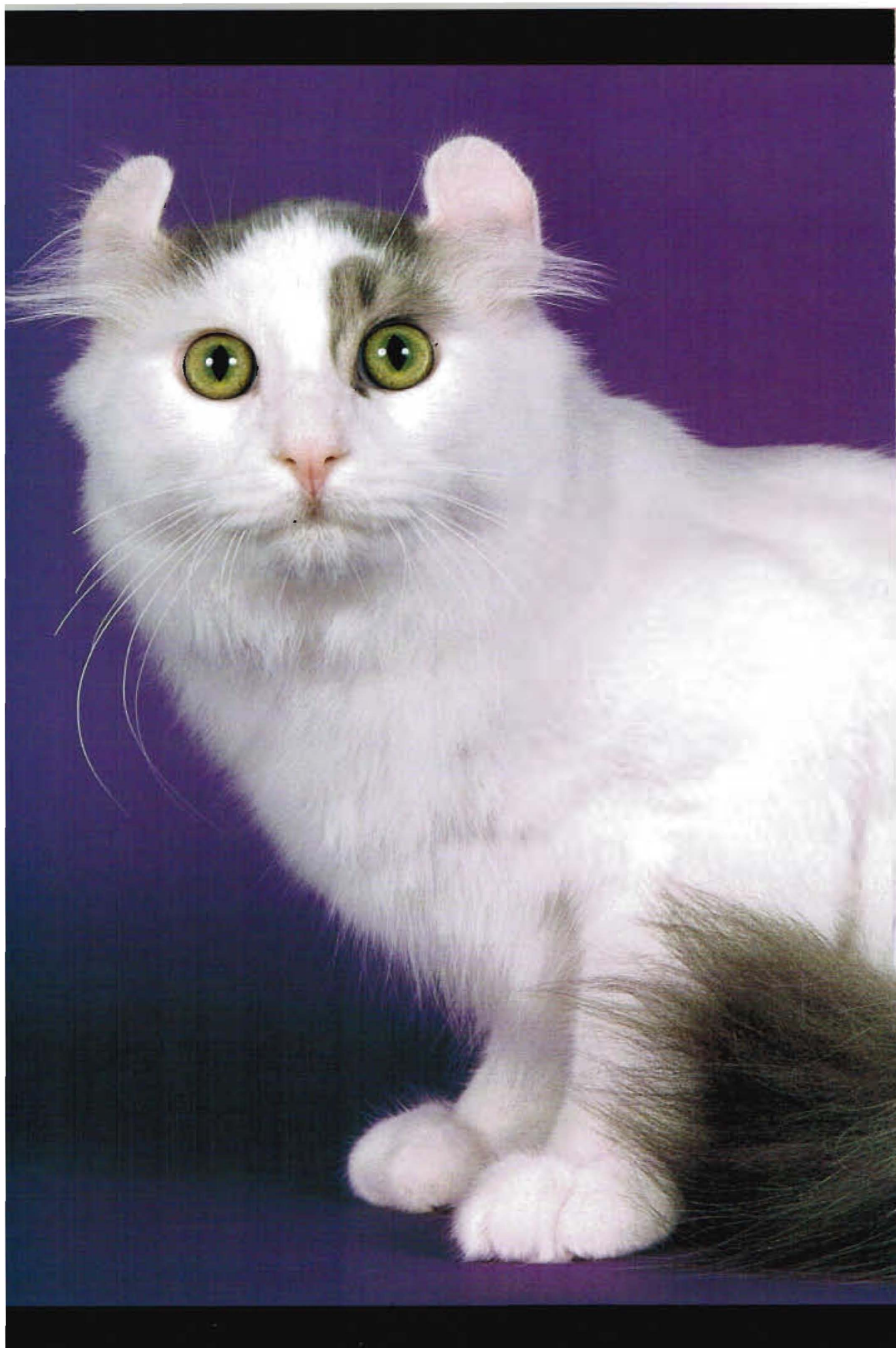
Not all Scottish Folds have folded ears. Although straight-eared cats can't compete in the show ring, they make great pets and can be used for breeding.

Championship status in the CFA in 1978, with longhaired Folds granted Championship status in 1993.

**GROOMING:** Even the longhaired coat version is considered wash-and-wear, needing only an occasional brushing. Ears may require some cleaning every few months and should be done with a non-oily ear cleanser applied with a cotton swab.

**LIFESTYLE:** Scottish Folds love their families and need interaction and playtime on a daily basis. They prefer families with children, dogs, cats or other animals to keep them from being lonely.











Curls are also very people-oriented and friendly. "They're the kind of cat that never meets a stranger," Camarena says. "They'll go over to you as though they had known you all their life."

"Curls learn quickly and are easily trained to voice commands, fetching and other tricks," says Caroline Scott, CFA's American Curl breed-council secretary and co-owner of Procurl Harem in New York. "A moderately active breed, they can play hard one minute, running through the house and climbing cat trees, then completely settle down, curling up in your lap the next."

Relaxing one evening in their poolside room at a Florida resort with her husband, Michael Tucker, Scott was startled by a knock at their propped-open door. "There's a cat out here watching the kids playing in the pool," the stranger asked. "Is it yours?"

**"THEY'RE THE KIND OF CAT THAT NEVER MEETS A STRANGER. THEY'LL GO OVER TO YOU AS THOUGH THEY HAD KNOWN YOU ALL THEIR LIFE."**

— JEANE CAMARENA

### ABRACURLDABRA CATTERY

"It couldn't be our cat. He's safe in the room inside a small tent," Scott says. She turned around to check anyway and found that the tent zipper was pulled open and their red-spotted American Curl, Luke, was gone. "We looked outside to find Luke sitting by the door, just as the man had said. He was totally cool when we discovered him and gave us that typical 'ha-ha, gotcha' Curl look."

American Curls and Scottish Folds may attract attention because of their unusual ears, but it is their loving, social personalities that make them simply "ear-resistible."

*Seattle-based free-lancer Theresa Meyers profiled the Burmese breed in October. You can find her on the Web at [www.theresa-meyers.com](http://www.theresa-meyers.com).*

## AMERICAN CURL



Descending from a stray cat found in Southern California, the American Curl has come a long way in only 20 years.

**APPEARANCE:** The first thing people often notice are the ears, which curl away from the face and toward the back of the head in an arc of at least 90 degrees. The base of the ear should be firm cartilage far at least one-third of the way up. Expressive eyes are walnut-shaped. American Curls have medium builds with a slender, well-muscled rectangular body shape. Its head has a modified-wedge shape without flat planes, featuring a gently rounded muzzle and firm chin. The breed comes in both long and short single coats, both of which feel silky and require little or no grooming.

**COLOR:** All, including blue-eyed colorpoints.

**PERSONALITY:** Often called the Peter Pan breed of the cat fancy, American Curls retain their kitten-like playfulness throughout their lives. Incredibly adaptable, extremely intelligent, curious and affectionate. They are quiet and will talk in chirps and chatters. Curls require regular attention and are very interactive with their families, often hopping into any open lap. They love to play and climb vigorously with almost acrobatic grace. Cat trees are strongly recommended for the breed to give them appropriate climbing opportunities and high places from which to view the surrounding human activities.

**ASSOCIATIONS THAT ACCEPT IT:** All

**RECOGNIZED FOR SHOW:** First accepted by TICA in 1985; by the CFA in 1992. Given Championship status in the CFA in 1993.

**GROOMING:** Virtually none. The American Curl coat, even the longhaired version, is considered wash-and-wear. Because of their unique shape, ears may require a gentle cleaning every few months. Breeders suggest using a non-oily ear cleaning solution on cotton rather than administering the solution directly into the ear.

**LIFESTYLE:** With exceptional adaptability, friendliness and tolerance, they'll fit well almost anywhere they are loved. Curls need families that will play and interact with them on a daily basis and enjoy children and families with dogs or other animals.