

# This Kitty Is So Beloved, Rare, and Healthy That You'll Be Challenged to Find One

Once you learn about this smart and beloved kitty, you'll crave one. They're considered a sign of prosperity, luck, health, and new beginnings in Thai culture, but are rarely for sale. Most are cherished gifts. Rarely, these beauties do come up for adoption. Can you rescue one?

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Silvery-blue cats with emerald green eyes, known as the Korat breed, are felines depicted in ancient Siamese literature, but receiving one or a pair as a gift rather than buying them is a Thai tradition, making them fairly rare
- “The Cat Book Poems,” written in Siam between 1350 to 1767, featured six cats thought to bring misfortune and 17 cats said to represent luck — the Korat being one of them
- No color variations are allowed for Korat breed standards; a kitty with marking or of any color besides blue is essentially not a Korat; other distinctive features include a muscular body and heart-shaped head
- Korats are playful, affectionate, social and very smart, wanting nothing more than to be involved in their family’s everyday activities. And on rare occasions, these beauties also come up for adoption
- If you’re thinking about adding one to your life, there are rescue organizations to help you find the Korat of your dreams

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If you’ve ever seen a dark blue cat with a silvery cast and large green eyes, chances are you were observing a Korat, a distinctive feline that happens to be one of the oldest known breeds. The Korat (pronounced Ko-raht') has an interesting history, based in Siam, now Thailand.

Korats are one of the subjects of “The Cat Book of Poems,” or tamra maew, written in Siam between 1350 and 1767, a book that includes paintings that is now housed in Bangkok’s National Library. The book features 17 cats said to represent luck — the Korat being one of them — and six cats believed to bring misfortune. Korat World shares the tamra maew about the Korat and explains the translation:

*“The hairs are smooth, with roots like clouds and tips like silver. The eyes shine like dewdrops on a lotus leaf.’ The cat ‘Maled’ has a body [color] like ‘Doklao’ ... ‘Maled’ means seed. ‘Dok’ means flower, and ‘lao’ can be translated as ‘lemon-grass,’ ‘pampas grass’ or ‘reed blossom.’ All of these are silvery and silky smooth, so are applicable to the Korat coat.”<sup>1</sup>*

A high-ranking monk named Somdej Phra Buddhacharn Buddhasarmahathera was commissioned by King Rama V (1869-1910) to copy the book of cat poems on special Khoi paper made from a tree of the same name. It was then folded in the traditional accordion style rather than a bound volume, and is on display in Bangkok's National Museum.

King Rama V must have taken an avid interest in this particular feline breed as he himself named the Korat after a province in Thailand where it was reputed to have originated, although Korats today live in many other provinces.

## Korat Breed Characteristics

Breed standards for the Korat are strict. Crossing with other types of cats is not allowed, as the distinctive blue coloring would compromise and threaten the purity of the breed. That's one reason why Korat breeders and owners will tell you that no color variations are allowed; a Korat of any other color or having any markings is essentially not a Korat. PetMD explains:

*"Its hair begins at the root in a light blue color, darkening along the shaft, into a slate grey-blue color, and tipping at the end in silver. These silver tips give the cat's body a phosphorous-like effect, glowing radiantly.*

*Another of the Korat's more recognizable traits is its large, round, luminescent green eyes and heart-shaped head. Newborn Korat kittens are born with blue eyes, gradually changing to a bright amber and eventually, over the next two to four years, the eyes become a brilliant green."*<sup>2</sup>

Korats are generally medium-sized felines with the appearance of having fine bones, but males especially can be much more solid and muscular than you'd think until you pick one up. Males typically weigh 8 to 10 pounds and females, 6 to 8 pounds. Interestingly, they mature slowly, not becoming a full-grown cat until they're at least a few years old. As kittens, their heart-shaped heads and tall, pointed ears are especially noticeable.

The distinctive blue hue may be the only color recognized by breeders, but that's not the only color Korats can be born with. Shades of lilac as well as those with an all-white coloring are also occasional, as are cats with marking on their fur, but these are not recognized by the Cat Fanciers Association. As PetMD notes, "These cats may exhibit the same personality qualities of the Korat breed, but registering a Korat that is anything other than blue-silver is not allowed."<sup>3</sup>

## Pleasing Personality, Affectionate, and Adaptable

Speaking of personality, Korats have a distinctive temperament, as well. They're known for being very social animals who love nothing more than spending time with their favorite humans. Many owners say they don't have to pick their Korat kitties up to pet them; the minute they sit down, their affectionate feline climbs onto their lap and proceeds to be their affectionate, amiable selves.

Korats are sometimes described as wanting to be the center of attention, but perhaps a more accurate way to put it is that they want to be involved in your day to day activities, whether you're working at your desk, reading or changing the sheets on your bed. It could also be that they like a little excitement and use every opportunity to make life more interesting.

In fact, PetMD notes that these cats are so highly intelligent they're able to memorize what it took to get their people to comply with their wishes, so be aware that you don't reinforce undesirable behavior or tendencies you wish to discourage, such as jumping on counters or becoming vocal to get a snack.

A tendency to be vocal is something Pet Breeds mentions with advice: "Eliminating stimuli that cause the vocalization or modifying the cat's behavior, such as keeping it occupied and content, can reduce vocalization."<sup>4</sup>

Being intelligent means your cat will welcome some mental exercise in the way of games and play. You might be amazed (and amused) at how quickly a game of fetch becomes routine. Puzzle toys are another excellent way to keep your Korat occupied and entertained. It's important to note, too, that Korats don't enjoy being left alone for long periods of time; four to eight hours is acceptable, Pet Breeds notes, but entire weekends, no.

Beyond that, these cats love other cats, get along well with dogs and are gentle with children, but they dislike being accosted by strangers almost as much as loud noises, possibly because their hearing, as well as their senses of sight and scent, are very keen, Cat Breed Info<sup>5</sup> explains.

## Korats Go International

This kitty is a symbol of prosperity, luck, health and new beginnings in Thai culture, which is why the Korat is a common gift for weddings. In this instance, the cat is a sign of fertility and good fortune for new brides and grooms.

Another ongoing tradition is that people are generally unable to find a Korat for purchase, but must instead receive one or even a pair as a gift. Such was the case when Korats arrived in the U.S. in 1959, but there's a back story. Jean Johnson and her ambassador husband lived in Bangkok for three years, during which time she was introduced to the Korat. She wanted to take one home, but found that even nobility and high ranking officials in Thailand were often unable to obtain a Korat unless it was given as a gift.

The Johnsons left for another job assignment in Southeast Asia, and it wasn't until the couple returned to the States five years later that Jean Johnson was sent a pair of Korats as a gift from a friend back in Thailand.

Wanting to begin a legitimate Korat family on American soil, Johnson outcrossed her Korats (named Nara and Darra) with her own blue point **Siamese cats** to avoid inbreeding and subsequent genetic abnormalities or diseases. Then she removed kittens with Siamese characteristics in order to perpetuate Korat traits in the first American Korat breeding program.

However, Korats are literally a rare breed, or what is called a minority breed. Being limited in their home country of Thailand, enhancing the gene pool, as it were, with imported felines is currently nearly impossible. PetMD observes:

*"Perhaps, as tradition would dictate, limits on breeding and population are quietly imposed. This could be so the upper hierarchy, or those fortunate enough to have been gifted a Korat, are only able to receive the cat."*<sup>6</sup>

## Grooming and Health of Your Korat

There's only one type of physical condition associated with Korats that could be fatal, and it's one that can be tested for to identify carriers before they're bred. The condition gangliosidosis, a neurological condition that worsens progressively and comes in two forms: GM1, caused by a lack of a specific enzyme known as acid  $\beta$  galactosidase, and

GM2, caused by a similar lack of enzymes known as hexosaminidase A and B, according to Pets 4 Homes, which explains:

*“Is a hereditary disorder that is also known as lysosomal storage disease. Cats with the disorder don't have an essential enzyme that they need to [metabolize] specific fats known as lipids and as such, these fats build up in cells that make up a cat's body which in turn means they cannot function as they should causing all the problems.*

*Both females and males can be ‘carriers’ of the condition if they only inherit one copy of the defective gene. As such, a cat would not develop the condition themselves, but if bred, they would pass the disorder on to their offspring.”<sup>7</sup>*

Keep in mind that this is a very rare disorder. Other breeds carrying one of the two forms of this condition include the Siamese, Burmese, Thai, Serengeti and cats of mixed breeds that include these mentioned. Kittens with this condition usually die from the disorder between the ages of 8 and 10 months old. Korats are known to be exceptionally healthy, so the above condition is not common. You can expect your Korat to live up to 15 years.

Because they have a single coat of fur, which is both short and fine, all that’s needed for grooming is a brush, generally twice a week. In the spring, however, Korats begin shedding their winter coats, so you’ll need to use the brush a few extra times per week during this period.

As you can probably guess, home maintenance isn’t really an issue when it comes to this rare breed, the hard part is actually finding someone to gift you a Korat, if you’re looking for one. The good news, if you’re thinking about adding a Korat to your life, is that even this rare breed needs occasional foster care and there are rescue organizations to help you find the Korat of your dreams.

You may be interested to know that Korats aren’t the only blue cats in the world. In fact, those who are recognized have real international flair, and a few have names that designate their origin, such as the **Russian Blue** and British shorthair, the latter of which only occasionally has a blue coat. There’s also the Nebelung from Germany, and the Chartreux, which hails from France.

### Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [Korat World](#)  
<sup>2, 3, 6</sup> [PetMD August 30, 2024](#)  
<sup>4</sup> [Pet Breeds Korat 2017](#)  
<sup>5</sup> [Cat Breed Info 2009-2017](#)  
<sup>7</sup> [Pets 4 Homes 2017](#)

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