

## A Rare Jewel

**Balinese look familiar, but definitely are their own breed.**

*By Elisa Jordan*

From a distance, you may not realize that the elegant Siamese curled up sleeping is not what it seems. Once the pointed cat unfurls its lovely plume of a tail, you understand that this is no Siamese. It's a Balinese cat.

### Family Tree

Simply put, the Balinese cat is a longhaired Siamese, though Balinese cats are, in fact, a separate breed. Many theories exist about why longhaired kittens began turning up in Siamese litters, but a common one suggests that the longhaired gene is a spontaneous mutation. As Siamese are among the most ancient of breeds, no one can be certain when the first one appeared. The early registry, Cat Fanciers Federation, though, recorded a longhaired Siamese in 1928.

"No one really tried to do anything to promote these cats until much later," says Marguerite Epstein, a Florida-based Balinese cat breeder and current Cat Fanciers' Association breed council secretary. "When these spontaneous longhaired kittens appeared in a Siamese litter they were usually sold as pets."

Then, in the 1950s, some breeders took note of the longhaired beauties, Epstein explains. The breeders began a breeding program with the longhaired kittens and the parents of some of the longhaired kittens that obviously had these longhaired genes.

Since then, dedicated breeders have devoted themselves to the Balinese cat. The name Balinese, in fact, comes from early breeder Helen Smith, who said the cat's grace and flowing coat reminded her of Balinese temple dancers.

**\*\*For the full article, pick up the May 2007 issue of CAT FANCY.\*\***

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