

ANOTHER CAT OF YESTERYEAR THE RUSSIAN LONG-HAIRED CAT



According to Harrison Weir in "Our Cats and All About Them," published in 1889 he once owned a Russian long-haired cat. It differed from the Persian and the Angora in that it "was larger in the body with shorter legs. The mane, or frill was very large, long and dense, and more of a wooly texture, with coarse hairs in it; the color of dark tabby, though the markings were not a decided black, nor clear and sound; the ground colour was wanting in that depth and richness possessed by the Persian, having a somewhat dull appearance.

"The eyes were large and prominent, of a bright orange, slightly tinted with green, the ears large by comparison, with small tufts, full of long, woolly hair, the limbs stout and short the tail being very dissimilar, as it was very short, very woolly, and thickly covered with hair the same length from the base to the tip, and much resembled in form that of the British wild cat."

These Russian long-hairs seem always to have been brown tabbies with blacks occurring only very occasionally.

Mr. Weir's Russian did not attach itself to humans, seems not to have cared for warmth and showed little interest in birds but preferred animals for food.

Helen Winslow in her "Concerning Cats" published in 1900, mentions the Russian long-haired cat briefly. "It is fond of cold weather, and its fur is denser, indicating that it has been used to colder regions. Many of the cats that we see are crosses of Angora and Persian, or Angora and Russian, so that it is extremely difficult to know a thoroughbred cat which has not been mixed with other varieties."

A description of the Persian of 1900 from this same book is of interest. "The Persian cat of very great value is all black, with a very fluffy frill, or lord mayor's chain, and orange eyes. Next to him comes a light slate or blue Persian with yellow eyes. The fur of the Persian is much more woolly than that of the Angora and sometimes in hot weather mats easily. The difference between a Persian and an Angora can usually be told by an amateur, by drawing the tail between the thumb and first finger. The Angora's tail comes out thin, silky, and narrow, although it immediately 'fluffs' up. The Persian's tail does not compress itself readily into a small space. The Persian cat's head is larger, its ears are less pointed, although it should have the tuft at the end and the long hair inside. It is usually larger in body and apparently stronger made, although slender and elegant in appearance, with small bones and graceful in movement."

COMPARISON TABLE

	Angora	Persian	Russian
Coat	long, silky & crinkly fine but not woolly	more woolly than Angora but long & silky	denser than Angora & Persian
Mane	full & fluffy	fluffy	large, long & dense, woolly with coarse hairs
Head	small	larger than Angora	
nose	not too long	not too long	
eyes	large	large, full & round	large & prominent
ears	small, pointed with tuft	less pointed with tuft & furnishings	large, tufted & furnished
Body type	larger than average	larger than Angora & stronger made	larger than Angora & Persian
legs	moderate length	moderate length	shorter
feet	tufts between toes	tufts between toes	
tail	long & like an ostrich plume	hair fuller & coarser, longer at base	hair same length from base to tip

From these three long-haired cats — the Angora, the Persian and the Russian—come our present day Persians. It is interesting to note the characteristics in these old breeds that carry over to our beloved Persians. It is equally interesting to note from which of these cats certain body and coat characteristics are inherited. So the Persian of today is a made-up breed but one of long standing and certainly no one can call a cat, bred for so many years, a hybrid, but it was once, wasn't it?