

## **READING TEXT 12**

### ***The Beauty of Cats***

For most people, a domestic cat is a more or less beautiful, usually affectionate but rarely useful member of the family. However, for the people who breed, show or simply admire them, the pedigree aristocrats of the cat world can easily become an obsession. As yet, there is a very much smaller range in the sizes and shapes of cats compared with dogs, which is not surprising when we consider that dogs have been selectively bred for hundreds, if not thousands, of years to develop physical and temperamental characteristics that can be put to work for man as well as admired. By contrast, all breeding of pedigree cats is for purely aesthetic reasons.

Only a few pedigree cat breeds date back beyond the late nineteenth century, and most have been developed since the 1950s. To achieve acceptance, any new breed must be officially recognized by the national and international organizations of 'cat fanciers' that regulate the breeding and showing of pedigree cats. To date, official recognition has been given worldwide to more than 100 different breeds. A fairly small number of these are what might be called 'natural' breeds, with distinctive characteristics that appeared spontaneously, and then became established in the cat population of a particular country or region. Examples include what is popularly known as the Persian, with its long-haired coat; the Russian Blue, with its plush grey 'double' coat; the Siamese, with its slender body, long, narrow face and distinctive colouring; and the Manx cat, with either no tail (a 'rumpy') or a small stump of a tail (a 'stumpy').

More usually, new pedigree cat breeds are the result of meticulously planned breeding programmes designed to establish or enhance attractive or unusual features occurring in non-pedigree cats. Without the intervention of the cat breeder, many of these features would occur only rarely or would have simply disappeared through natural selection. Even the so-called natural breeds have been considerably modified over the years by professional cat breeders striving to match or improve on the breed 'standard', a detailed description of the various points (length and colour of coat, body and head shape, etc) according to which a particular breed is judged in competition.

The majority of cats, both wild and domestic, have fur that is of short or medium length. Long fur in cats can occur either as the result of a 'one-off' genetic mutation, or through the inheritance of the recessive gene for long hair. Long-haired cats were well-established in Persia (now Iran) and Turkey long before the ancestors of most modern long-haired show cats were taken to Europe and America towards the end of the nineteenth century. Today's pedigree longhairs of Persian type have a cobby (sturdy and rounded) body, a very luxuriant long coat, short, thick legs, a round head, round face, very short nose and large, round, orange or blue eyes. There are

separate show classes for Persians of different colours. Also shown in their own classes are various non-Persian longhairs, including Chinchillas, Himalayans (also called Colourpoint Longhairs) and the Turkish Van.

Short-haired pedigree cats can be divided into three main categories: the British Shorthair, the American Shorthair and the Foreign or Oriental Shorthair. To the uninitiated, British and American Shorthairs appear to be no more than particularly fine examples of the non-pedigree family cat. The reality is that selective breeding programmes have achieved a consistency of conformation and coat characteristics in the different pedigree lines that could never be achieved by chance. Pedigree British Shorthairs have a cobby body, a dense, plush coat of a specified colour, short legs, round head, a somewhat short nose and large round eyes of a designated colour. By comparison, pedigree American Shorthairs have larger and less rounded bodies, slightly longer legs and a less round head with a square muzzle and medium-length nose.

The third main group of pedigree cats are the Foreign or Oriental Shorthairs. Some of these breeds, notably the Siamese, Korat and Burmese, did indeed originate in the East, but today these terms are used to describe any breed, of whatever origin, that displays a range of certain specified physical characteristics. Foreign and Oriental cats have a slim, supple body, a fine, short coat, long legs, a wedge-shaped head, long nose, large, pointed ears and slanting eyes. Finally, also included within the pedigree short-hairs, are various miscellaneous breeds which have been developed to satisfy a perhaps misplaced delight in the unusual. Examples include the Scottish Fold, with its forward-folded ears, the Munchkin, with its short, Dachshund-like legs and the apparently hairless Sphynx.

### TASK 1

Complete the table below. Choose NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS from the reading passage for each answer.

<b>Features</b>	<b>Coat</b>	<b>Body</b>	<b>Legs</b>	<b>Head</b>	<b>Nose</b>	<b>Eyes</b>
Persian longhairs	luxuriant and long	cobby	1 _____	round	very short	round orange or blue
British shorthairs	dense and plush	2. _____	short	round	rather short	large and round, designated colour
American shorthairs	dense and plush	larger and less rounded	slightly longer	less round	3. _____	
Foreign shorthairs	4. _____	slim and supple	long	5. _____	long	6. _____

## TASK 2

Answer the questions below using NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS from the passage for each answer.

7. What name does the writer give to breeds such as the Persian, Russian Blue and Siamese?
8. What is the name given to the description of physical features by which a pedigree cat is judged?
9. In which century were long-haired cats first exported from Persia?
10. What class of cat does the Chinchilla belong to?
11. What remarkable characteristic do Scottish Fold cats have?

## TASK 3

Choose the correct option.

12. The distinctive features of most pedigree cats are the result of \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. enhancing characteristics that appear naturally in cats from a particular region.
  - B. using breeding schemes to promote features which are found in non-pedigree cats.
  - C. genetic changes which occurred spontaneously in some cats in the late nineteenth century.
  - D. a misplaced pleasure in producing unusual looking cats.
13. The writer's main purpose in this article is \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. to outline the history of breeding pedigree cats.
  - B. to criticize the practice of producing odd characteristics in cats.
  - C. to classify the different breeds of pedigree cats.
  - D. to compare the respective practices of cat and dog breeders.

## ***ANSWER KEY***

### **TASK 1**

- |                |                 |                  |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 short, thick | 2. cobby        | 3. medium-length |
| 4. fine, short | 5. wedge-shaped | 6. slanting      |

### **TASK 2**

- |                           |                         |                           |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 7. natural                | 8. the breed 'standard' | 9. the nineteenth century |
| 10. non-Persian longhairs | 11. forward-folded ears |                           |

### **TASK 3**

- |       |       |
|-------|-------|
| 12. B | 13. C |
|-------|-------|