

*These two following articles offer the opinions
and ideas of two different Breeders of Silvers*

The following information about Silver Persians is adapted from the
book entitled

“Persian Cats and Other Longhairs”

by Jeanne A. Ramsdale

The Silver personality is one of the most interesting of all the varieties of Persians and is different in a way difficult to describe. They can be quite demanding, temperamental and independent. On the other hand, many are extremely affectionate and demonstrate it by hugging, head-butting and holding you with their paws. A good many of them are very talkative and Silvers are particularly given to developing little daily routines with you.

The effect of a Silver Persian's coloring could be described as white but when a Silver is placed next to a White Persian, there is a marked difference. Under a microscope a strand of hair is seen to be hollow. Whereas a White's hair is solidly filled with white pigment, the Silver's hair shaft is nearly empty. The Silver effect results from light reflecting off each translucent hair. A blued white is used to duplicate this color effect in paintings of Silver cats by Ida Reeves. There are two color varieties of Silver Persian: the lighter is called Chinchilla Silver; the darker, Shaded Silver. They are also both referred to as Silvers as they have the same origins and general characteristics. You may get both shades of coloring in a litter of kittens.

Silver Persians are thought by many to be the most spectacular of all the Long Haired cats. They are the most abundant long hair color variety in the United States, particularly popular on the West Coast.

The first thing you notice about a Silver is his eyes. They are characterized particularly by a rim of dark pigment on the edge of the eyelids. A smudge or streak of black tipping is immediately below the eyes. This gives the impression that the cat has mascara and eye makeup on. The eye color, itself, is outstandingly beautiful. It ranges from emerald greens to turquoise blues of intense shades. The deeper the color, the better for a good show specimen. The eyes are extremely large and round, set wide apart in the face.

The nose and mouth are also edged in black. The white whiskers are often dark-shafted just as they start from the muzzle. These facial markings enable you to see every play of expression. In fact, the whole face looks as though it is embroidered with black silk on silvery white velvet.

The brick-red center of the nose is also a characteristic Silver beauty mark. It should be of a deep color to contrast with the very light color of the muzzle and chin fur.

The Silver coat is of a much lighter and finer texture than most of the other colors. The hair grows in "angel tufts" or "horns" springing from the tophead. These start up alongside of the ears to stand up sometimes above the ears themselves. Many Silvers also have long feathery hairs that curl out and around the head. They start from the inside front edge of the ears. The whole coat, being light weight and finely textured, can be combed and groomed to stand away from the body in a cloud, giving an ethereal look.

The Silvers must have the extremely sweet expression (or baby-face, that is also desired in all colors) to a marked degree to live up to their full potential of beauty. The smiling mouth, a coquette's face makeup and all the frills of their fancy coat have earned them the title: The Cadillac of Cats.

Chinchilla Silvers

The ideal coat color of a Chinchilla Silver should be light silver white. There should be sufficient black tipping, evenly distributed over the cheeks, head, back, flanks, outside of legs and topside of tail to give a sparkling frosted look. Tipping should gradually shade off to a clear white color on the ruff, muzzle, chin, chest, belly, inside of the legs and underside of the tail. There should be no confusion at first glance as to whether it is a Chinchilla Silver or a White Persian with green eye color.

At times, when the Chinchilla's coat is in the process of shedding, the cat may look darker than a Shaded Silver. Closer inspection will reveal that the dark effect is from the tips of the dead or dying guard hairs. These may be stripped out by hand to hasten the procedure. When it is ready to come out, it will do so easily. The Shaded's can have their dead hair stripped out also to good advantage in the summer.

Shaded Silvers

The proper Shaded Silver coloring gives an entirely different appearance than that of a Chinchilla. Where the general effect of a Chinchilla is sparkling white with coal black dusting, the Shaded has an overlay of coloring in the shaded areas that is like a lavender gray or pewter patina, clearly demarked from the lighter underparts. They are best appreciated from a little distance away. The shading should give the impression that liquid silver has been brushed or painted on. All shading should be of the same intensity on the face, head, back, flanks, outside half of the legs and topside of the tail. No streaks, blotches or stripes

should be evident in the shading. This shading is considerably darker in total effect than the tipping of a Chinchilla. It should present a sharp, clearly outlined contrast where it meets with the clear white color of the ruff, muzzle, chin, chest, inner half of the legs, belly and underside of the tail.

If there is any doubt whether a particular Silver is Chinchilla or shaded in coloring, his color is not proper to either category at that time. He should be penalized for color if he is shown.

The question of which of the two types of silver coloring is the most desirable is entirely a matter of personal preference. Both are equally beautiful, although quite different. Perfect shaded coloring, evenly distributed is very hard to get, as is perfect Chinchilla tipping.

Many American Silvers reach sexual maturity at an earlier age than the other Persians. Some males at only six months of age have sired kittens (their own ideas, of course). However, as far as appearance goes the Silvers are, in general, a very slow developing cat. This tendency is also being improved upon by selective breeding. It creates a problem in evaluating the kittens and young adults, unless you are very experienced in knowing the potential of your stock. Their coat coloring, type, and eye color can all improve after the age of two or even three years to a marked degree. A careful study of family trends in the pedigree can give an idea of which features are most likely to develop. The various Silver families, although originally closely related, have each developed certain dominant individual tendencies, both good and bad, that can be quite easily traced in the progeny.

For example, in some Silver lines the permanent eye color "comes in" as soon as the baby blue starts to change at around 6 to 8 weeks old. In others, it goes through many stages of color change and depth, finally "jelling" when the cat is 18 months to two years of age. The most desirable permanent eye color usually manifests itself in the adult when the kitten's eyes show purple and turquoise blue in their very deep blue color at about 4 or 5 weeks. This depth and intensity does not change or fade even when the cat becomes old.

Another change is noticed in some families. The center of the nose on the kittens is black or nearly so. Black is not proper nose leather color for an adult Silver. These dark noses will usually lighten, taking varying lengths of time to do so. When they do, they become the very epitome of the color called for in the standard-clear, deep, brick-red. If the nose leather remains too dark or has a muddy color in adulthood, it is an undesirable trait to be overcome in future breeding. Equally undesirable is the tendency noticed in other families for the nose leather to be pink or pale in the center with little or no black edging. When a Silver

is bred to another color of Persian, either one of these faults is likely to appear in the kittens and their following progeny.

Breeding of Silvers

The silver color has been "set" in Silver Persians through many generations of color-breeding. In spite of the inherent difficulties that are likely to be encountered in continuing to do so, most Silver breeders feel that this is the best procedure.

In their opinion, a Silver cat can be bred only to another Silver to maintain the green or blue-green eye color, brick-red nose, face markings and bright and sparkling coat color. As a general rule, if not color-bred, any one or all of the features which make a Silver distinctive are usually lost. By the time these beautiful qualities are recovered any gain is questionable.

The silver color strain should be kept intact and unmixed with any other. When improvements are needed in bone or type, careful selection of a Silver mate that does have the desired qualities is the proper procedure. There is a definite challenge in the breeding of Silvers. Breeders are striving to match the solid colors in heavy bone and equal their body type. It has been done successfully by many in recent years. There is no necessity for Silvers to be actually frail-boned in order for them to have the beautiful ethereal look that is their trademark.

All Silver kittens are born speckled or patterned, some to a greater degree than others. Many have complete tabby markings of black or gray on white or are quite dark on their backs and tails. The ones with the least coloring do not necessarily turn into Chinchillas as they grow up—in some families they do, in others, they don't. Usually, though not always, the kittens with very little or no markings on their heads, faces, and legs will be the Chinchillas, and vice versa. Often the fur is quite short on the newborn, so all you see are the very tips of the top coat. As they grow older they get lighter, day by day. The pattern diffuses out as the top coat gets longer and the undercoat comes in. It has been a considerable shock to many novice Silver breeders who did not happen to be warned to expect this, when their Silver mother cat who was bred to another Silver had kittens that were very dark, short-haired and striped!

However, the definite markings usually fairly well disappear by 4 to 6 weeks, starting at the head, the rings on the tail being the last to go.

The skin of a Silver is very tender and delicate. Guard against any irritation of it which might cause the coat to come out in handfuls. The affected area of the skin will often turn black, temporarily. The undercoat also tangles and mats easily so particular care must be taken to keep it from felting by daily combings.