

SPHYNX

(Hairless Cat)

The case of the “hairless” cat is truly bizarre. There are occasional instances in different parts of the world of cats without fur being born into a litter of normal kittens. Considering that the best-documented cases occurred in Canada (1973) and France (1938), countries with climates certainly not warm enough for a cat devoid of fur, it would have been reasonable to study it as a scientific curiosity rather than to select it as a breed. This, however, is what has been done. The Sphynx, also known as the hairless cat, has extremely short hair, almost like fine down, and only on certain parts of the body, while the rest is bare. It has short or no whiskers. This is caused by the recessive *hr* gene (*h* in France). Cases of hairlessness are inherited monogenically but not always as recessives.

Instances of other mammals are known with genes causing lack of hair inherited as dominant. It is not even known whether the cases registered in the world are owed to the same gene, or whether they are caused by mutations independent of each other.

The hairless cat has a slender body, a wedge-shaped head, golden, green or hazel almond-shaped eyes. Its tail is long and slim. The permitted colours for the fur and skin are the same as for the European Shorthair. This is a delicate animal which, lacking both underfur and outerfur has no protection against sudden changes of temperature or superficial injury.

