

Purrfect pedigrees
SELKIRK REX

**PEDIGREE
PROFILE**

Breed number: 79

Average lifespan:
around 14 years

Temperament:
friendly, loving,
loyal and
intelligent

Weight: 3.5kg
to 7kg

Availability:
quite rare

Colours:
numerous

My beautiful curl-friend

They say variety is the spice of life, and you could be spoiled for choice with the curly-coated Selkirk Rex, with a rainbow of colours to choose from as well as two coat lengths — long or shorthaired.

Purrfect pedigrees **SELKIRK REX**

Not surprisingly, they have proven to be friendly and affectionate family pets which is what made Zoe Amarilli, chairman of the Selkirk Rex Cat Club, fall in love with them: "Selkirk Rex cats have a special relationship to their humans; they are very playful and intelligent, affectionate and uncomplicated in nature; they literally wrap themselves around your finger and heart," she says.

Selkirks are what you might call the chameleons of the cat world because they easily adapt to their surroundings. Zoe says that they make excellent, undemanding indoor pets, but will also love the outdoor life too as they have delightfully inquisitive natures.

"They adore company and love nothing more than a feline companion or two. They are hard to faze and even happy to bed down with the canine members of the family," Zoe adds.

An inquisitive black tipped shorthaired Rex.

ORIGINS

The Selkirk Rex originated from Sheridan in Montana, USA, in 1987 when Persian breeder Jeri Newman adopted a "strange looking" curly coated kitten from a local shelter. Jeri later bred this kitten, named Miss de Pesto of NoFace, to one of her Black Persian males and she gave birth to six kittens, three of which had a curly coat and the other three were straight-haired.

Jeri selected one of her family names, 'Selkirk' (which coincidentally is also the name of a mountain range, so linking with the regional themes our own Cornish and Devon Rex have), and so the Selkirk Rex breed was established, gaining full championship status with The International Cat Association (TICA) in 1994.

The first Selkirk Rex arrived in the UK 2002 and after years of promotion by Jeri and other dedicated breeders, the Selkirk Rex was given full GCCF Championship status in 2009.

The only acceptable outcrosses for the Selkirk Rex with the GCCF are the British Shorthair and Longhair, Persians and Exotic Shorthairs.

HEALTH & WELFARE.....

Weekly grooming sessions are recommended as all Selkirks need care to ensure their coats don't become matted. Zoe recommends grooming using a wide toothed comb or one with rotating teeth. The curly fur can cause some irritation inside the ears and increase wax, so clean their ears once a week.

Cats with thicker, curlier coats may be prone to excess grease, which can be controlled by giving them regular baths. Zoe suggests: "Most show cats are bathed before a show, shorthaired cats normally no

more than three days before a show and longhairs anything up to a week before to allow the coat to recover and 'bounce' back."

Selkirk Rex are not thought to have any specific health problems - although there was a slight risk they may have inherited diseases that were found in breeds they've been outcrossed with, including polycystic kidney disease (PKD) and hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM).

The best advice is to source your kitten from a responsible breeder who will have screened their cats.

DID YOU KNOW?

All Selkirk kittens are curly coated at birth.

"They literally wrap themselves around your finger and heart,"

A golden shaded kitten.

THE LOOK

With a medium to large 'cobby' body, similar to the British Shorthair, Selkirks have thick tails, sweet, full-cheeked faces with large, round eyes, and medium-sized ears, as well as unusual curled whiskers.

Their delightful curls are most prominent around the neck, underside and rear in

both coat lengths. Overall, their coats have woolly look and a plush feel.

The longhaired cats have plumed tails with longer ruff hairs around the face, while a shorthair cat's ruff and tail are a similar length to the rest of the coat.

Selkirks are bred in a wide variety of coat colours, patterns and colour combinations, including colour points, tipped, shaded and tabby.

Some kittens and adults may lose their whiskers due to their brittle nature, but they do grow back.

How curly a Selkirk's coat is depends on his or her genes, while some - variants - will have straight coats.

A blue golden colourpoint shorthaired Selkirk Rex.



A shorthaired curly black smoke.



KITTEN TIME

As kittens are born with curly coats, it can be challenging for a breeder to know if you will have a curly coated kitten or not, however, curly coated kittens have either curly whiskers or no whiskers at all, while variant (straight-coated) kittens have long, straight whiskers. "They may lose the curl as they develop but the adult curly coat should be there again from

eight to ten months," Zoe explains, "The coat continues to develop until about two years of age."

The coat texture is often seasonal and affected by hormones, especially in the females, and they all moult during the summer months.

A list of breeders with PKD negative kittens can be found on the Selkirk Rex Cat Club website at www.selkirkrexcatclub.co.uk/Breederlist

Living with **SELKIRK REX**

NICHOLARYAN FROM HAYWARDS HEATH, WEST SUSSEX, ADORES HER CHARMING AND MISCHIEVOUS SELKIRK, SIX-YEAR-OLD NEVE. SHE TELLS US WHY...

Q What first attracted you to the breed?

"I first met a Selkirk and her breeder at a cat show in 2008 and thought how lovely she was. I then took a friend to meet the Selkirk breeder who happened to live just five miles from me. While my neighbour and the breeder were talking, a 13-week-old Selkirk kitten came straight up to me and made friends. Although I hadn't, at that point, considered having a Selkirk, I fell in love with this little kitten. She was Neve who turned out to be a full sister to the first Selkirk I met at the cat show."

Q What do you like the most about Selkirks?

"Selkirks have the most appealing nature, even though Neve is now six years old she still plays like a kitten.

They can be quite charming as well as mischievous although not as demanding of attention like some other breeds."

Q Describe your cat's personality.

"Neve has the most wonderful temperament and loves everyone. I can honestly say she loves being shown as she will roll on her back in her pen for a belly rub when the judges open the pen door! She purrs her way through the day. She always knows if I'm sad and always wants to help with anything I'm doing."

Q Do you have any advice for potential owners?

"I would advise potential owners to only buy a kitten from a registered breeder as GCCF registered Selkirks will always be genetically free from



Polycystic kidney disease – it is a requirement in the GCCF Selkirk Rex breeding policy. Selkirks are safer kept as indoor cats, or should have a home with a cat proof-garden or safe garden.



Photo: Robert Fox

TOP SHOWCAT

Show name: UK Imperial Grand Champion Wyrewood Conqueror

Pet name: William
Owner: Chris Hazel

At home: "William is such a good natured cat even though he is an entire male. He has won quite a few best in shows and best of variety; I am so proud of his achievement thus far. Selkirks have the sweetest nature."

DREAM TEAM

Obviously a Selkirk Rex should get on well with their British or Exotic Shorthair or Persian outcrosses, but the sunny-natured Selkirk is said to get on well with many breeds.

A British Shorthair



A cuddly blue shorthaired Rex

IS THIS THE CAT FOR YOU?

As Zoe mentions, Selkirks are very adaptable and are happy to be kept as indoor or outdoor pets so would suit most households, and their affectionate natures mean they make good lap cats. But remember, if he will be left alone during the day it is a good idea to have two cats to keep each other company. ■

Photo: Zoe Amarilli