

## Ragdoll

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*



Pick up a Ragdoll cat, and you will understand the name given to the breed. Ragdolls have the unusual ability to go entirely limp when held, mimicking a toy rag doll in flexibility. One of the largest of the domestic breeds, these cats are loving and charmingly beautiful and, as some say, "You'll never be content to have just one."

### Interesting Breed Facts:

**HISTORY:** The Ragdoll is a newcomer in the world of cat fancy. Ann Baker of Riverside, California, is credited with developing the breed in the early 1960s. Her unique selection of breeding stock included free-roaming cats. Over the years Ragdolls took on the favored traits of large size, gentle demeanor, pointed coloration, and a tendency toward limpness.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Ragdolls are captivating with their large, blue oval eyes and wide-set ears, which tip slightly forward, framing serene expressions. They are "pointed," with darker color on their extremities contrasting with lighter-colored coat on the body. The recognized colors and patterns differ between registering associations. One Standard is Seal, Blue, Chocolate, Lilac, Red, Cream, and Tortie colors in the five patterns of Colorpoint, Mitted, Bicolor, Van, and Lynx. In addition, white markings, such as "mittens," often occur. Kittens are born white; however, from that time on, multiple color/pattern possibilities exist. The adult coat is medium-long and soft, similar to rabbit fur. Bushy tails and "ruffs" and "britches" (longer coat around the neck and on the back of the hindquarters) contribute to the cat's attraction and appeal. And how they purr! Otherwise they are silent little pals, interested only in making faint musical sounds at dinnertime. Ragdolls reach maturity between 3 and 4 years of age. The neutered adult male weighs up to 20 pounds; the mature female weighs about 5 pounds less.

**TEMPERAMENT:** Despite the somewhat obscured nature of the breed's origin, there is no ambiguity regarding the reasons why people are enamored with Ragdolls. Docile and non-aggressive, they melt your heart with their winsome, yet frolicsome, nature. They shadow their caregivers and beg to be hugged. Mellow dispositions render them suitable for multi-pet households and for families with children. Care must be taken, however, to prevent any type of harassment from people or pets, which would harm the cat due to its yielding manner.

**PREFERENCES:** Ragdoll cats adore their caregivers. Owners have almost constant companionship during their pet's waking hours (and even at night). They enjoy playing with toys, so an assortment of playthings is suggested to keep them exercised and amused.

**BEST FEATURE:** The Ragdoll offers the cat fancier the elegance of a full, semi-long coat without the grooming concerns posed by longhair breeds. Because matting is not a problem, routine brushing is all that is required to maintain the coat. They shed mainly in the spring and fall; but the hair is soft, does not weave its way into fabrics, and generally removes from surfaces easily. Ragdolls are intelligent and train readily; for instance, they can be taught to use a scratching post instead of furniture. In fact, they rarely expose their claws except when responding to the instinctual need to scratch.

**BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO OWNERS:** A taste for the outdoors must be discouraged. Ragdoll cats lack the innate response of self-protection and are defenseless if allowed to roam. Cherish them as indoor pets, where they treat the fortunate owner to years of devotion and companionship of the best feline sort.