Abyssinian

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

The Abyssinian cat, also known as the Aby, is one of the oldest breeds in existence today. However, much of this active and athletic breed's past is unclear. What is known, however, is that their beautiful ticked coat and playful personality has made the Aby one of the most popular shorthaired breeds in the United States.

Interesting Breed Facts:

HISTORY: Though recognized as one of the world's oldest breeds, little is known about the origins of the Abyssinian. Some theorize, based on the breed's distinct physical characteristics, that the Aby is a descendant of the cats worshipped in Egypt more than 4,000 years ago. Others surmise that the Abyssinian was brought to England in the 1860s by British soldiers returning from the Abyssinian War. Some geneticists place the Abyssinian's origins somewhere on the coast of the Indian Ocean or in parts of Southeast Asia. The only definitive answer to the breed's longevity, however, is that after World War II, Abyssinians were thought to be a casualty of the destruction that decimated Europe and, therefore, extinct. However, twelve purebred Abyssinians had survived the war and were instrumental in the concentrated breeding program that developed to ensure the breed's survival and eventual popularity in countries around the world.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: The Abyssinian is a medium-sized, muscular, and proportioned cat with a slender body. They have a wedge-shaped, but slightly rounded, head. Their ears are large and moderately pointed. Their eyes are almond shaped, large, and usually gold or green in color. Unlike many cats, the Aby has slim legs and small, oval paws. They also have long tails that taper as it moves towards the tip. Their coat is soft, dense to the touch, and medium length. Adding to their beauty, the Abyssinian's coat is ticked (or has bands of dark and light colors contrasting with each other on each hair) and can be blue, fawn, red, ruddy, lilac, or cream.

TEMPERAMENT: The Aby is usually tolerant of dogs and other pets. However, most could easily do without an animal companion. Most are also usually tolerant of children, though some suggest the Abyssinian prefers other animals to children. Unlike many breeds, the Abyssinian is typically tolerant of strangers and will most likely greet them with a run around the room.

PREFERENCES: The Abyssinian has an extremely high amount of energy and needs a variety of toys to fulfill his need for play. Interestingly, many are known for their ability to learn tricks and will perform them with great energy. They require a lot of daily play and stimulation and especially relish being the center of attention. In fact, it is not far-fetched to suggest that the Aby happily accepts the role of the family clown. Most are also less vocal than other breeds.

BEST FEATURE: Fanciers often agree that it is the Abyssinian's intelligence and independence that makes them a truly enjoyable breed. Coupled with their minimal need for grooming and relatively long life expectancy of 12 to 14 years, the Abyssinian is an ideal cat companion for the right family.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO OWNER: Due to their high levels of energy, this breed is not for those who want a relaxed lap cat. Because of their independence, most also do not enjoy being cuddled or handled - unless on the individual cat's own terms.

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WE RECOMMEND FOR YOUR ABYSSINIAN:

Da Bird
Encourage activity and play with this popular cat toy.

Drs. Foster & Smith Classi-Cat Treehouse
Give your Aby a comfortable place to scratch, climb, play, and rest.

Drs. Foster & Smith Seafood Cat Treats
Reward your Abyssinian's play without sacrifice to his diet.

Drs. Foster & Smith Window Cat Perch
Let your Abyssinian enjoy comfortable views of the world outside.

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