

# BRITISH LONGHAIR



by

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Reprinted from  
*Felis Historica*  
Volume 1 No 7  
January 2021





Affectionately referred to as 'MOOFY FLOOFY' is a pedigreed British Longhair, owned by Lawlie Hill (UK). 'Moofy' was born June 13, 2016; bred from two British Shorthairs, her sire was an International Grand Champion (Blue) and her dam was a solid Lilac. She compares favourably with the more open-faced Blue Persians of yesteryear, (1910 – 1930's). She is shown opposite sporting sound eye colour.

Photos: Lawlie Hill Article Graphics ©[www.gograph.com](http://www.gograph.com)





BY

**LORRAINE SHELTON**

# The BRITISH LONGHAIR

The Selkirk Rex was still in early development when I walked the aisles of the big CFA Santa Monica Cat Club show and came to a stop at the benching area of a successful British Shorthair breeder. There was a gorgeous longhaired kitten with a “for sale” sign on its cage. Her dense coat, rounded head and eyes, broad muzzle, and substantial boning would make a wonderful contribution to our young breed.

When I inquired if the breeder might consider parting with the kitten with breeding rights, I was told, “Nope. Can’t happen.” I was undeterred, as I had faced this challenge before when working with my chocolate and lilac Persians: breeders that didn’t want their cattery names in the pedigree of an “inferior” line of cats. I thought I might be able to convince the breeder of the merits of my plans.

“You don’t understand,” she said, “I can’t give you papers, even if I wanted to. We can only place these kittens as pets without papers.” I was incredulous.

An offspring of two CFA Grand Champions that can’t even be registered? She must have meant that there was no “Any Other Variety (AOV)” class to exhibit this cat in at the shows, right?

Wrong. No papers to even acknowledge the kitten’s existence. No entry in the cat registry’s database to indicate how frequently this trait appears. I was looking at an “unmentionable”, an embarrassment, a “felis non grata”: a British Longhair.

Of course, a loving family quickly scooped up the adorable kitten. What is not to love? The word “cute” has a synonym in the world of science: “Neotony: the retention of juvenile features in the adult animal.”



‘Moofy’ – closeup on her eyes and profile

Photo: Lawlie Hill





**More photo-angles on 'Moofy Floofy', a Blue Spay British Longhair taken by her owner, Mr. Lawlie Hill.**

Baby-like features of a large head, over-sized eyes, short muzzle, and stubby limbs even elicit a spike in hormones that ensures that we protect the young of our own and other species. This biological response has been hypothesized to contribute to the domestication of animals as pets and influence the development of various breeds.

It is why teddy bears have their characteristic look. In summary, this kitten had been designed and selectively bred for well over a century, since the beginnings of the cat fancy, to be the epitome of an attractive show cat. Unfortunately, the length of its fur did not meet the current standard for its breed.

The emergence of the dog and cat fancies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is concurrent with the publication and increasing public awareness of Darwin's Origin of Species in 1859, with the first formal dog show occurring in England that year and the famous Crystal Palace cat show 12 years later.



**'Bonnie' – a Lilac British Longhair at 10 weeks**

Photo/Owners: Nick & Kim Blankley

Darwin often cited the Greyhound as an example of adaptation of conformation to function in his works. The ability of cat and dog fanciers to imitate the process of natural selection through directed breeding and artificial selection brought Darwin's theories into the kennels and catteries of science-minded individuals.

**"I think it is a great mistake to give "Russian" in our show classification now, as these are really almost extinct in England... The last time I showed my Russian was at the first Westminster show, in a class for Russians. She was, however, beaten by the round-headed British blue. In 1901 the class was altered to Short-haired blues... I had a most amusing talk with a blue Russian owner the other day, and a good laugh with him over the ancestors of his 'Russian' blues" – Annie James, 1902.**





**More appealing photos of 'Bonnie' – a Lilac British Longhair spay kitten, owned by Nick & Kim Blankley**

In the early British cat shows of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of the exhibits were shorthaired. There were a handful of representatives from a few distinct breeds, namely the Siamese, Abyssinian, and Manx, but the remainder were differentiated by color.

The Russian shorthaired cat (also known as the Archipelago cat), the Chartreux, and the blue European shorthair competed in a single color class, much to the dismay of breeders who preferred the “foreign” type, as judges usually selected the round-headed European type for awards, even in the few instances where a separate “Russian” class was declared!

Breeders recognized from the beginnings of the cat fancy that the winning formula was to create a cute cat.

**“Blue short-haired cats – many of them imported from Northern Russia – make very desirable pets...There are some people who appear to wish to assert that there is an English breed of blues, and I have been told strange tales of unexpected meetings in country villages with cats of this colour, whose owners declared that both parents were English bred... I venture to doubt these assertions.” – Mrs. Constance Carew Cox, 1902.**

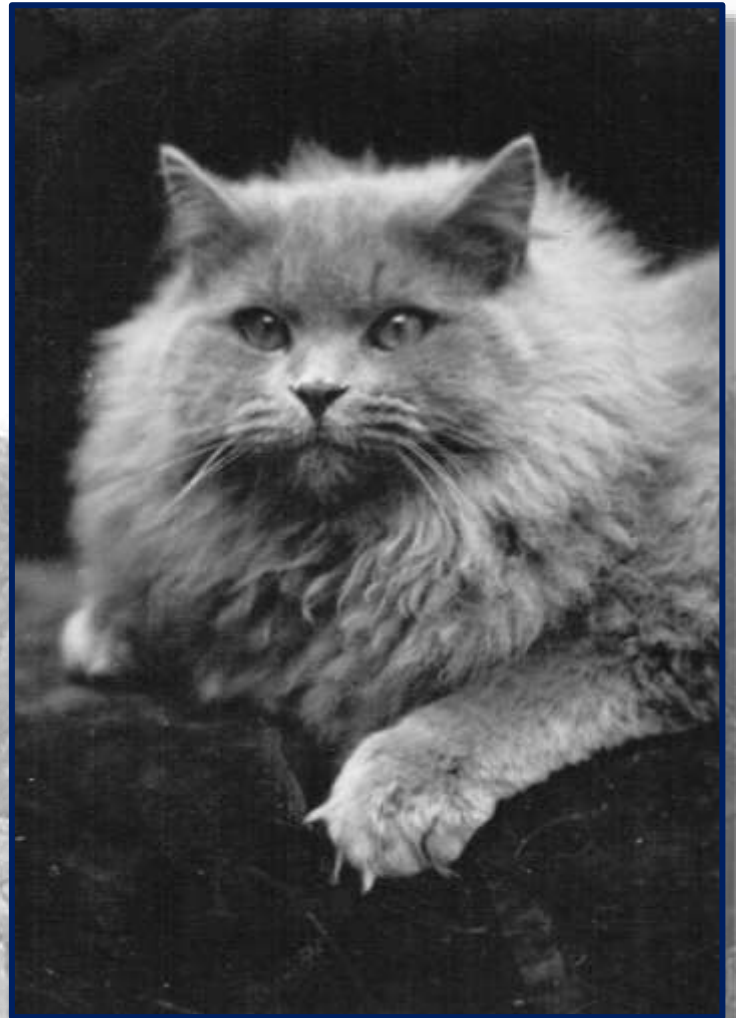
In the earliest cat shows, the few longhaired cats seen were usually elegant white cats imported from France, referred to as Angoras. Starting in 1896, longhaired cats began to dominate the cat fancy.

Separate varieties of longhairs were described, but the Russian Longhair, Angora, and Persian cats competed together in the same color classes.

Foundation imports were interbred to the extent that differentiation between the geographically labelled varieties was viewed with skepticism by early judges. Any purity of lineage that may have existed in their native country prior to importation into England quickly disappeared in the enthusiasm to fulfil the desire for these increasingly popular pets in the community.

Type progressed away from the elegant look we associate today with Turkish Angoras towards the round-headed, baby-like look that was popular with the judges.





**TWO TOP SHOW 'OAKLANDS' BLUE PERSIANS FROM THE 1910-1913 ERA  
to whom Modern-day British Blue Longhair counterparts could be favourably compared.**

Photos: © The Harrison Weir Collection

**"It must be remembered that, however crossed, selected, re-crossed, domesticated, or what not, we have but two breeds on which the superstructure of what is known to-day as the classification of varieties has been reared: the Long-hair or Eastern cat and the Short-hair or European." – John Jennings, 1901.**

Because the longhaired trait is recessive, these cats would breed true, unlike the shorthairs who might occasionally produce "throwback" longhaired offspring.

Without knowledge of the genetics involved, the lack of consistent coat length in the offspring of shorthaired cats was erroneously interpreted as evidence of poor breeding practices. Keep in mind that cat fanciers of the day were trying desperately to produce tortoiseshell male cats so that they could breed pure specimens of that "breed".

**"The kitten I have to sell (Ed. Note: Chinnie, the foundation of all chinchilla silvers) is quite pure bred... The father is one we bred partly from Mrs. Radford's breed and partly from a splendid tom cat that was found living wild at Babbicombe" – Grace Hurt, 1882.**

The use of Himalayan cats in the 1970's to produce chocolate, lilac, and pointed varieties in the British Shorthair resulted in these colors being expressly prohibited in CFA.

However, long before that decade, John Jennings and Harrison Weir observed that breeders were being creative in their pursuit of new colors and the perfection of existing colors by performing numerous experimental crosses with cats of various breeds.





**Miss Meilan-Wilkinson's 'BRIGHTON MIDGET' – Silver Classic Tabby English Shorthair – born in 1897, was proven to carry Longhair. Progeny from her went on to produce Longhairs that were retained for breeding.**

Photos: Left, 'Cats: Show & Pet' (1903) by C.A. House. Right: Ogden's Cigarettes Collectors Card

**READ about her and her legacy at 'The History Project' – [www.cat-o-pedia.org/brighton-midget.html](http://www.cat-o-pedia.org/brighton-midget.html)**

**"I yield to no one in appreciating markings in these <long-haired> cats... but that those markings have been obtained by crossing Short-haired cats is only too apparent, apart from the fact that I know those who have thus produced them." – John Jennings, 1901.**

After the first world war, the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) declared that only third generation offspring of longhair to shorthair crosses would be eligible for competition, a definition that CFA adopted for its breeds in the 1950's as well. However, after the decimating impact of WW II on the cat fancy, the few remaining individuals of the British Shorthair lines were bred with domestic shorthairs of unknown ancestry, Persians, and other breeds to recreate a new foundation population.

**"For a long time we have called the self blues Russians. No doubt they, in the first instance, came from the East but since they were imported into this country they have been mixed in a great measure with self blacks and in some cases with long-haired blues to get strong, short, round heads." Mr. T.B. Mason, 1902**

Three generation purity of pedigree in Shorthairs was later re-established by the GCCF, in response to the widespread interbreeding of Longhairs with Shorthairs. Across the pond, CFA decided to separate out the American Shorthair, the Exotic Shorthair, and the British Shorthair into separate breeds in 1967. This was a response to the observation that the shorthairs were increasingly exhibiting evidence of Persian ancestry (despite what their pedigrees might reflect). Ongoing breeding to Persians would only continue with the cats assigned to the Exotic Shorthair breed. In the initial period of this transition, individual kittens in a single litter could be assigned to any of the three breeds.





**British Longhair (Blue Neuter) 'Robyn' owned by Bob & Lise Clark**

Photo: © Helmi Flick Cat Photography

**"Because a specimen is described as emanating from this, that, or the other country, my readers will do well to avoid a too hasty acceptance as to the purity or nationality of the breed... the cat I refer to won principle honours in long-hair classes for several seasons, making a considerable total prize-winning record. Now this specimen, to my certain knowledge, was the result of an accidental cross quite foreign to the breed it represented. How many cases of a similar character could be addressed, I hardly like to suggest." – John Jennings, 1901.**

So, if the crossing of British Shorthairs to Persians was discontinued four decades ago, why are longhaired kittens still being produced? Breeding two short haired cats together, even if both are carrying the recessive mutation for long hair, will only result in a 25% chance for an individual kitten being born with long hair. If only one cat in the pair is carrying the mutation, no longhaired kittens will be born. It may take multiple litters, with multiple mates, before a stud or queen produces evidence that they carry this mutation. Luckily, the molecular genetics of the long hair trait has been established and breeders no longer have to rely on pedigree or breeding history alone to try to ascertain if a litter of British Shorthairs may produce longhaired kittens. Genetic labs around the world can now test for this mutation, allowing breeders to choose to eliminate or perpetuate it in their programs.

The genetic basis of long hair in cats, long known to be inherited as a recessive trait, was published in 2007 by a collaboration of researchers at the Laboratory of Genomic Diversity and the National Center for Biotechnology Information at the National Cancer Institute; the Center for Animal Transgenesis and Germ Cell Research at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine; Centro de Biologia Genômica e Molecular, Faculdade de Biociências in Brazil; and the Department of Otolaryngology and Neuroscience at Johns Hopkins University.





**'Robyn,' a British Longhair (a Blue Neutered male),  
bred at the LaziBlues cattery, owned by Zina Avrutova, New York State,  
and the much-loved pet of Bob & Lise Clark, of Chestnut Run farm, New Jersey.**

Photo: © Helmi Flick Cat Photography





**TICA RW DINA PAREL OF CWTCHYCATS – Cream & White British Longhair female, bred by Peggy Defieuw**  
Owned and photographed by Carolyn Littlejohns.

They found four separate mutations of the feline fibroblast growth factor 5 (FGF5) gene, any combination of which will cause the longhaired phenotype in domestic cats. Mutations of this gene are responsible for long hair in other mammals as well, including dogs and mice.

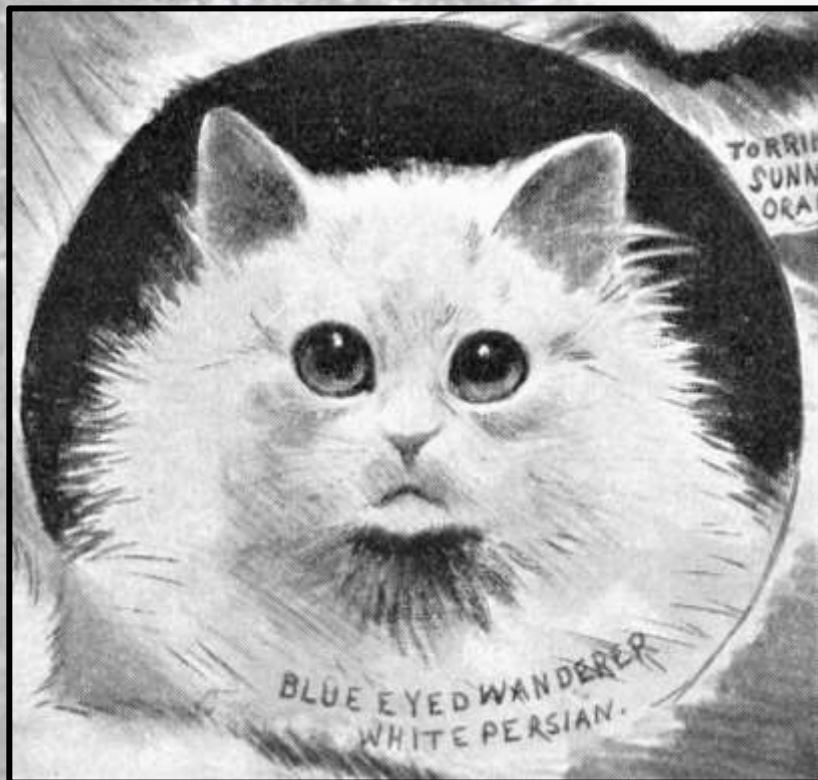
**“I am disappointed at the neglect of the short-haired English cat, but the ascendancy of the foreign long-hair... I do not think that the breeding of short-hairs is yet properly understood” – Harrison Weir, 1901**

In this study, three British Shorthair cats were assessed for the presence of mutations in the FGF5 gene. One of those cats carried Mutation 4, the variant found to be fixed in Persian cats and present in breeds known to have hybridized with them. This variant was also fixed in the Birmans, Turkish Angoras, and Turkish Vans in the study. The other three variants, often heterozygous with Mutation 4, were found in Ragdolls (Mutations 1 and 3), Maine Coons (Mutation 3), and Norwegian Forest Cats (Mutation 2). The genetic findings were, therefore, consistent with the history of the British Shorthair breed and suggested a penetrance of the longhair mutation of ***as high as 30% in the breed.***

**“Miss Harper’s Blue-eyed Wanderer has great quality and lovely texture of (long) coat. He was in truth a wanderer in the streets of a London suburb and, although labelled ‘breeder and pedigree unknown’ he has almost always held his own in the white classes at our largest shows” – Frances Simpson, 1903**

Therefore, there is no need to recreate breeds such as the Traditional Longhair, Sterling, or Doll faced Persian, as this breed has existed since the beginnings of the cat fancy, albeit hiding in plain sight.





Miss Ellen Harper's 'BLUE-EYED WANDERER' (Blue-eyed White Persian). Left: An interpretative sketch by Louis Wain, and Right: A photograph of the cat himself from the cover of 'Our Cats' Magazine.

Images: 'Black & White' Magazine, January 1902. 'Our Cats' Magazine, April 1901.

Courtesy of The Harrison Weir Collection.

The cat known today as a British Shorthair has always had a longhaired counterpart, cherished in the early years of the cat fancy. As the mutations for extreme brachycephaly became fixed in the Persian and Exotic breeds beginning in the 1980's (although undoubtedly in the gene pool since the 1940's), the non-extreme counterpart, sharing a foundation heritage in England, simply remained "under cover" within the contemporary British Shorthair breed.

Genetic analysis of the of the Persian and British Shorthair breeds (Lipinski MJ, et al., The Ascent of Cat Breeds: Genetic Evaluations of Breeds and Worldwide Random-Bred Populations; Genomics, 2007) indicate that they are both members of the same extended family.

**"Pathfinders Tangle – This cat when arriving in the USA caused a sensation for being the best bi-colour seen there, and the breed was granted championship status since then...(Proposed Bi-Colour standard) Long-Haired - Breed 12a, Short-Haired - Breed 31... (50 points on colour, including eye colour) The remaining 50 points to be apportioned according to the standard laid down for all British Short-Haired cats" – Norah Woodifield, 1974.**

There are, as yet, no genetic tests for the two mutations that define the head structure of the contemporary Persian, but two genes (CHL1 and CNTN6) have been identified as candidates for these mutations. These genes are known to influence face shape in humans. Just as British Shorthair breeders have the ability to select cats based on coat length variants, breeders may one day, theoretically, have the ability to select cats free of the brachycephalic mutations in order to consistently produce British Longhairs of moderate type.





**TICA GRC. RACHAEL DIONIS OF CWTCHYCATS – Chocolate Tortie & White British Longhair, bred by E. Lapina.**  
Owned and photographed by Carolyn Littlejohns.

Feature	Longhair (1902)	Shorthair (1902)	British Shorthair (GCCF current)
<b>Head</b>	Round and broad across and between the eyes. Nose rather short. Cheeks well developed	Small, broad across and between the eyes, rounded above. Nose rather long than short	Round face with full cheeks and good breadth of skull with round underlying bone structure. In profile, a rounded forehead should lead to a short, straight nose with a nose break which is neither too pronounced nor too shallow.
<b>Ears</b>	Ordinary size, but looking small (Weir). Small (Simpson) Width between the ears.	Ears of medium size (Weir). Ears small (Simpson). Rounded at apex and broad at the base. Good space between the ears.	Small, rounded at the tips. Set far apart fitting into (without distorting) the rounded contour of the head
<b>Eyes</b>	Large, round, ("or almond shaped", Weir), full and very bright.	Large, round, and full.	Large, round and well-opened. Set wide apart.
<b>Body</b>	Large, small in bone. Body long, legs short. (Weir) Cobby and low on the legs (Simpson)	Cobby in build, round quarters, and good in bone substance.	Cobby type with short level back. Low on legs with deep chest. Equally massive across the shoulders and the rump. Medium to large, but not rangy. Short, strong legs.





**TICA TGC EDELWEISS BRITFAVORITE OF CWTCHYCATS – Lilac Silver Mackerel Tabby British Longhair male, bred by Tatyana Olenitskaya. Owned and photographed by Carolyn Littlejohns.**

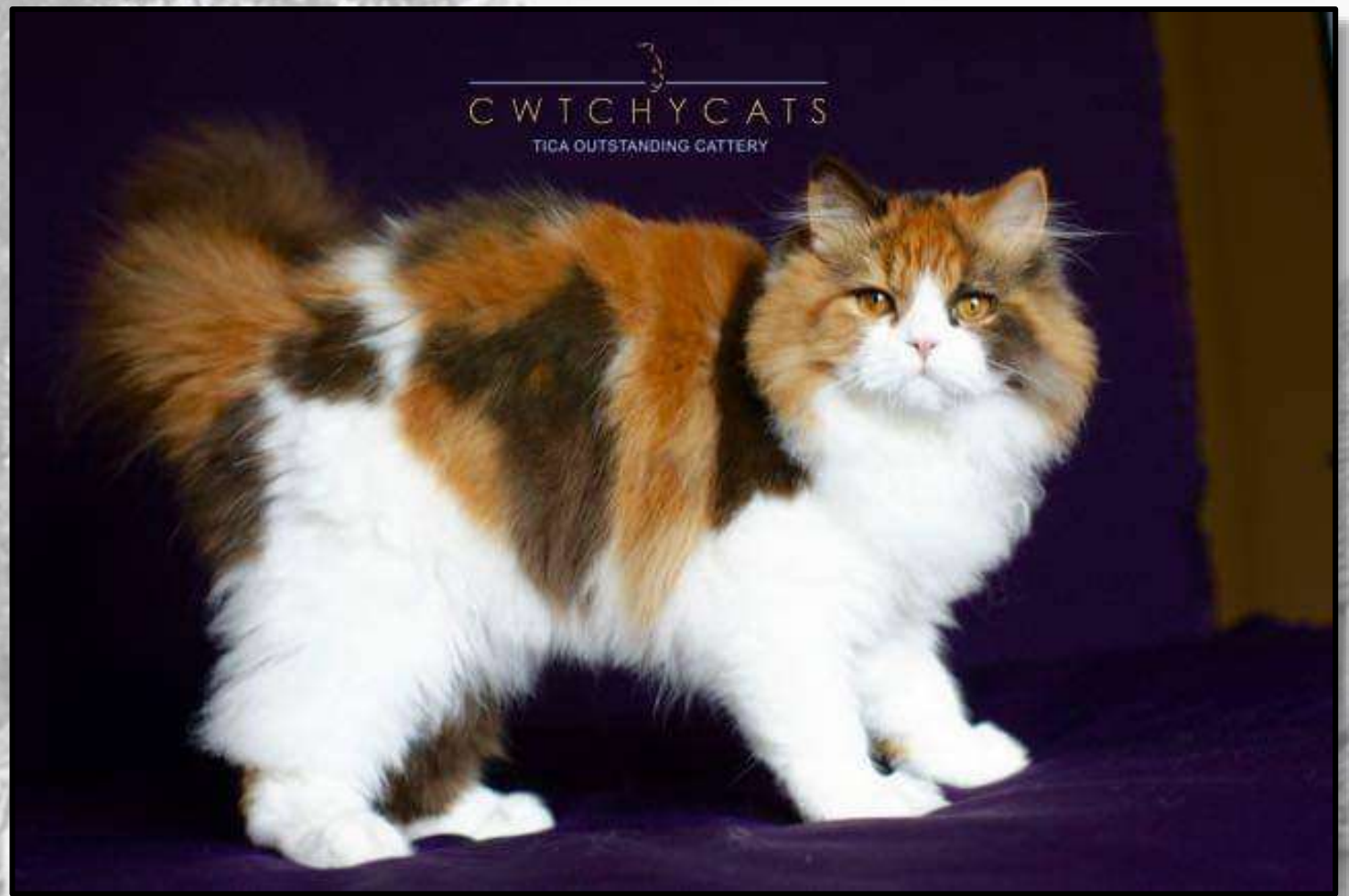




**CWTCHYCATS ONE IN A MILLION – Lilac Tortie Smoke British Longhair female,  
bred, owned and photographed by Carolyn Littlejohns.  
Shown here in a frontal view portrait, and side body profile.**







**TICA GRC. RACHAEL DIONIS OF CWTCHYCATS – Chocolate Tortie & White British Longhair, bred by E. Lapina.**  
Owned and photographed by Carolyn Littlejohns.

The animal welfare implications of extreme brachycephaly have been receiving increased attention in recent years, with legislation passed in multiple countries mandating the geometry of a dog's skull to reflect a minimum muzzle length of 1/3 that of the total skull length. It is not unreasonable to assume that this trait will be targeted in the cat fancy as well.

The Persian breed has been in decline of popularity worldwide for the past three decades. The famous chinchilla silver mascot of the Fancy Feast cat food brand, which has been a chinchilla silver of moderate type for close to 50 years, has more recently been a Burmilla Longhair or British Longhair, which seems to indicate that their marketing research shows a public preference for a moderate type cat.

In the years since I admired that beautiful longhaired kitten in California, the status of these cats has improved. The British Longhair has been recognized for championship competition in TICA since 2009 and in FIFe and GCCF since 2017. In their first year of Championship competition in TICA, RW SGC Hunnybears Aristorex Fancy Faye was the highest scoring British Longhair Cat, finishing 11<sup>th</sup> in the Southern Europe Regional standings. A cream, IW SGC Smittenkitten Findus Fluffypants was the 25<sup>th</sup> highest scoring longhaired cat Internationally for the 2012-2013 show year. A brown mackerel Tabby, IW SGC Fencroft Alabaster of Hashtag, was the 22<sup>nd</sup> highest scoring Allbreed cat Internationally in the 2015-2016 show season and is TICA's highest scoring British Longhair to date.