



Royal Animal Hospital – Coat Shedding

Keep Fur in Mind When Picking Shorthaired or Longhaired Cat

Let's get one thing straight up front: Almost all cats shed. The "almost" is there to apply to those very few cats who haven't any fur -- such as those of the Sphynx breed, who still manage to carry a little down that can rub off on your clothes. Once you accept the shedding, though, you'll find there's a lot of variety when it comes to cat fur.

Cats can have three kinds of hair in their coats -- down, awn and guard. The down is the shortest, finest and softest hair. The awn is the coarsest, and the guard (sometimes called the primary hairs) is the longest. Not all cats have all three varieties. The Cornish Rex, for example, has only down and wavy awn hairs, giving the coat a distinctive feel some have described as being like touching warm suede.

If you count out the more exotic coats of some purebred cats, though, you're mostly looking at the difference between choosing shorthaired and longhaired cats. If you're thinking of adding a cat or kitten, you should give some thought to the kind of fur you like, since you'll be brushing it off every piece of clothing and furniture you own for the next dozen years or more.

Some people like the sleek look and feel of a shorthaired cat; others adore the flowing softness of the longhairs. The shorthairs have about them the air of a tiger: You can see their muscles move as they walk, see the coiled promise of power while they sleep. In longhairs, the power is even more subtle, hidden by lush thickets of lovely long fur. Do you prefer to rub your hand down a sleek pelt or bury your fingers in a longhaired one?



What about shedding?

The difference in shedding levels between short- and longhaired cats can be dramatic, especially in cats that are prized for the volume of coat, such as with Persians. Are you prepared to live with a lint roller in your bathroom, your glove box and your desk drawer at work? Would you be appalled to have a friend pick one of those glorious 4-inch pieces of fur off the back of your sweater? If you're on the low end of fur tolerance, you'd better stick

with shorthaired cats. (If you have no tolerance for fur at all, maybe you'd be better off with a tank of fish.)

You also need to consider the extra care that goes into all but the sleekest of coats. Longhaired cats mat easily and need to be combed out every other day or so and brushed thoroughly on a weekly basis. Hairballs, clumps of fur caught in the cat's digestive system, can be a constant problem with longhaired cats, requiring medical attention. If your cat's mats get out of control, you'll need to seek out a professional groomer, and that costs money. You'll spend even more money if you elect, as some cat owners do, to have your longhaired cat professionally groomed on a regular basis.

Longhaired cats are more challenging to live with in other ways, too. Their urine and faeces can get caught in their coats, and litter may catch on the tufts of fur in their paws and get tracked all over the house.