



*The white
cat of
Thailand*

The Khao Manee Cat

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In the past 100 years or so, the Western world has embraced three great ancient natural Thai breeds, the Vichien Maat (Siamese), the Suphalak (Burmese and Tonkinese) and the Si-Sawat (Korat). Until recently, a fourth ancient Thai breed had been overlooked outside of Thailand, and the Khao Manee (pronounced "Cow Manee") is now threatening to become an endangered breed in its own land.

What is a Khao Manee?

OK, so what is so special about this breed, you ask? I will go into more detail a little later, but in a nutshell, take the spritely naughtiness and devotion of

the Burmese, the grace of the Siamese, the heart-shaped face and upright ears of the Korat and the sheer beauty of the Tonkinese, roll them all together, add a diamond white coat, characteristic high cheekbones and jewels for eyes, and you have a Khao Manee. It is as Thai as all of the aforementioned breeds, which are of course closely related, and the Khao Manee is no exception.

History

The first recorded mention of the Khao Manee (white gem), originally named Khao Plort (all white), was in the Tamra Maew, the ancient manuscripts of Thai cat poems, circa 1350-1767.

"The sixth feline completely white, eyes of clear mercury. This cat if in any house brings long life and title.

*Material wealth coming in with no decrease
Will be entertained with all things in happiness"*

Originally they were believed to have all had mercury coloured eyes, but some time later on breeders extended to all eye colours, the odd eyed being considered lucky but the yellow eyed being the most popular with Thai breeders.

The name "Khao Manee" probably began to be used around the 19th century. At Thai cat shows, they also add the name "Khao Plort" to avoid any confusion. They have also been known as "diamond eyes", however we try to avoid association with this name, because unfortunately it also refers to a type of glaucoma, unrelated to the breed.

In 1999, the first Khao Manees were exported from

Thailand into the West. On Tuesday 17 August, US breeder Colleen Freymouth welcomed two Khao Manees from Thailand into the USA. She went on to breed the first Khao Manee litter in the USA later that year.

It took a further 10 years for the Khao Manee to reach UK shores. Looking back, I can hardly believe it is now almost two years since the arrival of my beautiful odd eyed Khao Manee girl, Odyssey ChaWee of Ayshazen, from the USA. Bred by Janet Poulsen of Odyssey cattery in Minnesota, ChaWee was the first Khao Manee to arrive in the UK, on 9 May 2009. Since then, life has been a whirlwind of promotion of awareness of this stunning breed. Tina Turner of Kinabalu cattery and I joined forces and continued to import Khao Manees from both Thailand

“ A diamond white coat, characteristic high cheekbones and jewels for eyes ”

and the USA, and to breed our own. Tina produced the first UK born Khao Manee litter on 25 March 2010. Now, in early 2011, we have 11 breeding Khao Manees, including 2 studs. Later this year we will be joined by 2 more imports, a male and a female. Other interested UK breeders have now bought Khao Manee kittens and we have a waiting list of other breeders.

In 2009, the Khao Manee Cat Club was formed and is now running successfully. It has applied for pre-affiliation with the GCCF. The club has finalised a Standard of Points, a Registration Policy and a Breeding Policy and have applied to the GCCF for recognition of the Khao Manee. At the time of going to press, the breed name has been accepted, enabling us to exhibit our cats at GCCF shows, and we are hoping to hear shortly that they can be registered on the GCCF Reference Register. On 20 November 2010, history was made again, when three Khao Manees belonging to Tina Turner were exhibited at the Supreme Cat Show. Khao Manees are now exhibited in the UK in both GCCF and TICA.

In TICA, the breed is a couple of years further ahead. On 17 May 2009, Khao Manees were granted Registration Only status, and in September 2011, application will be heard for acceptance of the Khao Manee in the Preliminary New Breed section.

Genetics

Largely speaking, the Khao Manee is phenotypically a dominant white cat. However, many people are surprised to

learn that they are also known to produce coloured offspring. It all depends on whether the parents are homozygous or heterozygous for the white masking gene (“W”). White is not a colour. It is “epistatic”, and it masks the true colour of the cat. The homozygous Khao Manee will carry two dominant white genes (WW). Heterozygous will carry one gene for epistatic white and one for true colour (Ww). Therefore if two heterozygous cats are mated, a percentage of the kittens born will be homozygous recessive (ww) and will show their true colour. These coloured cats are important, and are used in our breeding programme, being mated back to white Khao Manees.

UK Prices

Expect to pay around £650 for a neutered pet Khao Manee kitten. Breeding cats start at around £900, depending on quality and sex.



Deafness

One of the factors involved with white cats unfortunately is that some are born deaf in either one or both ears. The dominant white gene can occasionally cause damage to the inner ear. To date, the incidence of deafness in Khao Manees is anecdotally reported to be fairly rare, perhaps due to selective breeding by Thai breeders over hundreds of years. The Khao Manee Cat Club has produced a breeding and registration policy that takes this into consideration, and only allows cats with a positive BAER or OAE hearing test certificate to be registered on the GCCF active register. Allowing for the fact that Khao Manee cats are not really suited as free-roaming outdoor cats, a deaf cat should have little problem adapting to an indoor life, and can live happy and enriched indoor lives.

Temperament

The temperament of the Khao Manee is generally very typical of most Thai cats. Possessing above average intelligence, they are active, curious, affectionate, people loving cats, who like to be involved as much as possible in life with their human companions. They are obsessive retrievers, and love nothing more than to cuddle up in front of the telly with whoever takes their fancy at the time. Much like their Burmese cousins, they seem to love everyone, paying special attention to visitors, but at the end of the day, they seem to bond more with one person in particular. Having said that, they are careful

not to exclude anyone in their affections, and are known to surprise visitors by suddenly hauling themselves on to their shoulders if they feel they are being ignored! As a Burmese breeder of 11 years, I can testify that they interact well, and play and sleep together happily. This is a graceful looking cat, almost regal, but their graceful appearance belies their naughty, playful natures! If you are a lover of a cat who interacts well with people, who insists on checking out your every move, including following you into the toilet, and sleeping under the covers with you, you need look no further than the Khao Manee.

Standard of Points

General

The Khao Manee is a solid white, odd eyed, or even eyed, medium sized cat of robust type, with medium bone structure, good muscular development, possessing a solid look along with balance and proportion. The neck, legs, body and tail are neither short nor elongated. They are not extreme in any way. Males will be proportionately larger than females. The skin is pink in colour. Temperament is outgoing, extremely friendly and sociable. Although somewhat vocal at times they are not aggressive.

Body and Tail

Body: The body is medium in size, solidly built, muscular in development, and presenting a well-proportioned, balanced, moderate, solid appearance with good width and bone structure, giving the appearance of well-developed athletic shoulders, chest and hind quarters. They are graceful and symmetrical in appearance. The broad back is level from the shoulders to the base of the tail. The abdomen is well muscled with slightly loose belly skin. Adult males have muscular necks, shoulders and jowls, and are proportionately larger than females.

Legs and Paws: The legs are proportionate in length to the body, muscular and strong. The paws are proportionate to the legs and body. They are rounded in shape. The paw pads are pink in colour.

Tail: Medium bone structure, the length medium in proportion to the body, measuring a half to two-thirds of the body length, slightly broader at the base, tapering to a rounded tip.

Head

Shape/Size: Whether viewed from the front or in profile, the head is a wide, heavy wedge. There is a definite whisker break. The brow, cheek and profile all show clean, strong contours, with high cheekbones. The muzzle is blunt but not excessively short. In profile it is squared. The lips and skin around the eyes are pink. The chin and jaw are neither receding nor unduly massive. The female has a more delicate head shape than the male. Kittens have a more angular head. A slight muzzle pinch should not be penalised in kittens.

Profile: In profile there is a slightly convex contour to the forehead, from the top of the head to just below the eyes, with a very slight stop. The nose is quite prominent. The tip of the nose is blunt, slightly rounded in bone structure. Nose length is in proportion to the head, and in a straight line with the chin, which is of medium depth with a level bite. The nose leather is pink.

Ears: The ears are medium to slightly large, held high on the head with a slight angular set, and alert, cupped forward, broad at the

base and rounded at the tips. Hair on the ears is very short, with sparse furnishings. Kitten ears are larger in proportion to their head.

Eyes: One of the defining attributes of the Khao Manee. The eyes are large, set forward, rounded almond, and luminous. The top line of the eye is slanted down towards the nose. The distance between the eyes is slightly more than the width of one eye.

Eye Colour: The Khao Manee is either odd-eyed, has each eye of different shades of the same colour, or has both eyes of the same colour, or each eye may be bicoloured. Eye colours are: Blue, Yellow, Amber, Green, Bi-coloured, Odd-eyed (blue and any other colour). The odd eyed cat has each eye of two different colours, or each eye of two different shades of the same colour. Bi-coloured have eyes of two colours. True eye colour develops after 3 to 5 months of age. The skin around the eyes is pink. In its native Thailand, the odd-eyed Khao Manee is considered the best and is a good luck cat, although any of these colours is acceptable.



Coat

The coat is white in colour shiny, and smooth, but loose and slightly open. The coat over the spine tends to break as the cat moves. There is little undercoat, and length is shorthaired but slightly plush. Kittens and young Khao Manee occasionally have a darker patch on the head, which usually disappears at around a year old.



Faults

Withhold certificates or first prizes in kitten open classes for any defect as listed in the preface to the GCCF S.O.P. Booklet.

Withhold all Awards for:

1. Extremely aggressive temperament.
2. Non-white markings anywhere in adults, other than those referred to in the colour description.
3. Three or more faults from

the list below.

The presence of any of these faults should be taken into account when judging a Khao Manee, however one or two minor faults in an otherwise excellent cat should not be too heavily penalised and should not preclude awarding the BOB or certificate:

1. Small Ears
2. Small eyes
3. Weak chin
4. Visible tarnish on coat

Scale of points

Total 100

Head and ears

Head shape 10

Profile 10

Ears 5

Eye colour

and shape

Eye shape and set 10

Eye colour 10

Body

Body 15

Legs/feet 5

Tail 5

Coat

Coat colour 15

Coat texture 10

Condition 5



Links

The Khao Manee Cat Club

www.khaomaneecatclub.com

Chrissy Russell (Ayshazen Cats)

www.khaomaneecats.co.uk, tel: 02380 696602

Tina Turner (Kinabalu Cats)

www.kinabalucats.co.uk, tel: 02380 579323