

Siamese cat

One of several breeds native to Thailand (formerly known as Siam), in the 20th century the Siamese cat became one of the most popular breeds in Europe and North America. The modern Siamese is characterized by blue almond-shaped eyes, a triangular head shape, large ears, an elongated, slender, and muscular body, and point coloration. TICA describes the breed as social, intelligent, and playful into adulthood, often enjoying a game of fetch. Siamese prefer to live in pairs or groups and also seek human interaction. Their **Meezer** nickname refers to their vocal nature. The Oriental cat was developed in order to expand the range of coat patterns, while the Thai preserves a moderate head and body type.

History:



Wankee, born 1895 in Hong Kong, became the first UK Siamese champion in 1898.



While this show quality specimen from 1960 still exhibits relatively moderate characteristics, the breed standard was setting the stage for the modern Siamese, with its call for a "dainty, long and svelte" body, a long head that "taper[s] in straight lines from the ears to a narrow muzzle", "ears large and pricked, wide at the base" and tail "long and tapering".



The pointed cat known in the West as "Siamese", recognized for its distinctive markings, is one of several breeds of cats from Siam described and illustrated in manuscripts called "Tamar Mew" (Cat Poems), estimated to have been written from the 14th to the 18th century. In 1878, U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes received the first documented Siamese to reach the United States, a cat named "Siam" sent by the American Consul in Bangkok. In 1884, the British Consul-General in Bangkok, Edward Glencoe Gould (1847–1916), brought a breeding pair of the cats, Pho and Mia, back to Britain as a gift for his sister, Lilian Jane Gould (who, married in 1895 as Lilian Jane Veley, went on to co-found the Siamese Cat Club in 1901). In 1885, Gould's UK cats Pho and Mia produced three Siamese kittens—Duen Ngai, Kalohom, and Khromata—who were shown with their parents that same year at London's Crystal Palace Show. Their unique appearance and distinct behaviour attracted attention but all three of the kittens died soon after the show, their cause of death not documented.

By 1886, another pair (with kittens) was imported to the UK by a Miss Eva Forestier Walker (married in 1887 as Mrs Vivian or Lady Vivian) and her sister, Ada. Compared to the [British Shorthair](#) and [Persian](#) cats that were familiar to most Britons, these Siamese imports were longer and less "Cobby" in body types, had heads that were less rounded with wedge-shaped muzzles and had larger ears. These differences and the pointed coat pattern, which had not been seen before in cats by Westerners, produced a strong impression—one early viewer described them as "an unnatural nightmare of a cat." Over the next several years, fanciers imported a small number of cats, which together formed the base breeding pool for the entire breed in Britain. It is believed that most Siamese in Britain today are descended from about eleven of these original imports. In their early days in Britain, they were called the "Royal Cat of Siam", reflecting reports that they had previously been kept only by Siamese royalty. Later research has not shown evidence of any organised royal breeding programme in Siam. The original Siamese imports were medium-sized, rather long-bodied, muscular, graceful cats with moderately wedge-shaped heads and ears that were comparatively large but in proportion to the size of the head. The cats ranged from substantial to slender but were not extreme in either way.

Modern development:



[Lilac point Siamese cat](#)

In the 1950s–1960s, as the Siamese was increasing in popularity, many breeders and cat show judges began to favour the more slender look. As a result of generations of selective breeding, they created increasingly long, fine-boned, narrow-headed cats; eventually the modern show Siamese was bred to be extremely elongated, with a lean, tubular body, long, slender legs, a very long, very thin tail that tapers gradually into a point and a long, wedge-shaped head topped by extremely large, wide-set ears.

By the mid-1980s, cats of the original style had disappeared from cat shows, but a few breeders, particularly in the UK, continued to breed and register them, resulting in today's two types of Siamese: the modern "show-style" Siamese, and the "traditional" Siamese, both descended from the same distant ancestors, but with few or no recent ancestors in common. In addition to the modern Siamese breed category, The International Cat Association (TICA) and the World Cat Federation now accept a breed called the Thai. The TICA Thai includes Siamese cats of the less extreme type or a Within Mat imported from Thailand. Other names are "Old Style Siamese", "Classic Siamese", and "Apple heads" (originally a derogatory nickname coined by modern-type Siamese breeders).

Appearance:



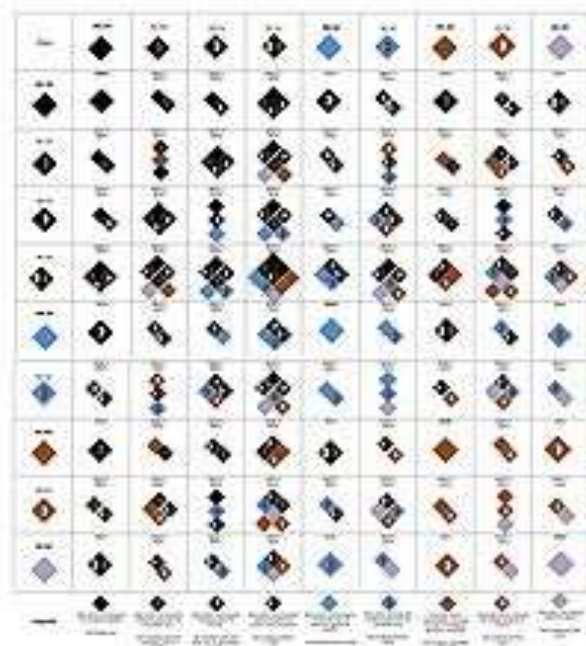
Seal tabby silver Siamese



Seal point Siamese kittens



Side view of the head of a seal point adult



The chart is a grid of diamond-shaped icons representing different genetic combinations of the Siamese gene. The patterns include solid colors, points, and various combinations of colors and patterns. A legend at the bottom identifies the symbols used in the chart.

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Siamese gene chart

The breed standard of the modern Siamese calls for an elongated, tubular, and muscular body and a triangular head, forming a perfect triangle from the tip of the nose to each tip of the ear. The eyes are almond-shaped and light blue, while the ears are large, wide-based, and positioned more towards the side of the head. The breed has a long neck, a slender tail, and fur that is short, glossy, fine, and adheres to the body with no undercoat. Its pointed colour scheme and blue eyes distinguish it from the closely related Oriental Shorthair. The modern Siamese shares the pointed colour pattern with the Thai, or traditional Siamese, but they differ in head and body type.

The pointed pattern is a form of partial albinism, resulting from a mutation in tyrosinase, an enzyme involved in melanin production. The mutated enzyme is heat-sensitive; it fails to work at normal body temperatures, but becomes active in cooler areas of the skin. This results in dark colouration in the coolest parts of the cat's body, including the extremities and the face, which is cooled by the passage of air through the sinuses. All Siamese kittens, although pure cream or white at birth, develop visible points in the first few months of life in colder parts of their body. By the time a kitten is four weeks old, the points should be sufficiently clearly distinguishable to recognise which colour they are. Siamese cats tend to darken with age, and generally, adult Siamese living in warm climates have lighter coats than those in cool climates. Originally the vast majority of Siamese had seal (extremely dark brown, almost black) points, but occasionally Siamese were born with blue (a cool grey) points, genetically a dilution of seal point; chocolate (lighter brown) points, a genetic variation of seal point; or lilac (pale warm grey) points, genetically a diluted chocolate. These colours were at first considered "inferior" seal points, and were not qualified for showing or breeding. All of these shades were eventually accepted by the breed associations, and became more common through breeding programmes specifically aimed at producing these colours. Later, outcrosses with other breeds developed Siamese-mix cats with points in other cat colours and patterns including Red and Cream point, lynx (tabby) point, and tortoise-shell ("torte") point.

In the United Kingdom, all pointed Siamese-style cats are considered part of the Siamese breed. In the United States, the major cat registry, the Cat Fanciers' Association, considers only the four original colourations as Siamese: seal point, blue point, chocolate point, and lilac point. Oriental cats with colourpoints in colours or patterns aside from these four are considered Colourpoint Shorthairs in the American cat fancy.

Many Siamese cats from Thailand had a kink in their tails but over the years, this trait has been considered a flaw and breeders have largely eradicated it, although it persists among street cats in Thailand.

Temperament:

Siamese are usually very affectionate and intelligent cats, renowned for their social nature. Many enjoy being with people and are sometimes described as "extroverts". Often they bond strongly to a single person. Some Siamese are extremely vocal, with a loud, low-pitched voice—known as "Meezer", from which they get one of their nicknames—that has been compared to the cries of a human baby, and persistent in demanding attention. These cats are typically active and playful, even as adults, and are often described as more [dog](#)-like in behaviour than other cats.

Health:



This Siamese cat demonstrates the once common [cross-eyed](#) trait that has largely been bred out.

Based on Swedish insurance data, which only tracked cats up to 12.5 years, Siamese and Siamese-derived breeds have a higher rate of mortality compared to other breeds. The median lifespan of the Siamese group was somewhere between 10 to 12.5 years. 68% lived to 10 years or more and 42% to 12.5 years or more. The majority of deaths were caused by [neoplasms](#), mainly [mammary tumours](#). The Siamese also has a higher rate of morbidity. They are at higher risk of neoplastic and gastrointestinal problems but have a lower risk of [feline lower urinary tract disease](#). Vet clinic data from England shows a higher median lifespan of 14.2 years.

The most common variety of [progressive retinal atrophy](#) (PRA) in cats (among them the Abyssinian, the Somali, and the big group of Siamese-related breeds) is related to a mutation on the card-gene and a DNA-test is available.

The same [albino allele](#) that produces coloured points means that Siamese cats' blue eyes lack a [tapetum lucidum](#), a structure which amplifies dim light in the eyes of other cats. The mutation in the tyrosine also results in abnormal neurological connections between the eye and the brain. The [optic chiasm](#) has abnormal uncrossed wiring; many early Siamese were [cross-eyed](#) to compensate, but like the kinked tails, the crossed eyes have been seen as a fault and due to selective breeding the trait is far less common today. Still this lack of a tapetum lucidum even in uncross-eyed cats causes reduced vision for the cat at night. This trait has led to their dependence and interest in humans, as it affects their hunting ability, a desirable trait for many owners. However it also makes them vulnerable to urban dangers such as night-time vehicular traffic. Unlike many other blue-eyed white cats, Siamese cats do not have reduced hearing ability.

Breeds derived from the Siamese:



Balinese are also known as Longhaired Siamese, being distinguished by coat length



Oriental cats have the same head and body type but green eyes and a wide variety of coat patterns

- [Balinese](#) – Natural mutation of the Siamese cat; a longhaired Siamese. In the largest US registry, the Cat Fanciers Association (CFA), limited to the four traditional Siamese coat colours of seal point, blue point (a dilute of seal point), chocolate point, and lilac point (a dilute of chocolate point). Other registries in the US and worldwide recognise a greater diversity of colours.
- [Burmese](#) is a breed of domesticated cats descended from a specific cat, Wong Mau, who was found in Burma in 1930 by Dr. [Joseph Cheeseman Thompson](#). She was brought to San Francisco, California, where she was bred with Siamese. While technically not derived from Siamese, the breed was considered a form of Siamese for many years, leading to crossbreeding.
- [Havana Brown](#) resulted from crossing a chocolate point Siamese with a black cat.
- [Colourpoint Shorthair](#) – a Siamese-type cat registered in CFA with pointed coat colours aside from the traditional CFA Siamese coat colours; originally developed by crosses with other shorthair cats. Considered part of the Siamese breed in all other cat associations, but considered a separate breed in CFA. Variations can include Lynx Points and Torte Points.
- [Himalayan](#) - Longhaired breed originally derived from crosses of Persians to Siamese and pointed domestic longhair cats in order to introduce the point markings and the colours chocolate and lilac. After these initial crosses were used to introduce the colours, further breed development was performed by crossing these cats only to the Persian breed. In

Europe, they are referred to as colourpoint Persians. In CFA, they are a colour division of the Persian breed.

- [Javanese](#) – a longhaired version of the [Colourpoint Shorthair](#) in CFA. In Europe, it is an obsolete term for the longhaired version of the [Oriental Shorthair](#).
- [Occitan](#) – a spotted cat originally produced by a cross between Siamese and [Abyssinian](#).
- [Oriental Shorthair](#) – a Siamese-style cat in non-pointed coat patterns and colours, including solid, tabby, silver/smoke, and tortoise-shell.
- [Oriental Longhair](#) – a longhaired version of the [Oriental Shorthair](#).
- [Savannah](#) – The Savannah is a domestic hybrid cat breed. It is a cross between a serval and a domestic cat. (The first was bred with a Siamese)
- [Snowshoe](#) – a cream and white breed with blue eyes and some points that was produced through the cross-breeding of the Siamese and bi-coloured [American Shorthair](#) in the 1960s.
- [Thai Cat](#) – also called the Wichian Mat or Old Style Siamese, the original type of Siamese imported from Thailand in the 19th century and still bred in Thailand today; and throughout the first half of the 20th century, the only type of Siamese bred in the West.
- [Tonkinese](#) – originally a cross between a Siamese cat and a [Burmese](#). Tonkinese x Tonkinese mating can produce kittens with Burmese "sepia" pattern, Siamese "pointed" pattern, or a Tonkinese "mink" pattern which is something in between the two, with less pattern contrast than the Siamese but greater than the Burmese, and with aqua eyes.

- Mekong bobtail (Thai bobtail)

