

MAINE COONS AT A GLANCE

Written by Liz-Hansen-Brown — Photos by Larry Johnson Photography and Helmi Photography



Despite their size, the Maine Coon cat is sweet tempered, gentle and friendly that gets along with just about everyone. They have a clown-like personality and are willing to ‘help’ their owners, yet aren’t demanding of attention. Find out more about this breed and if the Maine Coon is right for you and your family.

Temperament:
Friendly, Intelligent, Gentle

Height/Weight Range: Maine Coons don’t typically reach full maturity until they are 4 years of age.

Adult females: Females are typically somewhat smaller at 12 to 15 pounds, but still larger than average for a cat.

Adult males: Males are quite large with healthy weights that are usually around 18 to 22 pounds

Colors: The Maine Coon breed is available in a variety of colors and patterns except pointed (pale body and relatively darker extremities, i.e. the face, ears, feet, tail and in males, scrotum).

Life Expectancy: 12.5 years. Pet insurance data obtained from a study* during years 2003–2006 in Sweden puts the median lifespan of the Maine Coon at 12.5 years.

About the Maine Coon: The Maine Coon is a beautiful and loving cat that you will treasure having in your life. Social by nature, they make excellent companions for large, active families of all ages that also enjoy having dogs and other animals, including other cats. Despite their size, Maine coons are almost always the gentlest of cats and tend to follow their people room-to-room as constant companions, if not always lap cats. While sometimes mischievous, Maine Coon antics are good-natured and easily forgiven by adoring owners.

Activity Level: Kittens are of course, more active than their adult counterparts, but if encouraged, most Maine Coons remain playful their whole lives. Interactive toys can provide both exercise and bonding time, while many play fetch, walk on a leash, and entertain their family by following simple commands (for a reward, of course!)

Grooming: The coat of a young kitten tends to be thinner and shorter as compared to that of an adult Maine Coon. The mature Maine Coon has a two-layered coat which is shorter around the shoulder and longer around the under belly, britches and ruff. Coat type/texture can vary based on the color and/or line. Some Maine Coons have cottony, high maintenance coats that need daily combing and regular grooming. Other Maine Coons have a silky coat that doesn’t need as much attention. Some owners find it easier to keep their pets in a “lion cut” rather than keep up with the daily grooming.



Nails should be trimmed more frequently (once a week) when the Maine Coon is a kitten and less frequently (every 2-3 weeks) as an adult. As with any cat, regular teeth brushing is recommended. Talk to your vet for instructions and suggestions.

Nutrition: Similar to any cat, the Maine Coon needs proper protein and nutrients. A high-quality diet is recommended. As with any cat, after altering (spaying/neutering), they have a greater tendency to become overweight. Owners should be aware of both the quality and quantity of foods being fed. Most breeders would recommend avoiding “free feeding” of adult cats.

As with all cats, it is important to give your cat fresh, clean water daily, so cats don’t hesitate to drink. The water bowl should be placed at least three feet away from any food. Cats’ noses are sensitive and an overwhelming smell of food may cause them to drink less. Maine Coons tend to love to play in water and many owners provide their cat’s fresh water through a stainless steel or porcelain water fountain (avoid plastic bowls).

Health: Responsible breeders will test their cats for Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (“HCM”) with evaluation by both genetic DNA testing as well as with periodic echocardiograms that have been evaluated by a Board Certified veterinary cardiologist. Genetic testing by itself is helpful, but not all mutations have been identified and researchers believe there are many different DNA mutations associated with this disease. Only Maine Coons that are proven free of heart disease by echocardiogram *and* negative for the HCM mutation (A31P) should be used in breeding.

As a large breed, Maine Coons may be susceptible to joint disorders. Many breeders will also test their breeding cats for feline hip dysplasia (Xray) and luxating patella (Xray and/or physical exam).

Additionally, DNA screening for SMA (spinal muscular atrophy) and pyruvate kinase deficiency is becoming more common place by breeders.



History: One of the oldest natural breeds in North America, the Maine Coon is generally regarded as a native of the state of Maine (in fact, the Maine Coon is the official Maine State Cat).

A number of attractive legends surround its origin. A wide-spread (though biologically impossible) belief is that it originated from matings between semi-wild, domestic cats and raccoons. This myth, bolstered by the bushy tail and the most common coloring (a raccoon-like brown tabby) led to the adoption of the name ‘Maine Coon’. Another popular theory is that the Maine sprang from the six pet cats which Marie Antoinette sent to Wiscasset, Maine when she was planning to escape from France during the French Revolution. Most breeders today believe Maine Coons originated in matings between pre-existing shorthaired domestic cats and overseas longhairs (perhaps Angora types introduced by New England seamen, or longhairs brought to America by the Vikings).

Similar Breeds: Norwegian Forrest Cat

Opposite Breeds: Singapura (small), Sphynx (hairless) and Minskin (small *and* hairless)

Did You Know?

Maine Coons are the only native American breed among pedigreed cats. One of the oldest natural breeds in North America, the Maine Coon is generally regarded as a native of the state of Maine, where it was made the official state cat of Maine in 1985.

Maine Coons will often chirp and trill rather than meow to communicate with their people. Maine Coons don't typically "meow;" they chirp and trill (a mixture of a meow and a purr). Cats may chirp when they spot prey and a trill is often made when they are happy.

Move over Hemingway cats, Maine Coons sometimes also have six toes and are identified by TICA as Maine Coon Polydactyls. Early in the breed's development, Maine Coons were often polydactyls, meaning they were born with extra appendages on their paws. Stemming from a genetic mutation, it is believed this helped them use their paws as "natural snowshoes" during snowy Maine winters.

Most Maine Coons actually like water. While other cats will steer clear of a full bathtub, a Maine Coon will happily take a bath. Their water-resistant fur also helps make them good swimmers.



The Breed Standard:

The Maine Coon is America's native longhaired cat. The breed, with its essentially amiable disposition, developed through a natural selection process where only the fittest survived. It should always be remembered that the Maine Coon developed basically as a "working cat" able to

fend for itself in rough, woody terrain and under extreme climatic conditions. The Maine Coon is a large breed with big ears, broad chest, substantial boning, a long, hard-muscled, rectangular body and a long, flowing tail, and large feet with tufts.

Refer to (<https://tica.org/pdf/publications/standards/mc.pdf>) to read the full TICA Maine Coon Breed Standard.

** Egenvall, A.; Nødtvedt, A.; Häggström, J.; Ström Holst, B.; Möller, L.; Bonnett, B. N. (2009). "Mortality of Life-Insured Swedish Cats during 1999–2006: Age, Breed, Sex, and Diagnosis". *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine*. 23 (6): 1175–1183. doi:10.1111/j.1939-1676.2009.0396.x. PMID 19780926.*

UNUSUAL FRIENDS!

Written by Angela Hick-Ewing, RVT

Photo permission to share by Buttons and Hera's loving family

Meet Hera and her service cat Buttons. Service cat you say! How can a cat be a service cat to a dog?!

This is a case of a very unique interspecies bond between two unlikely friends.

Buttons was adopted as a rescue kitten that no one wanted. Little Buttons was sick and had some serious eye issues. She did not get along with other cats and was mostly indifferent to humans. Her owners were debating on whether they should keep her given her inability to integrate into the family. However, they came to find Buttons cuddling with Hera. She would nuzzle in and Hera would clean her. Very quickly the two became inseparable.

Now Buttons has incidents of acting up, biting at owners, trying to trip them, or suddenly very cuddly and vocal and overall acting really weird. She also gets very protective over Hera, keeping others off of Hera's bed and sticking even closer to Hera. When Buttons starts to act like this the family noticed a trend. Buttons acted up when Hera was going to have a seizure or was having a seizure.

Buttons has woken her owners in the middle of the night to alert them when Hera was having a grand mal seizure so they could treat her. Buttons will guard Hera during her seizures and keep the other cats and dogs away until Hera has recovered. When Hera starts pacing, Buttons will try to stop Hera and settle her. Buttons will settle as soon as their owners are tending to Hera and deems that Hera is safe.

Hera when recovering and in her post ictal stage, will whimper and whine till Buttons is there and settles in with her. The two will then cuddle and wait things out under the watchful eye of their owners.

This is truly a very unique bond of a dog and cat that is a rare treasure to observe!

