

## Kitten History: Somali

**This distinctly fox-like feline has gained a loyal following around the world.**

*Stacy Hackett*

A ruddy-ticked coat, large ears, an exotic look and long fur? Is it an Abyssinian? Guess again: your beautiful longhaired kitten is a Somali, the Abbys longhaired cousin.

After World War II, the Abyssinian breed seemed on the brink of extinction. Breeders worked hard to save the beautiful cats and some cats of unknown parentage were used to strengthen and build the breed. Today's breeders believe some of those mystery ancestors must have carried the gene for long hair.

As the Abyssinian breed continued to gain popularity, occasionally a longhaired kitten or two would appear in litters. Liking the fox-like, exotic appearance of these babies, several breeders began working with the longhaired versions. In the United States, Evelyn Mague began the Somali movement, and was the woman who named the breed.

The Cat Fanciers Association accepted the ruddy and red colors of the Somali for championship status in 1979. The blue Somali received this status in 1986, followed by the fawn color in 1990. Today the breed enjoys worldwide popularity.

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