

SEAL POINT SIAMESE

By JEANNE SINGER

The first Siamese was undoubtedly a seal point. We have no photographs of the exotic little cat discovered and cherished in Siam nearly a century ago. However, verbal reports describing those



Jeanne Singer with
Gr. Ch. Aria of Singer

brought back to England suggest that they were seals. The bewitching beauty of seal point Siamese has captured the hearts and hearths of the world. Seals are so popular that some pessimists predict they will be the "alley cat" of the future.

The seal point is the basic Siamese. Genetically, seal is dominant to all other colors in Siamese. A seal point can carry the genes for blue, lilac, and chocolate recessively. In fact, many of our most outstanding Siamese of the three other colors have had at least one and often two seal parents. This is quite logical be-

cause the seal point has always been the pioneer in our breeding refinement of type, head, eye color, and bone structure. Progress in the development of Siamese style has first appeared in seals and, through them, passed on to the other Siamese colors.

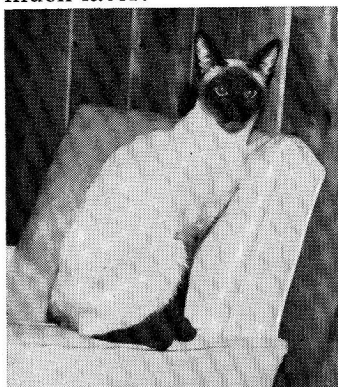
The breeding and showing of seal points is perhaps the most difficult and exacting challenge in the Cat Fancy. If you're after "easy wins" stay away from seals! The competition is fierce. Seals, for many years, have been the largest classes at the cat shows. Not only are they numerous, but the quality is high. A 2nd or 3rd place ribbon in a class of seals is often a more significant win than completing a championship in some other class.

Good seal color is the most striking and vivid of all the Siamese. You have the dramatic contrast between deep seal brown, almost black, points and pale faun to cream body color. This is the ideal. Alas, too few seals attain it or keep it.

Far too many adult seals darken to an over-all muddy brown, sometimes unpleasantly tinged with grey. Others, if they keep a light body, fail to develop proper depth of point color. The points look washed out, faded, and incomplete.

Since all Siamese, including seals, are born pure white with no markings, one cannot predict adult color from very young kittens. The nose and foot leather is the first part to turn dark. By three months, the points should develop to a certain intensity. The mask can be complete over the nose and up to the eye-line, but not yet over the forehead up to the ears. The ears are completely closed early. The feet are dark, but the front legs are still pale. The tail is usually ticked with lighter hairs until later. The body color often becomes "sooty" or "dirty" looking at 3 or 4 weeks. "This "sooty" baby fuzz soon sheds

out and the color clears up around 3 months. Adult shading comes in much later.

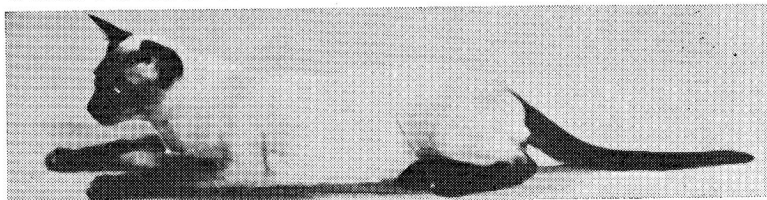


Gr. Ch. Singa Penelope S. P.
at 7 years.

kittens will have better color when they clear up than their white siblings. My own breeding experience has flatly contradicted these notions. However, a kit that turns dark and muddy all over at a very early age, and stays that way, practically never develops the desired cream coat in adulthood.

I have found, with my own seal family, that the earlier and denser the point development, combined with a clear white coat from birth, the better the adult seal coloring. I look for a strong black and white contrast on kittens from the age of three months as a favorable indication. Some seals are very slow to develop point color. Even as late as 6 to 8 months, the mask looks faded and streaked, perhaps with white whisker pads and goggles around the eyes. The front feet and legs stay a pale tan color a long time. I have found that these "slow developers" often turn dark all over when the color finally comes in. Contrast is lost. There is absolutely no relationship between eye-color and point or body color. Some of the palest bodied cats have the deepest blue eyes — a stunning combination!

The nature of Siamese coloring is supposedly a semi-albino pattern which restricts color to the extremes or "points" of the body.



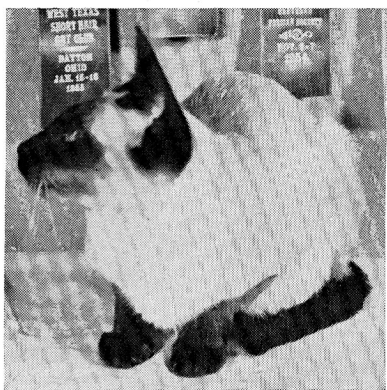
Dbl. Ch. Morris Lindex of Astra (Imp.)

The better this restricting mechanism, whatever it is, functions, the better the two colors, point and body, will be.

I would not pass judgement on adult seal color until the cat is at least 2 years old. A seal point can have perfectly beautiful color at one year and be a mess by two years. If a seal can "hold" its color up to two years, its chances of remaining correctly colored are good.

Siamese do tend to darken with age, and allowance is made for this in the standard. However, there are some seals, all too rare, who have kept the desired color up to ten years and would put many a youngster to shame. Inheritance has much to do with the stability of seal point coloring. As in all things, good breeding counts!

Even if you own a well-bred, correctly colored adult seal point, only half the battle is won. It is a never-ending challenge to keep a seal in peak show condition. Color faults show up much more glaringly on a seal than any other color of Siamese. (I have not found the blue points nearly as difficult.) White hairs and ticking in the points fairly scream at you. This same ticking can go unnoticed and unfaulted in a blue, lilac, or chocolate. A dark seal body really looks woefully dark because it has such a long way to darken from cream to brown. An equally dark lilac could never look as dark.

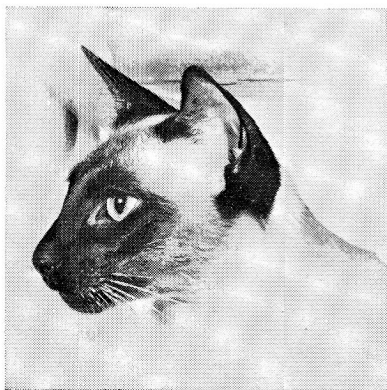


Gr. Ch. Bul'h Houdini

her pale coat. (In compensation, the new coat, after kittens, is sometimes better than the old.) An injury, burn, or skin disease will temporarily "reverse" the colors. The body color will first grow in black over the injured spot while the point color will temporarily come in white. Again you have the maddening wait for the faulty hairs to shed out and the new hair to grow in normal.

Seals are also sensitive to climate and sunshine, but this response varies between individuals. A steady hot climate tends to lighten the entire cat and fade the point color. A steady dose of cold can darken. However, I have found that seals with really good color do not respond to changes of temperature nearly as much as seals with poorer color. The ones with truly dense points and pale bodies tend to stay that way, hot or cold.

Illness, injury, pregnancy, nursing, bad diet, and temperature can all wreak havoc with the seals. These cause TEMPORARY, not permanent, alterations in color. A few sniffles, a runny eye, or a fever for a few days will cause noticeable ticking in the mask. A more serious illness can demolish the point color completely and darken the body color. The best of queens will become darker in body color and often lose point color after nursing a large litter for several months. It can take 3 to 4 months to clear up a ticked mask and 4 to 6 months for a nursing queen to regain



Gr. Ch. MaKhanDa Willa

Poor health or bad nutrition ruins even the best. There are no magic feeding formulas — just the BEST diet for all round general health that you can devise. (I add a vitamin and mineral supplement to be on the safe side.) You simply must keep your seals in top physical condition to keep their color respectable and preserve that firm muscle tone required for all Siamese. Siamese color is far more demanding than other breeds whose color is more permanent and “fixed.”

Sunshine definitely improves the warm tone of the seal coat. Sunshine oxidizes the hair as in humans, and a seal who runs outside in the sun daily will be “blonder” than his indoor colleagues. Sunshine, though, will not make a really dark coat light. It merely warms it up a bit.

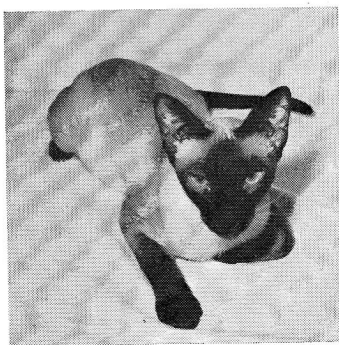
Some breeders feel that mixing in the dilutes, lilacs and chocolates, will lighten the seal coat. The evidence does not favor this. Many seals, with all other colors in their pedigree, still have dark coats, often unattractively combined with washed out points. Conversely, some pure seal lines have the same trouble. It appears to be an inherited fault. There is some evidence that blue point mixed with seal helps the body color — but not always. There is much evidence that good color contrast bred to good color contrast tends to perpetuate itself regardless of point color.

The English were the first to refine the seal point, set the standard, and send their progeny to America to carry on. English imports are behind many of today's winning cats.

Some notable seal imports with impact were Ch. Oriental Nanki Pooh of Newton, Db. Ch. Morris Lindex of Astra, Silken Pedro of Bridle Trail, Spotlight Ptolemy of Caithness and Holmesdale Caraban of Wu. The champions and grand champions descended from these old imports are legion.

In America the old Amdos line pioneered fine bones and daintiness. Newton and Vee Roi seals had fine color. Millbrook and Chirn Sa Hai seals were outstanding.

In the past decade, a vast improvement in head type has occurred. Style setters included Gr. Ch. Bult'h Houdini, Gr. Ch. Fan T Cee Tee Cee, and the Medicine Lake cats.



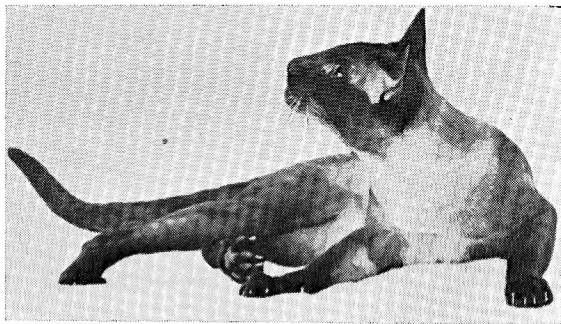
Gr. Ch. Jen-Kins Dark Hussy

Today we have many seals with excellent head type. The day of the apple head is past. Body type has been struggling along, but not nearly enough determined breeding skill has been focused on the fine-boned, dainty but firmly muscled body. There is still a tendency for the coarse, ungainly body to be overlooked for the sake of a good head. Tails have improved enormously. The real whip tail is no longer an oddity. Eye color has not actually improved, just spread around more. Years ago we had seal specimens with the very deep vivid blue eyes unique to Siamese. It was once thought to occur only on seals. The seals, fortunately, have

C. F. A.

spread it to the other colors, so that now, at last, ALL Siamese are required to have it.

Color, alas, with a few exceptions, has gone backwards. Ten or fifteen years ago, breeders and judges were far more demanding and



Gr. Ch. Le Shin-Wieler Saipan

selective about seal color. Examples of good stable seal color could be found in any show room. Woe to the seal whose front legs were pale, whose whisker pads were white, or whose tail was ticked! Hip spots or tiger markings were fatal! Now such deficiencies are overlooked.

Perhaps this will be the challenge of the

next decade in seal point history. We shall try to preserve our head type, eye color, body type and at the same time improve our point and body color. The perfect seal is yet to be born.