

## Only Four Colors

Why do CFA Siamese breeders insist that Siamese come in only four colors? It has little to do with color genetics and everything to do with the history of the breed and the difficulty of Siamese color. Imported into England in the last quarter of the 19th century and bred in Siam (Thailand) for generations before, the Siamese entered our lives as a seal point breed of domestic cat in the dawn of the organized cat fancy. As geological time goes, that is nothing; in terms of the cat fancy and generations of Siamese, that is everything. Seal points were registered and shown in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century and in the first shows of CFA, organized in 1906.

The dilution of black, or seal point, is blue or chocolate. Lilac is dilute, or recessive, to all three. We know that chocolate points occurred in English litters from the beginning, and we also know that breeders there quickly found homes for them. The incidence of blue is less clear, but there is no question that blue cats were present in Siam.

Following England's lead, CFA recognized the blue point in 1934, the chocolate point in 1952, and the U.S. led the way in 1955 by recognizing the lilac point. By the time red, the O gene, was introduced into a small part of the Siamese gene pool, along with the tabby (lynx) points, many generations of Siamese had been born in this country and selection made for the non-agouti, ticked tabby pattern in order to produce clear coats with no spotting or barring. (A reminder: All cats are basically tabby.) Siamese breeders decided to adhere strictly to A.C. Jude's definition of a Siamese in his *Cat Genetics*: A cat with solid color restricted to the points. To do this meant avoiding any introduction of the O gene (red) and agouti (lynx) in the CFA Siamese. In any event, by this time the Siamese was, in cat fancy parlance, an old, established breed.

Siamese in all four colors have been on the CFA show bench for more than half a century, longer than the existence of the majority of the breeds recognized around the world. As for the seal point Siamese, it is the granddaddy of them all!

## Additional Information

### CFA

CFA Siamese Breed Council  
[www.siamesebc.org](http://www.siamesebc.org)

The Cat Fanciers Association  
[www.CFA.org](http://www.CFA.org)

For Kids...About Cats  
[www.kids.cfa.org](http://www.kids.cfa.org)

### Siamese Breed Clubs

Siamese Alliance of America  
[www.siamesealliance.org](http://www.siamesealliance.org)

National Siamese Cat Club  
[www.nationalsiamese.com](http://www.nationalsiamese.com)

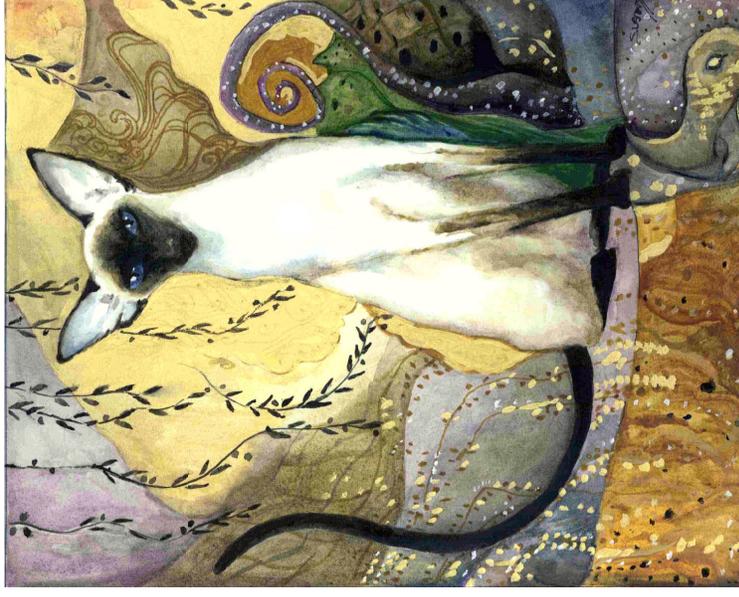
### Find a Breeder

CFA Cat Breeder Referral Service  
[www.cfa.org/cbrs.html](http://www.cfa.org/cbrs.html)

### Cat Show Info

Cat Shows US!  
[www.catshows.us](http://www.catshows.us)

# Siamese



Arguably the oldest recognized breed of pedigreed domestic cats in the world, the Siamese is without doubt the inspiration and genesis of the enthusiastic breeding and showing of fine felines that we know today. The Siamese personality – so loving, so vocal and so attuned to human beings – attests to centuries of cohabitation of man and feline. It is this social attribute more than any other that makes the Siamese an ideal family pet, truly the feline “man’s best friend.”

It all began in the temples of Siam. As has been documented both in art and literature, the breed was nurtured and protected by generations of the royal family in that country. Finding their way to the rest of the world as highly prized gifts, the Siamese was first exhibited during the latter quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in England at the first known cat show.



*Artwork on the front page is by Susan Perkins*

*Text by Betty White*

*Original photos copyright Chanan*

The striking Siamese color pattern, first recognized in seal point, quickly captivated the public. Blue points were recognized in 1934, chocolate points eighteen years later, and lilac points in 1955. These four colors comprise the Siamese spectrum, and they have been on the CFA show bench now for over half a century.

In the world of cats, the Siamese illustrates best John Keats' famous poetic line, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." The elegant beauty of the Siamese, both in the svelte lines and breathtaking color, is a given among cat fanciers and the public alike. There is no argument here. The breed is loved by all both for its beauty and for its endearing personality, shaped by loving breeders and owners for centuries.

To own a Siamese is to own one of the world's living treasures.



While insisting upon type, breeders understand that it is the color pattern, rather than type, that is more widely appreciated.

The Siamese pattern evolved from a genetic mutation and is classified in the albino series. An enzyme affecting color that is activated by temperature restricts color to the "points," the naturally colder parts of the body. This explains why kittens warm from the womb are born white. Color develops gradually as the babies grow. Siamese do darken with age, but the meaning here is advancing age as the circulation of blood becomes less efficient. Anything that would modify temperature, whether it is a cat that basks in the sun or a cat whose skin is insulated by body fat, will adversely affect Siamese color. In addition, there may be polygenes in certain families of Siamese cats that darken coats prematurely. Of all the wonderful qualities of a Siamese that the world loves, the hardest thing for the breeder to achieve is excellent color. It is the nature of Siamese color, the months – even years – of color development that makes the problem of selection of breeding stock so daunting.

### Seal Point

For as long as there have been written records, seal points have been described as seal brown. Think of a seal basking on a rock. Is he brown or black? Unless a black panther is sitting next to him, you might say that he is black. Then again there are nearly black seals and seals that are clearly dark brown. The



same is true of seal point Siamese. Body color is nearly white to fawn, depending on age and polygenes. Whether young or old, light bodied or not, there must be a definite contrast between body and points. The ideal seal point has clear unmarked body in stark, heart-stopping contrast to its point color. The paw pads and nose leather are black.

### Chocolate Point

Chocolate point Siamese also come in different shades of chocolate. Think of milk chocolate and "almost" dark chocolate, with both shades having a white chocolate body. Milk chocolate is the ideal color, indeed the color in most standards, with paw pads and nose leather a cinnamon pink. The lighter the point color of a chocolate point Siamese, the less developed will be the point color in a young cat. Chocolate point Siamese should mature into cats with full masks and stockings to preserve that dramatic contrast.



### Blue Point

Blue is not blue in the cat world. Blue is slate gray. A blue point Siamese has a bluish-white body with paw pads and nose leather a slate gray. The color is difficult to attain to perfection, primarily because of the polygenes that affect development. Over the years, breeders have tried to work with "color-bred blues." The problem lies in the tendency over time for the color to migrate into the body when blue point is bred to blue point. Once again, an ideal Siamese of any color must have the remarkable contrast between the body color and point color.



### Lilac Point

Lilac point Siamese are the most delicately colored of the four Siamese colors, with pinkish-gray points on a glacial white body. The nose leather and paw pads are lavender pink. What the color lacks in vibrant contrast of body to points is more than offset by deep blue eye color. The porcelain-like visual effect of elegance is not unlike the aesthetic of blue-and-white china.

