

The Oriental Shorthair cat is an elegant breed of cat that come in a beautiful 'rainbow' mix of over 300 colour variations. You could say that they are a remake of the original 'black and white' Siamese.

Oriental cats are very intelligent, athletic and they love human company. When you are sitting down, an Oriental will be generally on your lap, and at night they will be in bed with you, probably under the covers with their head on your pillow.

The breed was originally developed with Siamese as the foundation stock and then crossing them with other breeds. The original intent was to broaden the Siamese gene pool in Britain because so many breeding programs had been devastated during World War II. Crosses were made with Russian Blues, British Shorthairs, and Abyssinians along with domestic shorthairs which resulted in kittens without the darker pointed Siamese pattern. These were then bred back to Siamese.

Within a few generations, Breeders managed to produce cats that looked like Siamese but with a variety of colours and coat patterns along with the traditional pointed pattern of seal, blue, lilac and chocolate points.

When the cats were imported into the United States in the 1970s, crosses with American Shorthairs produced yet more colours and patterns. A longhaired variety was also developed.

The Oriental has a smooth, silky coat lying close to the body that should be well muscled and supple. They should have a 'triangular face', wide-set ears, and long legs with a good length of tail. Most Orientals have green eyes, white Orientals can have blue or odd coloured eyes and the pointed oriental cats have blue eyes

Today Orientals come in more than 300 colours and patterns, including various pointed varieties. Once you have owned one you will probably never again be without one again.

Photograph: 5 week old kitten Cinnamon, silver, classic tabby being judged at a Cat Show.

