

## They Can Be Demanding, Chatty and Bossy, but They're Fun!

These animals love to follow you around, are always social, and won't hesitate to create their own intrigue if you ignore them. They're highly chatty. And ever so sweet, loving and loyal. Their chattiness may be the perfect diversion if you enjoy their antics.

**Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker**

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Created as an offshoot of the Siamese, then bred with American shorthairs, Orientals can have any one of more than 300 pattern and color combinations — more possibilities than any other breed
- Orientals can be either longhaired or shorthaired, and have almond-shaped eyes, flared ears that seem out of proportion to their rather small, wedge-shaped heads and long bodies, necks and legs
- One of the most engaging personality traits of the Oriental is how much they talk, and in a low raspy tone
- Other endearing traits when you have Oriental kitties is how loyal, sweet, affectionate and social they are, making them a perfect pet for people who live alone

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One look at the sleek silhouette of the cats known as Orientals and you'll see why they're known as natural athletes. From their large, pointed ears to their long, thin, tapering tails, words like "lithe," "svelte" and "muscular" describe these beautiful felines very well. Besides being physically engaged, Orientals like to be involved in whatever's going on; they love having fun. As Vetstreet<sup>1</sup> observes, they also enjoy chatting you up while they're doing it, which can be funny and entertaining as they have loud, raspy voices.

Most domestic cats have a similar look, with variations in the length of their fur and the width of their faces. Orientals, however, are unique; when you see one, you know exactly what they are. They can have any one of more than 300 pattern and color combinations — more possibilities than any other breed. While Orientals were created as an offshoot of the Siamese cat breed, the latter has gently blending point colorations, or overall pale coloring with darker extremities, such as their faces, tails, ears and feet.

But Orientals don't have points, because when they were bred from the Siamese, cats with no pointing were used. These cats have upward-slanted, almond-shaped eyes that are typically blue, green or one of each, and flared ears that sometimes seem quite out of proportion to their rather small, wedge-shaped heads.

Their bodies are longer, too, in proportion to the rest of their features, and their necks and legs are longer and slimmer than their American counterparts. Because they can also be either longhaired or shorthaired, longhaired varieties come with a plumed tail. Either way, they seem somewhat delicate walking on their dainty paws. The overall appearance has earned Orientals the name "Ornamentals."

## History of the Oriental

Imported to the U.S. in the 1970s, Orientals were bred with American shorthairs, which created even more color combinations. Cat Time explains:

*"The breed was developed using Siamese as the foundation breed and then crossing them with other breeds. The original intent was to broaden the Siamese gene pool in Britain because so many breeding programs had been devastated during World War II.*

*Crosses with Russian Blues, British Shorthairs, Abyssinians and domestic shorthairs produced kittens without the pointed Siamese pattern, which were then bred back to Siamese. In just a few generations, breeders produced cats that looked exactly like Siamese, except for the variety of colors and patterns they displayed, as well as cats with the traditional pointed pattern."*<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly, Orientals with point markings aren't recognized by all cat associations, and some even require them to be exhibited as Siamese. True, the wedge-shaped head and sleek body style are the same as a Siamese, and the personality is very much the same.

## Personality Plus: The Oriental

Most cat enthusiasts who know about Orientals will tell you that other than the color, this breed is very much like the Siamese. And if any one personality trait jumps to the forefront, it's how talkative they are. Usually they're described as being opinionated, even expecting their humans to listen to their advice and act on it.

While they may be bossy, or at least have a lot they need to get off their chests, one thing that's a recurring theme in regard to Orientals is how sweet, loving and loyal they are, and the chattiness is a welcome diversion for people who live alone or enjoy the entertainment.

Orientals will also prove their devotion to family members in their desire to be close to you, jumping into your lap or snuggling up in bed with you. However, as devoted as they are to their favorite humans, Orientals may also become distraught or at least let you know they're unhappy being left alone for very long at a time, such as when you go to work every day.

One way to remedy this is to get a companion cat so they can be alone together. These are good pets if you have children (although with any type of pet, children must be taught to treat animals with respect), or dogs who don't mind sharing space with cats.

As for other types of cats in the house, it works best if the other cats are compliant, as Orientals enjoy being in charge. When introducing a new pet into your household, do it in stages, if possible, so everyone can get used to each other gradually. Early socialization is a good idea for Orientals so they can get used to new situations without becoming nervous or skittish, especially if they ever have to be boarded away from home, visited by a cat sitter or take a trip to the vet.

## Activity for Your Oriental

That lithe body your Oriental has allows them to be very agile, which comes in handy when they're taking flight from the top of the draperies or your highest kitchen shelves. Cat toys definitely come in handy for these guys; otherwise you might find them sorting through your dresser drawers and laundry baskets or jumping out from a hiding spot in wait for someone to scare when they walk by. Actually, they might do those kinds of things even if you do socialize and pet them a lot. Orientals enjoy a little intrigue in their lives.

Because they're smart and adore being with you, experiencing what you experience, Orientals are easily trained to walk on a leash or leashed inside a protected yard. They love playing, either tumbling around with other cats, chasing a teaser or string or batting toys or household objects around.

Some cats are considered outdoor cats, but Orientals are not. They're best kept inside or in a safely fenced yard or "catio," a secure platform built outside an open window so cats can experience the atmosphere of the great outdoors.

## Health of Orientals

Orientals are easy to care for — a good brushing every few weeks will take care of dead hair. Medium-sized cats weighing between 5 and 10 pounds, Orientals may have health problems just like any other type of kitty, but they share the same predilection as Siamese cats, which Cat Time notes can include:

- Amyloidosis, which occurs when amyloid protein is deposited in body organs, such as the liver in members of the Siamese family
- Asthma or bronchial disease
- Congenital heart defects such as aortic stenosis
- Crossed eyes
- Gastrointestinal conditions such as megaesophagus
- Hyperesthesia syndrome, a neurological problem evidenced by cats who excessively groom themselves, resulting in hair loss or manic behavior when petted
- Nystagmus, a neurological disorder causing involuntary rapid eye movement
- Lymphoma
- Progressive retinal atrophy

Affectionate, adaptable, energetic and intelligent, having Orientals in your house will almost be like having another person, especially as they're also social butterflies. If you're not keen on hearing incessant chatter and requests for almost constant interaction and attention from your cat, this isn't the cat for you.

On the other hand, if you're looking for a fast friend who likes nothing more than being in your company, your Oriental kitty will fill the bill very nicely. Look for an Oriental rescue organization in your area if you'd like to adopt one of these special kitties into your life.

## Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [Vetstreet 2001-2017](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Cat Time 2017](#)