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**101 GIFTS  
FOR CATS  
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THE PALETTE'S NOT EASY TO HANDLE, BUT—

## IT'S A COLORFUL WORLD —THE CAT FANCY

by Jane S. Martinke

*THIS SEEMS TO* be a good time to pause for a breather and change of pace in our study of the standards while we take a good hard look at something that is common to every standard in some form—*COLOR*. We all enjoy a little color in our lives, so why not in that most important part of them, our cats? I venture to say we may come across some interesting aspects of this subject in the course of that look, for here again the standards do not present the whole story.

We will start with *White* which so many people erroneously believe to be merely an absence of color and which would appear to be the simplest color of all, but which may in actuality be the most complex. There probably is no such thing in the animal world as a true perfection of white lacking any trace of one or more other colors shading it subtly—if indeed there is such a thing anywhere. Most people accept that there are many types of white in textiles and paints. There is chalk-white, ivory-white, off-white, eggshell-white, oyster-white, blue-white, clown-white, colonial-white, not to mention a myriad of other tones all, loosely speaking, in the range of what passes for white. None of them are a true white for each one has some slight trace of some other color in it, just as a house-painter mixing his colors will add just a smidgeon of what would seem to be a wildly inappropriate and incompatible color which becomes indistinguishable in the mixture, but which adds immeasurably to the distinction of the resulting shade.

In the cat fancy it is not too uncommon to hear someone disparage a rival's win taken with a White on the grounds that "After all, the Whites don't have any color faults to contend with and this gives them an unfair advantage over the other colors." This simply is not so, and anyone either so innocent or so stupid as the case may be as to make such a statement is unconsciously revealing an abysmal

ignorance on the subject of White cats. The breeders of Whites have fully as many difficulties as those working with any other color. Many people fail to realize that in cats, as in paints and textiles, there are many different shades and types of white.

Everyone is aware that the quality of any color, including white, in a cat at a given time can be affected either advantageously or adversely by outside influences. Most realize too, even if only subconsciously, that a clear sparkling white which reflects light almost like a prism is the most desirable type. However, when white is dull or "off" or yellowed, they assume automatically that it is because of some temporary condition which is affecting the coat. It goes without saying—why, I wonder, do we use that phrase so freely when we always follow it up immediately by saying what we profess to believe does not need to be said? Ye gods, where was I? Oh yes. It is true that the purity of white can be substantially altered by many things. An overly acid condition will yellow the coat noticeably. So will too much iron in drinking water or diet. The wrong type of shampoo can dull the color so that it no longer reflects light. Chronic physical conditions can dim even a fastidiously clean and well-groomed coat and make it appear dull and lifeless. Last year's wornout guard hairs, if left in the coat after they have served their purpose and are ready to be discarded to make way for the new hair growth, will coarsen and thicken in texture and this too will have an undesirable effect on the color. Excess humidity can affect color. The cat itself, if it tends to be fussy about its appearance, wishing to show off its white as though it had been freshly washed and ironed, can lick itself so much that the acidity of its saliva will tarnish the purity of the color. Even the very texture of the fur will have an effect on the quality of the white. A very silky coat will tend to glisten and

sparkle from reflected light. A "cotton" coat can be an excellent white but it is not likely to have such a high sheen and sparkle. A wooly coat may possess a good tone of white, but it can appear very dead and dull.

In view of all these possible conditions, to name only a few of them, which can alter the true color of a cat, it is small wonder that only the most skilled and astute among the breeders, and those blessed with a keen eye for nuances of color into the bargain, ever fully realize that, even under the most optimum conditions where the cat is safeguarded from every possible factor which might spoil the perfection of its color, there will still be rather wide variations among Whites. Some cats possess a naturally clear and pure white coat like sheets laundered with great skill and a judicious use of both sun and bluing. Others will be slightly yellowed and show the tone of white sheets which were perfectly laundered originally but which have lain in a drawer so long that they have taken on a slightly ivory tinge. Some may hint at a touch of saffron in the paint pot from which they were colored. Some may even have a suggestion of the type of white hair found on people who were originally carrot-tops.

Attention may be diverted from these variations somewhat by great care in keeping the cat immaculate, extreme selectivity in the choice of grooming preparations which are so pure and neutral that they cannot affect the color, and scrupulous attention to the diet to be certain that it is fully nutritional. They cannot be eliminated completely because they are genetic in character, and it must be remembered that any characteristic which is programmed into the genes can be passed on to the progeny—and if, alas, it is one you don't want in your line it probably will be.

It must be remembered in addition that Mother Nature is an artist at camouflage, and white cats are one place where she exercises this skill to the nth degree in some cases. *NOT EVERY WHITE CAT IS A WHITE CAT*. No, I have not flipped my lid as you have anticipated I would—not yet at least, just give me a little more time. Many Whites are genetically a wholly different color which is simply masked by the white and are not, properly speaking, white cats at all. In the show ring, where judgments must necessarily be based on phenotype rather than genotype, they are white. In the breeding program this should not be taken for granted.

Everyone who has worked with Whites personally, and many who have not, are well aware that white kittens often carry a patch of blue on the head which disappears completely with maturity. Many breeders are delighted to find such a spot on their white kittens because of a widespread belief



that these particular kittens will be free of the deafness so commonly found in white animals of any species and which is rife in cats. If there is any validity in this theory the soundness of the hearing may well be due to the fact that such a cat is, almost certainly, a Blue or a Bluecream genetically rather than a White or, at the very least, in some breeds, a spotted cat incompletely white. This same fact of life may be one of the major factors influencing the quality and tone of the whiteness of the coat.

White is found in Persians, Angoras, American Shorthairs, Exotic Shorthairs, Manx, Rex and Japanese Bobtails, even Sphynx. With the heat of the argument which currently rages over whether genuine Angoras do or do not appear in colors other than white, prudence and a due regard for life and limb dictate that I except this breed when I say that in all these breeds, plus the Birmans, white may be combined with some other color—although it must be admitted that I do violence to my own beliefs when I include Persians and I do so only because what the standard of an association says is so is so for that association whether it is so or not so. No matter whether white is found as a solid color or as part of a color pattern, the purer, the clearer and the more sparkling this white is, the better.

The Angoras are to be *pure white*. The standards for American Shorthair, Exotic Shorthair, Japanese Bobtail, Manx, Persian and Rex are more demanding and call for *pure, glistening white*. The physical impact of the calibre of the white will necessarily vary somewhat from breed to breed because of the length and the texture of the fur. It may be that the white of the Angora whose standard does not specify *glistening* will have more of that quality than that of any other breed. This is occasioned by the type of its coat. The fur is to be *silky with a wavy tendency*. It is to be *very fine and have a silk-like feel*. Pure natural silk fibers have a tendency to reflect and refract light and a coat which has the propensities of silk would have this characteristic in common with it. The waviness would add to the reflective properties of this coat and remove from it any sense of flatness of color since it will possess the normal variations of light and shadow found in any uneven surface.

The timbre of the white in American Shorthairs will vary widely in direct ratio to the amount of Persian which has been bred into the background of the individual specimen forming a portion of its genetic makeup, but let us pass from that touchy point in great haste. I haven't really the "figger" to find a rail a comfortable perch and somehow I doubt that tar would go well with my complexion, not to mention that feathers tickle. The standard for American Shorthair does call for a coat

which is *hard in texture*, the antithesis of the Persian type of fur. The harder the coat, the shinier it will be and the less Persian influence there is the harder the coat is likely to be.

The white of the Exotic Shorthair will, of course, be very similar to that of the Persian because everything about it in an outstanding specimen will be owed to its Persian ancestry with the single exception of the length of its coat.

The white of a Japanese Bobtail, like the other colors found in this breed, has a depth of intensity not found in other breeds for some reason and it is rather difficult to convey an accurate picture of this difference to those who are not familiar with them. To put it as simply as possible, its white is whiter than other whites as its black is blacker and its red more vibrant. The colors of this breed tend to stand out from other colors just as fluorescent paint seems to be a little larger than life when compared with normal paint.

Manx have a thick and very double coat and this is bound to have some influence on the quality of the white to be found in this breed. I have seen some Manx of good quality otherwise whose white appeared to be somewhat grayed, but I have inclined to feel that this could be due at least in part to a certain amount of laziness about the grooming on the part of the owner, since I have also seen white Manx from somewhat similar bloodlines so clear and sparkling that, if they were larger, one would need the protection of sunglasses against snow-blindness when looking directly at them.

Persians come in so many different textures of fur, all of which meet the standard adequately, that there is a greater diversity in the tones of white found among them than in any other breed. Probably the clearest and purest type is found in the cats whose individual hair shafts are the finest in calibre. This type of coat is very silky and tends to "flow" in the proper direction. This is the texture of coat in which knots form easily, but which does not actually mat.

The second type is the "cotton" coat which is thicker both in the numbers of the individual hairs and in the diameter of the hair shaft. This can be a fluffy flyaway type of fur which is very difficult to groom properly and which is as stubborn as though it were one huge cowlick, resisting the blandishments and efficacy of comb, brush and prayer alike.

The third type is the slightly wooly texture which makes its possessor when in full bloom look like an overgrown teddy bear. It mats badly and, if neglected, can turn itself into pure felt.

Obviously these three types of fur and the gradations between will reflect

and refract light differently. Genetic Whites and genetic Non-Whites with white coats can be found in all these types.

The Rex cat presents white in a still different aspect. Because its coat is to be *short, extremely soft, silky and completely free of guard hairs* it has the natural advantages of the silkiness which appears in the Angora and also shares with it the pattern and interplay of light and shadow caused by a wavy coat which, in the case of the Rex, becomes a tight marcel-wave effect. The standard also specifies that the Rex coat is to be *relatively dense*. In many instances the coat is something less than dense and the pink tones of the skin show through, at least slightly, like a woman's slip through a sheer gown. This imparts a completely different tone to its white from that found in other breeds. I have never as yet seen a Rex with the blinding, shimmering white found in its cousins among the other breeds and yet, when the fur is examined carefully and analyzed in one's mind from an optical point of view, it may be very white indeed. It simply gives a different effect in this type of coat, possibly because of a lack of depth in the coat type which has no guard hairs.

Of course there are white Sphynx as well, but this is certainly a contradiction in terms since, although the cat may be white genetically, from a physical standpoint it is pink, the pink of its skin, because of its hairlessness. Can a pink cat be a white cat? It can because it is a white cat genetically and, if it had fur, that fur would be white.

Now that we have taken a harder look at Whites do you see the folly and the fallacy of the argument that it is all right to use any amount of powder in grooming Whites because it will not alter the color as it does with "colored" cats? It does indeed alter the color. It can mask a yellowed tone to the cat's—and its owner's—advantage and it can dim the luster and sparkle of a purer White by coating the hair shafts and reducing the light-reflecting ability.

Fortunately both for the cats and the judges, just as people in this century have learned that a liberal sprinkling of talcum powder is no substitute for a good shower, so in the past five years or so have the breeders and exhibitors of cats, and today most White cats are appearing in the show rings so meticulously clean that there is no need for powder to mask the tattle-tale gray.

Since Whites are unique in that they are divided into three separate color classes on the basis of eye color—Blue, Copper in some breeds, Gold in others, and Odd, this would seem to be the proper place to get into an analysis of eye color in general and so we shall, but it will have to wait until next month.