
Breed Specific NFO, The Norwegian Forest Cat



07.11.2025

Norsk Skogkattring



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Introduction

When asked to write a Breed Specific of The Norwegian Forest Cat, my beloved breed, it was with a weary mind. Could I do it?

This was not an easy task, and it has proven to be a bit of a challenge.

The breed has meant so much to so many people in Norway for over 50 years now, and to make a document that is to be a guideline for generations to come about this breed, to help them feel the same way as i do and want to carry on the work of preserving the breed - is a huge task.

The document will hopefully get reviewed in the years to come and naturally be supplemented with facts and new scientific findings as they emerge.

I have had help from judges that know the breed well, and from breeders who have been breeding for many years, I have looked through so many magazines and articles and books and learned a lot. There is so much more to be said about the breed. But that will be another task.

A special thanks to: Anne Veland, Karl Preiss, Bette Lind for giving a judge's comments, and Andreas Madsen, Britt Thomassen, Karina Buran, Raymond A. Sætre, Maria Myrland and Eva Walter for help with content, articles, use of facts and moral support.

Thanks to my dear friend, Julie Aastorp, for comments, help with descriptions and historical facts.

Also, Jon Wikne for finding words the spellcheck did not, and not to forget Christin Vargskogen for helping to put the finishing touches on the work, editing and making a great illustration, and making the whole thing look presentable.

I would not have become a breeder if not for Inger Lise Refsnes, and her mentoring me in my first years. Her knowledge and love for the breed inspired me, and she gave me so much help.

And of course, thank you to the Norsk Skogkattring (NSR) for believing in me.

I hope you will find The Norwegian Forest Cat, Breed Specific useful, informative and enlightening.

On behalf of the Norsk Skogkattring,
30.07.2025 Frøydís Husøy.



About the breed

The history:

The Norwegian Forest Cat is a part of legends and myths. According to one legend, the grey Norwegian Forest Cat was supposed to be the subject of a bet between two Norse gods: Loki and Thor. The cat belonged to Loki, who persuaded Thor to lift the cat from the ground to prove the strength and power of the second.

The first breeding plans were started to ensure the future of the national cat in the 1930s, but World War II interrupted this work, and it did not get started again until the 1960s.

The Norwegian Forest Cat was fully recognized by FIFe in 1977. (FIFe).

The beginning

(input from "Norwegische Waldkatzen," by Tanja Ehrhardt, and knowledge by Julie Aastorp)

It is said that the cats first came Europe around the year 500 ad, when Attila of Hun died and people wandered here to find new land to settle down on.

The cat followed the food (mice) and then found better prey in the Nordic forests, hills, and shorelines. And so, the cat developed further and adapted to the harsh nature and the changing weather, and every little part of it was made specially to survive in the Nordic nature.

Vikings had cats on their ships to keep mice and rats away, and in that way Viking cats got to go with the ships across the seas and start new lives. Some were given as gifts, as they were known as great ratcatchers. The Vikings also brought back foreign cats from overseas, and this probably influenced the breed here in Norway.

The Norwegian Forest cats were later hunted for their fur, blamed for sickness and disease, chased away for being "out of this world"

The cats lived alone in the forest, and in flocks in the mountains, by the shorelines and in the outskirts of Norway after the Black Death (1350). They evolved to become a big harsh and tough breed.

When people started moving back to the abandoned farms and outskirts of Norway, the cats slowly became domesticated again and started to live with people once more.

Loved for the temper and devotion to their people, the survival skills and the mystery that surrounds them, they were a part of our landscape and everyday living. And as the people of Norway got used to seeing this big cat in their fauna again, it also became a part of the stories and folktales. The Norwegian Forest cat is a part of our history.

But in the late 1800/ early 1900s, they were declining in numbers due to natural crossbreeding with housecats and others as they were now mostly living amongst people.

The work of getting the Norwegian Forest cat recognised as a breed started in 1930, and a few representatives of the breed were already being presented at shows in 1938. But then the war came and put a stop to the ongoing work. After the war, society slowly started again, and by the late 60's/early 70's the world of cats had started again too. Shows were held, and The Norwegian Forest cat could enter - without getting certificates or other achievements.

It was now the time for some dedicated individuals to restart the work with getting the Norwegian Forest cat recognized.

In 1973 they came together, and the Norsk Skogkattring ([NSR] Norwegian Forest Cat Ring) was established in 1975. The proper and documented work of getting the breed back on its feet - and approved as a breed - started. We owe Edel Runås a huge thanks for her work. The purpose of the NSR was the pure breeding of the Norwegian Forest cat, the preservation of the breed, and to actively work towards gaining national and international recognition for the cat breed. And to make a solid standard for the breed, to be followed by breeders in the future and to keep it from changing from the original.

NSR gathered cats from all over Norway, and some from the surrounding countries too. They were all cats that fit the standard in one way or more, and they started to plan the breeding from these individuals to make a healthy gene-pool for the overall breed.

The different regions of Norway all had their “skogskatt” (Wegie), and some examples were just amazing. Like a miniature lynx!

Sadly, the number of complete origins was not that high.

The Norske Rasekatters Riksforbund [NRR] had a breed council that helped with the planning and approval of cats. This work took a lot of dedication, planning and almost became a lifestyle for the ones involved. We owe them a lot.

The breeding in the start was difficult as a lot of the novices had some of the features desired but not all, and a lot of them were not “all that” like the originals had been. However, the odd original looking cat could still appear out of literary nowhere. So, the breeding had to be both complimentary and reinforcing to the technical standard. The cats were not always as strongly built or had as good fur quality as they should have, ears small or too high set (not too low like we may see them today), nose profile not straight etc. This was due to years and years of the breed mating with shorthaired housecats and other breeds. For instance, Angora cats, as they were popular cats for people with pets. People did not castrate or use the pill on cats back in the days. And kittens were mostly given away for free.

The breeders had to cooperate, and plan ahead! They kept trying to rebuild the cat they knew and remembered! The Forest King! The original Forest cat was almost extinct by the time the work started, and what a loss it would be if they had failed in the work! In fear of the breed getting lost again they figured they also had to get it approved as a breed of its own. Helen and Carl Fr. Nordane were the key enthusiasts behind that project.

At the general assembly of Fédération Internationale Féline [FIFe] in Wiesbaden in 1976, Norway's delegate demanded that the Norwegian Forest Cat should be recognized as an international pedigree cat with CAC status. At that time, we had just over 100 registered cats. The breed was provisionally recognized, but without CAC (Certificat d'Aptitude au Championnat) status.

The following year, in Paris 1977, our delegate Mr. Carl Fr. Nordane once again promoted our cause. The somewhat problematic aspect in such contexts was that in Norway, Sweden, and Finland, cats at that time could not be transported to and from the continent due to the risk of rabies, so there was a thick red line in Skagerak. Therefore, Nordane only had photographic material and convincing arguments to bring with him.

We had 192 registered Norwegian Forest cats in Norway by then.

The photos of Pan's Truls went with Carl Fr. Nordane to France, to show that he really was a breed of its own. And he won the acknowledgement from FIFe. It was in the evening television news in Norway, and in the newspapers the following days! Mr. Carl Fr. Nordane was the man that finally made it happen, and Norway got their first national cat-breed.

The Norwegian Forest cat was internationally recognized with CAC status from January 1st, 1978. The NSR/NRR now had a Norwegian cat breed, and other countries wanted it too! Cats were carefully chosen and exported to neighbouring countries, and further abroad, to make breeders have good specimens to breed from all over the world.

Today, the breed is found in all corners of the world and is a popular family and show cat known for its good health, natural features, gentle temperament, intelligence, and playful being. They are great hunters, and love to join their humans in exploring nature or just hanging round doing house-chores.



PR Pan's Truls, born 02.05.1973, NFO n 09 23, sire King ns 23 and dam Lucy, NFO f 09 23

Historical documents from NRR and NSR magazines:

Minutes from the 14th NRRS General Assembly, Grefsenkollen Restaurant, June 11, 1977

(translated to English, 2025)

Chairman Carl Fredrik Nordane

Item 3, Incoming Proposals:

1. All breeders of Norwegian Forest Cats must be affiliated with the Norwegian Forest Cat Club to obtain pedigrees.

Jan Meeg emphasized that at the previous general assembly, it was established that all clubs should be private interest organizations. Anyone affiliated with an NRR club has the full right to obtain pedigrees. Jan Meeg opposed the proposal. The chairman of the Norwegian Forest Cat Club, Egil Nylund, also did not support the proposal. He did not want the Norwegian Forest Cat Club to be a mandatory forum. Svein Kristiansen suggested that the proposal be withdrawn. Helen Nordane explained the Breeding Council's motivation for the proposal. They wanted better control. There were some cats that were not representative of the Norwegian Forest Cat at Norak's large international exhibition in April, and she doubted whether the Norwegian Forest Cat would be approved at FIFe's general assembly in the autumn, as there were quite a few specimens that were not representative. Margit Løkke asked if there was any control in being part of the Forest Cat Club. Jan Meeg replied that it was only a breeding cooperation. If there have been lapses, they must improve the conditions. The Breeding Council must be consulted for upcoming matings. Nordane claimed that the Norwegian Forest Cat Club was in principle subject to the NRR's Breeding Council. Adelskatten then referred to the previous general assembly, where Nordane emphasized that the Forest Cat Club was a private arrangement like the other clubs, but that the actual forest cat issue was subject to the NRR's Breeding Council. Adelskatten further believed that since all forest cat matings must be approved by the Breeding Council, this would be sufficient control. Mrs. Røhlff claimed that there should be no compulsion to be a member of a club to obtain pedigrees. The proposal was rejected by 5 votes.

2. Proposal for revision of the standard for the Norwegian Forest Cat.

There was a discussion about the various points in the proposal. Nylund thought the standard was so good that it did not need any changes. The forest cat should be strong, and under the point "tail," it should not say fox tail, as the fox's tail has a completely different shape than the Forest Cat's. The forest Cat's tail is more "fan shaped." It should just say "long and bushy." Gulsett also proposed a new point scale, where more emphasis was placed on type and head, and under coat that condition was added, which together should have 30 points.

STANDARD FOR THE NORWEGIAN FOREST CAT (as adopted by the general assembly 1977)

(translated to English, 2025)

- **Type:** Strong and agile build, long body, high-legged, hind legs higher than front legs.
- **Head:** Triangular, long nose, straight profile without stop, good chin.
- **Eyes:** Large, open. All colours allowed regardless of coat colour.
- **Ears:** High with lynx tufts, placed high on the head so the outer edge of the ears follows the line from the chin and up.
- **Coat:** Long. The undercoat (see note below) is covered by a smooth, hanging topcoat from the back down the sides. Shirtfront, ruff, sideburns, and knickers.
- **Colours:** All colours are allowed, also with white paws, chest, belly, blaze, etc. The solid and bicoloured have a softer coat quality than those in the tabby group, which must be taken into account during judging, but their coat is also greasy.
- **Tail:** Long and bushy
- **Point Scale:**

Type	25
Head	20
Eyes	5
Ears	10
Tail	10
Coat and condition	30
Total	100

Faults: Dry coat, mats, clumps, short tail, short legs, profile with stop, short nose, round head, square head, small ears, large width between ears, as well as cats that are slender, delicate in type and form.

Note: The summer coat appears short, ruff, shirtfront, and sideburns are missing. This is because the undercoat is underdeveloped in summer. Only the length of the tail hairs shows that it is a long-haired cat. The knickers are also reduced.

The winter coat begins to come in the fall, in the form of an increasing development of the undercoat. The harder the winter ahead, the more undercoat. The back part of the knickers consists of wool hairs (without guard hairs) which are protected by the broad tail. "Indoor cats" usually have a reduced coat year-round.

The topcoat of young animals begins to come in at 3-5 months of age.

Type and coat quality are primary.

Colour and markings are of secondary importance.

3. No novice class for Norwegian Forest Cats Turkish Angora.

Under this point, Sverre Kristiansen said that Adelskatten agreed with the proposal, but he took the opportunity to quote a letter from Harald Lund Oslen, who is the secretary of the Breeding Council. It was about a call to a forest cat meeting.

In this call, it was specified that this was the last meeting where approval of first-generation forest cats would be carried out. This letter created some discussion among the delegates.

Nyland believed that we do not yet have such a large and good forest cat population that first-generation approvals must continue. Many cats are neutered, sterilized, and unforeseen things like diseases and accidents can occur, and one cannot be so sure that the population we have today is sufficient. Besides, there are many forest cats in nature that may be much better than those we have today, and it would be unfortunate if these could not be approved. Oslo is not the best place for forest cats. The clubs in the districts have opportunities here.

There was also a question about what mandate the Breeding Council has to make such a decision. Anne Gro Edstrøm insisted that with the small population we had, there would be a lot of inbreeding. Edel Runås could inform that the reason the Breeding Council did not want to approve more new cats is a request from FIFe's judges' committee, which believes it is best to have a small population and many generations to show at a FIFè general assembly. Since when the breed is approved, one can continue with first-generation approvals.

Egil Nylund agreed that there should not be novice classes at exhibitions, but that approval meetings must continue. Laila Vorvik wanted there to be a novice class for forest cats at exhibitions, as she believed it would be easier for people in the districts to get their cats approved. Helen Nordane referred to the Breeding Council's travel fund, and that there was nothing to prevent the Breeding Council from traveling around the country to approve forest cats and other cats on a control pedigree. It is just for the clubs to contact the Breeding Council to arrange meetings. She also emphasized that if the clubs had any objections to the Breeding Council, e.g., disagreement with the before mentioned letter, they could submit a protest to the Breeding Council, which would be considered. The board pointed out that the Breeding Council has advisory authority.

The general assembly emphasized: Continued approval of first-generation forest cats. The NRR board instructed the Breeding Council to approve first-generation forest cats. It was specified that there must be at least two judges in the Breeding Council. It was decided that there should not be novice classes for forest cats.

4. Forest cat breeding abroad must be based on Norwegian-imported and registered breeding animals. Only top cats should be exported abroad, Nordane emphasized. The proposal was adopted. Helen Nordane noted that proposals 3 and 4 must be submitted to FIFe's General Assembly as proposals. The general assembly agreed with this.
5. Repeal of the rule that litters from control-pedigreed cats must be inspected by the Breeding Council before pedigrees are issued.

Svenn Kristiansen explained that this proposal was not really intended as a direct proposal but was put forward to make it easier for those who live far away to get litters approved with the least possible difficulty. He emphasized that Adelskatten was not against the rule itself, but that the arrangement could cause problems for people from far away. After Eva Rode referred to the Breeding Council's travel fund and that other control-pedigreed cats could also be presented at forest cat meetings, the proposal was withdrawn.

The rest of this general assembly did not concern specific forest cat matters.

Information from NRR's Breeding Council, Oslo, January 1985. Forest Cat Rules (rules for novices)

(translated to English, 2025)

1. Forest Cats with Known Background

- a. By known background, it is meant that a cat has two registered and breeding-approved parents.
- b. Offspring of two breeding-approved parents automatically have the right to a pedigree. They are automatically breeding-approved.
- c. On the pedigree of litters to be registered, only the code for the main colour is indicated in this way: 13NFA, 13NFAW, 13NFB, and 13NFBW, where A stands for agouti (tigered, spotted, tabby, or ticked), W stands for White, and B for non-agouti (non-tigered, etc.). Regular requisition rules apply otherwise.
- d. After reaching 10 months, the final colour is determined, for example, at an exhibition by two judges and/or by judge(s) and members of NRR's Breeding Council. The owner should note on the registration form that the cat's colour needs to be defined further. NRR's Breeding Council can also determine the colour at a scheduled approval meeting.
- e. If a cat's colour is determined at an exhibition, the Breeding Council must have a copy of the colour registration. The Breeding Council's secretary contacts the registrar.
- f. The owner of the cat must send the pedigree to the registrar to get the official colour.

2. Possible Forest Cats with Unknown Background First-time Approval

By UNKNOWN BACKGROUND, it is meant that the cat does not have two breeding-approved parents. A cat with an unknown background can be approved as a Forest Cat following one of the following two procedures, provided it has reached 6 months at the latest on the day it is presented. A cat can only be presented once.

- a. The cat can be shown in the novice class at an international exhibition where it must be approved by two international judges (with SJH competence). Colour code 13NFA, 13NFAW, etc., is indicated. The registration form must also be sent to NRR's Breeding Council secretary via the owner's club. After the exhibition, the organizer must send a copy of the evaluation sheets to NRR's Breeding Council secretary. This applies whether the cat is approved or not. The Breeding Council forwards it to the registrar. (This procedure also applies to all other breeds.)
- b. The cat is presented to NRR's Breeding Council at a specially scheduled approval meeting. At least two members of the Breeding Council and an SLH judge must approve the cat. The cat's colour code is indicated (cf. 1.c above). Each cat presented must be paid for with NOK 50. A cat can only be presented once in the novice class. If there is only one judge at the exhibition, the cat can be shown again to another judge. If a cat is approved according to points 2.a or 2.b above, the owner must submit a requisition to the registrar through their club secretary to obtain an official registration certificate. The registration certificate is sent to the owner by cash on delivery.

Breeding Approval:

- 1. A cat approved as a Forest Cat according to points 2a or 2b or according to this chapter's letter A above is automatically breeding-approved if it has reached 10 months when approved. The cat can be approved under certain conditions. The conditions must be noted on the approval form/evaluation sheet. The owner must then apply to the

Breeding Council for mating permission. The mating partner must be specified along with a justification.

2. A cat younger than 10 months when first approved according to points 2a or 2b according to this chapter's letter A above can be breeding-approved after reaching 10 months in the following ways:
 - a. The cat can be breeding-approved at an exhibition: two judges must then give the cat the evaluation Excellent. This can be done by countersignature or by two judges evaluating the cat separately. The exhibition organizer makes the judges aware that the cat is to be breeding-approved. Alternatively, a separate breeding approval class (in this case, class 16) can be created. The additional judge does not need to be an active judge at the exhibition. The evaluation Excellent at two different exhibitions also grants breeding approval. The judges define the cat's colour further. The judge can approve the cat for breeding under certain conditions. This must be indicated on the breeding approval/evaluation sheet. NRR's Breeding Council secretary must have a copy of the breeding approval from the exhibition organizer. The Breeding Council contacts the registrar.
 - b. The cat can be breeding-approved and finally colour-defined at a specially scheduled approval meeting. A cat presented for breeding approval must be paid for with NOK 50.
3. For a cat breeding-approved according to points 2a or 2b according to this chapter's letter B, the owner must apply for mating permission to NRR's Breeding Council only if the cat is breeding-approved under certain conditions. The mating partner must be specified in the application along with a justification.

Export:

4. To Finland and Sweden, there is free export of approved cats regardless of generational status.
5. A cat to be exported outside Finland and Sweden must be at least 3 months old and at least a 2nd generation animal.

Approval Meetings, etc.:

6. It is a prerequisite that the number of approvals under NRR's auspices should be reduced when there is an opportunity to show the Forest Cats in the novice classes.
7. If necessary, a club can apply for an approval meeting. The club must then be prepared to bear the accommodation costs. Private accommodation of Breeding Council members is usually recommended.
8. Each application will be individually assessed by the Breeding Council, and a recommendation will be sent to NRR's board. The club is therefore asked to submit an application well in advance of a planned approval meeting.
9. If rejected, the clubs can still undertake the arrangement by covering all costs, including the travel expenses of Breeding Council members.
10. If there are not two competent Forest Cat judges to approve novices at an exhibition, the club can apply to the Breeding Council to have a judge sent from NRR. The Breeding Council will further assess the request and contact the board.

Signed Anne Gro Edstrøm and Roald Westre

The foundation

(Information given by different breeders and judges, gathered from the magazines Skogkatten and Aristokatt, and the old newspaper Aftenposten's online database.)

The Norwegian Forest cat foundation is not based on Pan's Truls, even though he was one of the very first NFO to be registered.

Other breeders that had cats of the original pedigrees are Av Baune, Pjewiks, the sire Timotei (who got his name from a shampoo bottle) Torvmyra's, av Granly's, Colosseum's, av Karibo, Gjervfjellet, Satyr's and many more. Just have a look further back on the pedigrees. In-between the repetitive ones, you have new novice names that brought fresh genes and blood into the foundation. These cats were chosen through a thorough judging process. You had to pass and prove your cat's quality.

When Truls was born (from a short haired mother actually) he was found to be not perfect- but he had a fabulous look to him, he was truly a forest king! He became an icon. He was not the biggest or the strongest- but he was overall a really good specimen for the breed.

Truls was used for breeding until he was neutered at quite an early age (1,5 years), due to him disappearing from Else and Egil Nylund for days and weeks on end. They hoped that by neutering him he would stay home more, and he did for some years- but then one day took off into the forest and never came back.

His direct kittens did not breed very much compared to others - but since the gene-pool was narrow, they are found behind a lot of cats. The Pan's Cattery had kittens for many years, the last registered kitten in Pawpeds.com (a cat pedigree database) was in 1998! Altogether, 341 Pan's Cats was born, and a lot of them went into breeding. The silhouette in the NSR logo is from Truls.



As time went by, the breed's foundation got stronger and better and really stood out. There were Norwegian Forest cats winning a lot at shows and therefore became very popular as breeding cats. They tended to be on every pedigree across a span of years, which is not a good thing to maintain a healthy breeding base. Matadors and Matadoras are not good for the diversity of the genes and should be avoided in breeding.

Today the Forest Cat breed is widespread all over the world, and has enough diversity in its lines, so it should not be a problem finding an unrelated match for your breeding cat.

The work ahead

NSR's thoughts for the future.

The Norwegian Forest cat breed standard is meant to give both owners, breeders and judges a better understanding of the breed specific features, and why it is so important to keep them all in the breed for the future.

The breed still has enough of a gene-pool to stay healthy. There is no need for inbreeding, linebreeding, or crossbreeding. The overall standard is good, but **health must come first!**

Breeders need to keep working together, across the borders and within countries.

This assures the Norwegian Forest cat stays big, strong and natural.

The number of breeders in Norway is declining, and this makes the continued work of the NSR more difficult. Preserving the breed for future generations is still the goal.

Hopefully, new breeders will come, feel welcome and get the support they need from the rest of the Forest cat community to keep up the work.

NSR hopes to keep the breed genuine, for it never to be mixed with other breeds, for shortcuts in breeding never to be made, and to contribute to keep this wonderful piece of Norwegian history, and world history, alive and well for future generations.

Breeders will never be able to reinvent what mother nature made, the size and power of the Norwegian Forest cat is gone forever; people that has not seen them will not understand just how big and powerful they were. Only the stories told will keep that alive.

We must focus on keeping what we have managed to create from what we could save; it is still a fantastic breed!

It only takes a few years to destroy a breed, but decades to rebuild.

As it is one of the few all natural cat breeds of the world, every natural development and asset are there for a reason.

The natural diversity of the breed is something to be loved and cherished in the breed. There is no goal for them all to look exactly the same, but the features specified in the standard must be there. And the fur quality and straight profile is of its strongest features.

Only together we can make sure that the Norwegian Forest cat does not end up being just a fairytale or a story from the past.

What can be done to keep the breed safe?

NSR want The Norwegian Forest cat to be of the best standard, and there to be health and quality in every part of the cat, all while it remains a popular breed all over the world.

Trough the history and discussions found in different articles and magazines over the years, changes in development have been ongoing, as have signs of "awareness" for ear placement (too low, or too high), eye placement (too deep or too narrow, too wide set) fur quality (too dry, too much undercoat, too silky etc) These tendencies have emerged and receded steadily over the years.

It is important to keep an overview of the changes, be aware and stop the unwanted changes, and turn back before it becomes too late.

Breeders need the show judges to help do this - as they are the ones seeing the cat all over the world. They will see the signs and will be able to inform FIFe's breed council and the NSR when things are changing from the standard.

The NRS and similar clubs may help by inviting new judges for NFO specials, the championship, and seminars online held by the NSR etc.

The Norwegian Forest cat does not have big litters of kittens. The normal is three to six kittens, but with a high survival rate. So, the numbers of litters born needs to be steady. How to do this is still a puzzle.

The popularity and the number of The Norwegian Forest cat being born and registered in Norway, is sadly decreasing (NRR). The numbers from the official registration system of the NRR, MinKatt, for the NFO 2013-2024 is really worrying, as we see almost a 25% decrease!

Year	Breed	Total	Male	Female	Import
2013	NFO	337	174	163	23
2014	NFO	346	186	160	21
2015	NFO	244	125	119	33
2016	NFO	328	173	155	18
2017	NFO	334	181	153	31
2018	NFO	378	204	174	26
2019	NFO	388	174	214	26
2020	NFO	346	176	170	21
2021	NFO	348	176	172	20
2022	NFO	291	151	140	19
2023	NFO	249	131	118	18
2024	NFO	211	124	87	22

We want to keep a sufficient gene-pool, to keep the 0% inbreeding as far back on the pedigree as possible, and therefore it is critical to avoid breeders all using the same males or having too many litters on a female. This to avoid matadors. Checking pedigrees before mating is vital, and working together across borders to make the best matings will be important.

We must keep a close eye on the development of the cat, and aware of new and possible genetic testing. When these tests are for hereditary deceases we must then consider making them obligatory.

While taking the wellbeing and the health of our breed seriously, we must also try to help new breeders do things correctly right from the start. We cannot sit by and let new breeders make newbie mistakes! Help them find males and females to breed good kittens for the future and provide advice on how to move on with breeding. By making others good breeders, we help the wellbeing and the future of The Norwegian Forest cat.

The Breed Specifics

FIFe description of the breed 2025:

Norwegian Forest Cat

Introduction

The Norwegian Forest Cat is a semi longhaired, natural breed originating from Scandinavia. With its solid bone structure, well developed muscle tone and spectacular coat it is called the Viking Cat.

History

The Norwegian Forest Cat is a part of many legends and myths. According to one legend, the grey Norwegian Forest Cat was supposed to be the subject of a bet between two Norse gods: Loki and Thor. The cat belonged to Loki, who persuaded Thor to lift the cat from the ground to prove the strength and power of the second. First breeding plans were started to ensure the future of the national cat in the 1930s, but World War II interrupted this work. Finally Norwegian Forest Cat breed was fully recognised by FIFe in 1977.

Appearance

The Norwegian Forest Cat is large, broad chested breed with long body and long, bushy tail. Hind legs are higher than front legs what make them perfect jumpers and hunters. The Norwegian Forest Cat's head is an equilateral triangle with straight sidelines and long profile. Large, pointed ears with characteristic tufts complete the Viking appearance. Eyes are large, oval, and very expressive with alert look. Double coat with woolly undercoat and coarse guard hair gives them good protection for all seasons of the year. Fully coated cat proudly presents its frill and knickerbockers on hind legs.

Temperament

Norwegian Forest Cats are intelligent, clever, and playful companions in the household. They love to play, interact with people and other animals. They try to always be around and watch the nearby environment. The Viking Kings always keep everything under control.

The Written Standard of the Breed:

FIFe has made a breed standard for each breed that is recognized in the association. This breed standard are guidelines breeders are supposed to follow, and that judge are to be educated on.

The first standard was written to describe the breed in the early 1970's, establishing what made this particular breed unique from the others.

The standard was revised and cleaned up before presented as a technical standard in FIFe style in 1977. The following is the version accepted in November the same year:

General

- **Size:** Large

Head

- **Shape:** Triangular, with all sides of equal length; good height when viewed in profile. The forehead is slightly rounded, with a long, straight profile without a stop or dip.
- **Chin:** Firm

Ears

- **Shape:** Large, broad at the base, pointed, with lynx-like tufts and long hair coming out of the ears.
- **Placement:** High and open, so that the outer lines of the ears follow the lines of the head down to the chin.

Eyes

- **Shape:** Large and oval, well open, slightly slanted.
- **Expression:** Alert and wild expression.
- **Color:** All colors allowed, regardless of coat color.

Body

- **Structure:** Long, strongly built, with solid bone structure.
- **Legs:** Strong and long-legged, with the hind legs higher than the front legs.
- **Paws:** Large, round, and in proportion to the legs.
- **Tail:** Long and bushy, should reach at least to the shoulder blades, preferably to the neck.

Coat

- **Structure:** Semi-long. The woolly undercoat is covered by a smooth, water-repellent topcoat consisting of long, coarse, and glossy guard hairs covering the back. A fully coated Forest Cat has a ruff, shirtfront, and "knickerbockers."
- **Color:** All colors are allowed, including all colors with white, except for pointed patterns and chocolate, lilac, cinnamon, and fawn. Any amount of white is allowed, such as a blaze, locket, white on chest, paws, etc. The color should be clear.

Faults

- **General:** Cats that are too small or lightly built.
- **Head:** Round or square head, profile with a break (stop).
- **Ears:** Small ears, placed too far apart or too close together.
- **Legs:** Short or thin legs.
- **Tail:** Short tail.
- **Coat:** Dry coat, mats or tangles, coat that is too silky.

Adds and changes of the times

The special Novice approvals for The Norwegian Forest cat stopped in 1990 in NRR and FIFe. Thereafter cats had to be approved by applying the NRR board the same way any other cat could be approved. The gene pool was at the time considered strong enough.

The standard was readjusted by judges in 1998, at a seminar in Sweden, to clarify and make it easier to read and understand. After this seminar, The Norwegian Forest cat Breed Council in FIFe was established.

Amber (Peterschmitt, 2009) was recognised in 2004 and got its EMS (colour)-codes in 2005. It has proven to be a colour-gene found only in The Norwegian Forest cat, and a genetic test will prove if your cat is a carrier of this colour.

In 2008 standards of many breeds were changed, and 5 points was taken out of the COAT and given to colour and pattern. A lot of breeders and judges did not agree on this.

Around 2013-2016 a different cat-association wanted to allow the cross of Maine Coon and The Norwegian Forest cat in a breeding program. This sent shivers throughout the Norwegians and FIFe. The Norwegian Forest cat breed council tried to make this forbidden in all associations, but it did not go through. There are still some breeders in other associations crossing these breeds with each other, and with other breeds, so it is necessary to be aware of this when importing new breeding cats. It is forbidden to cross The Norwegian Forest cat with any other breed within FIFe.

The standard included a list of faults up until a clean-up was done to all FIFe standards in the late 2010s. The discussions went long and hard, but the faults ended up being taken away. The argument was that the standard itself should be clear on how the cat should look, and the opposite is to be considered a fault. Many breeders are not convinced it was for the best for the breed and think faults in natural breeds should be noted, and points drawn. Faults not favourable for the breed would be fixed by evolution if left in the wild. For now the standard is set and in use, and leaves breeders responsible in not allowing faults to be bred on further.

The following shows FIFe's current technical standard (FIFe, 2025), last modified in 2025, and NSR's explanation of the parts to further show how each part is an important feature of the Norwegian Forest cat.

Remember that the standard is made to fit the 100 points-cat, and that such a cat hardly exists!



The FIFe standard of 2025

NORWEGIAN FOREST CAT NORWEGISCHE WALDKATZE CHAT DES FORÊTS NORVÉGIENNES

NFO

General/ Allgemein/ Généralités	Size/ Größe/ Taille	Large
Head/ Kopf/ Tête	Shape/ Form/ Forme	Triangular, where all sides are equally long; with good height when seen in profile; forehead slightly rounded; with long, straight profile without break in line (no stop)
	Chin/ Kinn/ Menton	Firm
Ears/ Ohren/ Oreilles	Shape/ Form/ Forme	Large, with good width at the base; pointed tips; with lynx-like tufts and long hair out of the ears
	Placement/ Platzierung/ Placement	High and open, so that the outer lines of the ears follow the line of the head down to the chin
Eyes/ Augen/ Yeux	Shape/ Form/ Forme	Large and oval, well opened, set slightly oblique
	Expression/ Ausdruck/ Expression	Alert expression
	Colour/ Farbe/ Couleur	All colours permitted, regardless of coat colour.
Body/ Körper/ Corps	Structure/ Struktur/ Structure	Long, strongly built; solid bone structure
Legs/ Beine/ Membres		Strong, high on legs; hind legs higher than the front legs
	Paws/ Pfoten/ Pattes	Large, round, in proportion to the legs
Tail/ Schwanz/ Queue		Long and bushy; should reach at least to the shoulder blades, but preferably to the neck
Coat/ Fell/ Robe	Structure/ Struktur/ Structure	Semi-long. The woolly undercoat is covered by a water repellent uppercoat which consists of long, coarse and glossy guardhairs covering the back and the sides. A fully coated cat has a shirtfront, a full frill and knickerbockers.
	Colour/ Farbe/ Couleur	All colours are permitted, including all colours with white; except pointed patterns and chocolate, lilac, cinnamon and fawn. Any amount of white is allowed, i.e. a white blaze, white locket, white chest, white on the belly, white on the paws, etc.

SCALE OF POINTS / PUNKTESKALA / ECHELLE DES POINTS

TOTAL		Points/Punkte 100
Head/ Kopf/ Tête	general shape, forehead, nose, profile, jaw and teeth, chin	20
Ears/ Ohren/ Oreilles	shape, size and placement	10
Eyes/ Augen/ Yeux	shape, expression	5
Body/ Körper/ Corps	shape, size, bone structure legs, shape of paws	25
Tail/ Schwanz/ Queue	length and shape	10
Coat/ Fell/ Fourrure	quality and texture length	20
	colour / pattern	5
Condition/ Kondition		5

General Size

The FIFe standard says: Large

Explained by NSR:

It is a big breed. Big and muscular. One of the illusions the body of a NFO creates by being taller on the hind legs than in the front, is that it looks shorter in the body than what it is. Females, between 4-5 kg is normal. Males should be around 7,5 kg. Some are bigger, some are smaller. It takes time for an NFO to develop, between 4-5 years before they are fully grown.

A NFO feels heavier than it looks.

Head shape (20 points)

The FIFe standard says:

Head shape: Triangular, where all sides are equally long, with good height when seen in profile. Forehead slightly rounded; with long, straight profile without breaks in line (no stop)

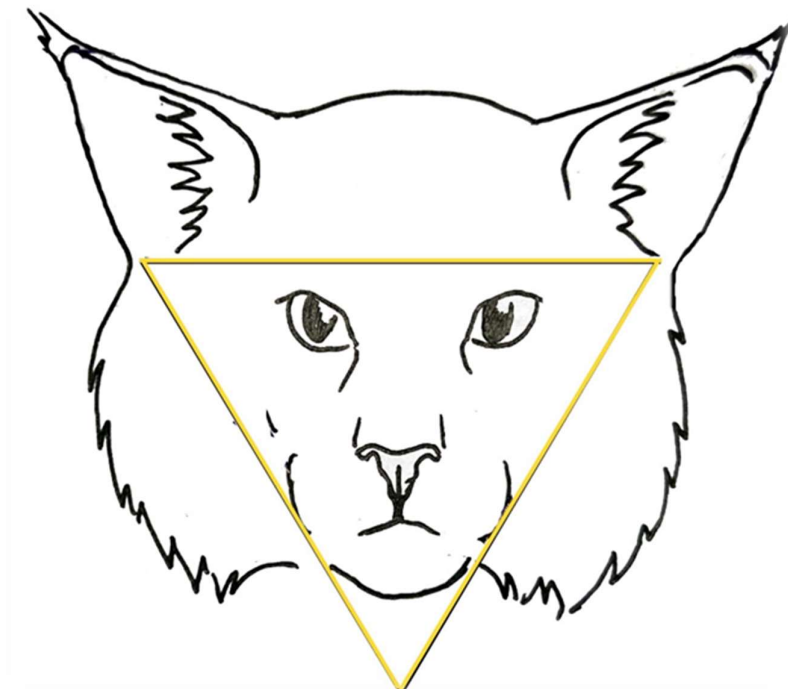
Chin: Firm

Explained by NSR:

Head from the front: The triangular head shape seen from the front is completed by the outer sidelines of the ears continuing the sides of the triangular upwards. (when the cats' ears are relaxed). The line goes from the chin, follows the sidelines of the head upwards and ends with the ears outer line. The triangle in a fully grown cat with correct proportions will still appear approximately equilateral when the ears are included.

In a young cat, however, the triangle will not appear the same way.

The bridge of the nose should be wide, distance between the eyes the same. This indicates a wide skull and decent size of the head.



A wide skull will give an illusion of a shorter head, but this is often not the case if two cats are measured against each other; it is just the difference in the boning.

The head should have straight lateral lines, without sunken or protruding eye sockets. The lateral lines help form the equilateral triangle the head should show - if you see the cat from the front.

When you put your finger along the side of the cat's jaw/mouth and towards the ears, the boning is not to be pinched. It should be filled and strong and straight. The whiskers are long and protrude as far out from the body as the cat is wide.

Head in profile: Look at the NSR emblem (of Truls); the head has no weak points. It is solid, it is strong. It shows power. The profile from the tip of the nose to the forehead must be straight. No break, no dip. This transitions into a slightly rounded forehead with a good height. The curve on top of the head is rounded and runs from the forehead and all the way to the neck. Sometimes fur on the nosebone might give an illusion of a break, but when you put your finger on it, **the boning is straight**. This is one of the features that makes the cat so special, and it is a MUST.



Truls without ears

The chin: The tip of the nose goes down to a good deep chin that harmonizes with the profile. A too prominent chin is not ideal. It should be strong, but not in front of the nose. When seen in profile, there is a straight line from the tip of the nose to the bottom of the chin.

The Norwegian Forest cat has a wide jawline that gives a strong bite and good space for teeth that are supposed to kill small game (or toy teddy bears), groom fur, and clean bones. A cat with badly set teeth will not survive in the wild.

The total points of the head are 20 points.

There are six items to be looked at. All important! General shape, forehead, nose, profile, jaw, and chin!

Ears (10 points)

The FIFe standard says:

Shape: Large, with good width at the base, pointed tips with lynx-like tufts and long hair out of the ears.

Placement: High and open, so that the outer lines of the ears follow the line of the head down to the chin.

(In remarks it says: mature males may have broader heads than females)

Explained by NSR:

The ligaments and cartilage of the ears are attached to the skull to allow movement up and down and in all directions when the cat is hunting or playing. They are also used to regulate body heat by sending blood out to the ears to cool the body down, during hunting and other efforts. The ears are a big part of the cat's mimicry and help them express themselves.

The hair growth inside the ears is to prevent air and debris from getting straight into the ear canals, and the nice slightly tighter hairs on the outer line of the ear gather at the top as ear-tufts. These will help to find the direction of the wind and to break the wind in the passage of the ears.



The ears should be harmonious in relation to the head of adult cats - but of decent size, nonetheless. On kittens and younger cats, the ears can often seem somewhat oversized. As they should. They will grow into their ears in time.

There should be plenty of space between the ears on top of the head of a adult cat. On a mature male cat, there should be at least one ear base between them, and on big skulls it's possible to place at least three fingers between the ears!

Do not assume that this makes the ears sit low on the side of the head! They are placed high and will move a lot when in use. The ears should be positioned in such a way that the ears' outer line become an extension of the cat's head sidelines, and this way give the triangle look. A cat that is alert, playing or hunting will lift its ears to zoom in, so that this triangle is broken. The ears will be set higher on the head of a young and undeveloped cat than an older and well-developed fertile cat.

It is best to see the "triangle" when your cat is relaxing and happy. A scared or uncomfortable cat can similarly pull its ears down and back to the side of its head.

From the back: you see the ear base and placement clearly. It might be a bit hidden in winter coat but just push the fur down and you will see.

Eyes (5 points).

The FIFe standard says:

Shape: Large and oval, well opened, set slightly oblique.

Expression: Alert expression

Colours: All colours permitted, regardless of coat colour. Oblique



Explained by NSR:

Eye shape and look is not the same. The eyes should be slightly tilted from nose to the start of the ear, follow the triangle. They should be of decent size, large compared to some breeds. Oval the standard says, almost like an almond when relaxed, and then they open and become alert when hunting. In young cats this makes them seem dominant, but they will grow into them together with the ears. The colour should match the rest of the cat.

Then there is the look. It has more to do with your cat's personality and inner strength, the mystery, and the long-lost soul of the forest. The power glows through the cat and out of its eyes, it is not so easy to explain - it needs to be seen. We call it "seeing the forest in the eye". An alert and slightly wild expression, a touch of mystery and power that comes from within, and that you do not see unless the cat wants to show it to you. The Look should say "I'm here, but I rather want to be out in the forest hunting - and I'm ready to go!" You cannot breed this into the cat; it comes from within. And for the cat to show it, it needs to feel the forest cat in itself. Some cats will only show this when they are outside hunting, but some sparkle all the time.

Body, and boning (25 points)

The FIFe standard says:

Body: Long, strongly built solid bone structure

Boning: Strong, high on legs; hind legs higher than the front legs. Paws; Large, round, in proportion to the legs. (In the remarks it says:

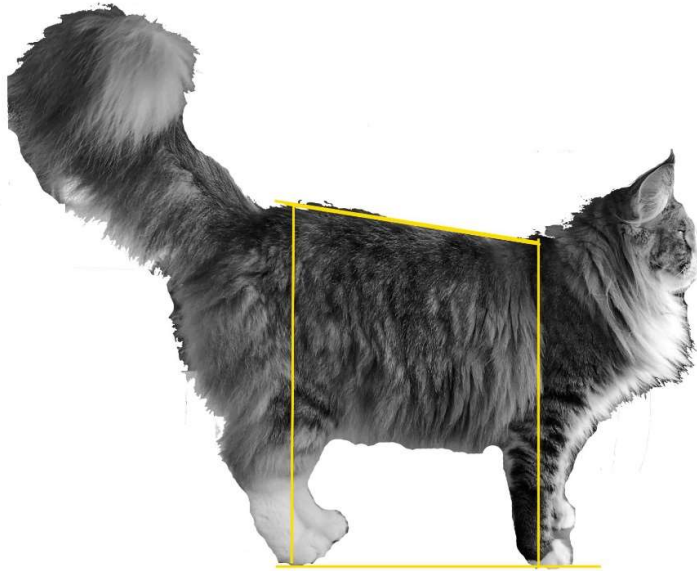
Very slow maturing of this breed should be taken into account)

Explained by NSR:

"Tree trunks to walk on, chest like a horse, skull like a ram and higher on hind legs than front legs."

The Norwegian Forest cat is a powerful cat. It should feel heavier than it looks, and it should have plenty of muscle mass.

It should have a round and powerful bone stem with good muscle mass, right down to the big paws. The powerful large paws should have strong claws. Remember, they are meant for climbing on trees and up steep mountains. The hind legs are higher than the front legs and help to give the cat momentum and resilience during the hunt. This is one of the features that makes the cat special and should always count in the points given.



The chest should be deep and wide with room for good lungs and a strong heart. Preferably make room for a normal palm between the front legs on a good-sized cat. The shoulders are wide set with good distance between the shoulder blades, and should preferably be *at least* a handbreadth apart on a large male cat if you measure with your thumb on one side and your index finger on the other. Some are as wide as 15 cm. Females are smaller, and as they are a slow growing breed the width and the power may take time to develop.

And then finally: the snowshoes and the claws. This is to help them walk on mud, moss, and snow, helps to climb trees up and down (and they do this headfirst!) and to endure the stones and harsh landscapes they lived in.

They spread their toes to make the base of their paws bigger and divide the weight on more ground, the fur helps keep them from sinking and also protects the paws from stones and debris; like a proper “snowshoe.” This helps them in winter on snow or wet conditions, on the wetlands and forest ground in summer. They really help them not waste energy! The claws are really strong, and long. Like little ice cleats. Every little thing has a meaning.



Tail (10 points)

The FIFe standard says:

Long and bushy; should reach at least to the shoulder blades, but preferably to the neck.



Explained by NSR:

The Norwegian Forest cat has a long and bushy tail, which is often carried straight up when walking. It will wag when the cat is happy, it will stand straight when the cat is mad. It is part of the cat's language and a vital part of the body. It is used to balance the body in hunting and playing, but also as an extra warm blanket for cold paws in winter.

The tail should have a broad and good muscled base, be of solid boning all the way to the pointed tip bone, and long. It is said that the cat and tail should reach at least one meter together from nose-tip to tail-tip to be of decent size. It should be at least as long as to the shoulder blades of the cat

when stretched up along the back, preferably to the neck. No tilted bones or unnatural bumps to be perfect!

Cats might swing the tail onto their back when happy. This is not a fault. The cat is just incredibly happy and shows it this way. But if it always curls over and along the side of the cat (like in some dog-breeds)- the cat should not go into breeding. This is an undesirable trait. We call that a squirrel-tail.

The volume of the tail will vary with season and age. The tail should have a good amount of guardhairs.

Coat (total of 25 points, 5 for colour/ pattern):

The FIFe standard says:

Semi-long. The woolly undercoat is covered by a water repellent uppercoat which consists of long, coarse, and glossy guardhairs covering the back and the sides. A fully coated cat has a shirtfront, a full frill, and knickerbockers.

The standard says in remarks that:

- Coat is evaluated mainly on texture and quality
- Length of coat and density of undercoat vary with season
- Kittens can take up to 6 months of age to develop guardhairs)

Colour: All colours are permitted, including all colours with white; except pointed patterns and chocolate, lilac, cinnamon, and fawn. Any amount of white is allowed, i.e. a white blaze, white locket, white chest, white on the belly, white on the paws, etc.

Explained by NSR:

The Norwegian Forest cat does have a double-layered coat. This is one of its most prominent features. The coat varies with the season in length and thickness. The coat has lanolin in it, like a sheep to help it keep dry and without tangles. It has an overcoat and an undercoat, which functions as the insulation layer. The quality should always count more than quantity, because without the right quality the cat would not survive in the wild.

The other features that stand out is the shirtfront, frill, and knickers.

The shirtfront starts at the back of the head, above the shoulder blades, continues to get longer on the sides/ front and down to the chest of the cat. From the front this almost looks like a lion's mane, but it does not stop abruptly where the face starts like on a lion. The fur of the head glides over into the shirtfront from the sidelines of the head. Summer-shirt is lighter than winter-shirt.

The coat on the shoulder blades is almost short, from the back of the cat it almost appears as if it has shaved shoulders! The back of the neck and shoulders is the one place the cat has trouble grooming, it is also the part where the male bites the female when mating so the skin is thick here.



The harsher and glossier "overcoat/ Guard hairs" is found along the back of the cat in between the undercoat and along the sides of the body, but also you find guardhairs in every other part of the fur. They keep the coat fluffy and prevents tangles, and provide air and good insulation in the coat. It doubles as a raincoat. It does not prevent your cat from getting wet – but keeps the rain out of the undercoat for a while and allows them to shake off the rain and snow and be dry underneath in winter.

The woolly undercoat will vary a lot from cat to cat and with the season. In summertime some cats will almost look like shorthaired cats with a bushy tail when seen from afar, until it comes closer, and you see the double coat is still there- just less of the undercoat.

The fur will wave and move in a special way called "lunse" (undulates or ripples) when the cat trots along.

A kitten can almost look short-haired, and a juvenile will not have the same amount of coating as a full-grown cat. And this is all natural.

The "overcoat/ Guardhairs" are visible from early age, and often clearer when the undercoat is short.

The furring continues under the paws, the snowshoes! Hair growth between the tread-pads both front and back feet. Preferably longer in winter than in summer.

We want the correct fur for the age, climate and season.



The difference of the summer and winter coat on a NFO (the same cat)

The Norwegian Forest cat comes in almost every colour and with any amount of white, and every eye colour, even the blue eyed.

All fully white cats should have their hearing tested as they might be deaf, and a veterinary certificate for hearing is to follow the kitten when sold.

The masked and pointed markings are not allowed in this breed.

Patterns are not so important to the cat, but for camouflage it has a function, and points are given at shows.

Condition (5 points)

The FIFe standard (2025) says nothing specific about the condition, but they do have some remarks

Remarks/ Anmerkungen/ Remarques	General/ Allgemein/ Généralités	• very slow maturing of this breed should be taken into account.
	Head/ Kopf/ Tête	• mature males may have broader heads than females.
	Coat/ Fell/ Fourrure	• coat is evaluated mainly on texture and quality. • length of coat and density of undercoat vary with the seasons. • kittens can take up to 6 months of age to develop guard hairs.

Explained by NSR:

In addition to the list above, The Norwegian Forest cat is not to be fat, not skinny, but muscular and strong. The Norwegian Forest cat should feel heavier than it looks.

It is not easy keeping a fertile cat fat enough, or a neutered cat skinny enough. By putting the cat on a scale once a year at least, the weight might be kept at a healthy amount.

The backbone should have good muckles on both sides, the chest and shoulders feel strong and muscular, as should the legs and the neck.
The belly should be even, not prominent. The ribs should be easily felt but never visible.

Health in The Norwegian Forest cat

The Norwegian Forest cat is overall a healthy cat breed, with a life expectancy of around 12-15 years in average. However, if you are lucky and the cat has a good health, an age of 17 and 18 is not uncommon.

Breed specific, we only have one known disease with mandatory testing, the GSD4.

GSD4

GSD4 stands for Glycogen Storage Disease type IV (Pawpeds, GSD IV). It is an inherited genetic disorder that affects metabolism in cats, particularly known in certain breeds such as the Norwegian Forest Cat. It is caused by a mutation in the gene that encodes the enzyme glycogen branching enzyme (GBE1). In affected cats, the body is unable to store glycogen properly. This leads to the accumulation of abnormal glycogen in the cells, which can damage muscles, the liver, and the nervous system.

Symptoms may include weakness, growth problems, neurological symptoms, and in severe cases, death at a young age. The disease is autosomal recessive – both parents must be carriers for the offspring to be affected.

In the early 2000s the GSD4 became a health issue for the breed and the debate in the NSR and the NRR was ongoing; Neuter all carriers- or breed carefully, and do the testing needed. The testing became mandatory for the Norwegian Forest cat (NSR, 2012).

The testing was easy, a genetic test tells if the cat was a carrier of the gene or not. And as this is a recessive gene, the matings with GSD4 carriers are controlled, and offsprings tested, it is not hard to keep this weakness out of a breed.

All registered Norwegian Forest cats in NRR should have a known GSD4-status, as all breeding cats must be tested, and the status is shown on the issued pedigree. Today, there is no need to breed on GSD4 cats anymore.

(GSD IV (NFO) N/N)*
[Nimrud Keshdy de Maison blanche](#)
(NO) NRR LO 187217 (FR)LOOF 2017.11219
NFO es 24
29.01.2017

On the pedegree this will show the cats GSD IV status. N/N is a non carrier.

Average health

According to the statistics available, The Norwegian Forest cat is average on most points of both diseases and reasons for deaths. This does not mean that there is no need to be

concerned about the development of various hereditary diseases, or those that make cats predisposed to certain weaknesses or defects. These also exist in our breed.

As a breeder, being aware of the dangers the breed is exposed to if we allow individuals with weaknesses to continue in breeding is an important part of the job. If something becomes a growing reason for deaths or illness in our breed – the consequences must be taken into consideration and dealt with quickly.

The breed council in FIFe and the NSR must work together keeping an eye on the development of the breed, together with the breeders, and other Norwegian Forest cat clubs around the world. Even though there is only one mandatory test before breeding in the Norwegian Forest cat, there are recommendations for other diseases we know occur in the breed.

PK-def

Pyruvate Kinase Deficiency (Pawpeds, PK-def), or PK-def, is caused by a mutation in the PKLR gene, which leads to a deficiency of the enzyme pyruvate kinase. This enzyme is essential for energy production in red blood cells. When the enzyme is lacking, red blood cells break down prematurely, resulting in chronic or intermittent anemia.

Symptoms may include fatigue and lethargy, pale mucous membranes, poor appetite and weight loss, poor coat quality, increased heart rate and breathing. In some cases jaundice, enlarged spleen or liver.

PK def is inherited in an autosomal recessive manner. A cat must inherit the defective gene from both parents to be affected. Cats with only one defective gene are carriers, but do not show symptoms. Carriers can pass the gene on, so genetic testing before breeding is important.

The condition is diagnosed through a DNA test, often using a simple cheek swab. There is no cure for affected cats, but some cats can live relatively normal lives with the condition. In severe cases, blood transfusions may be necessary. Experimental treatments, such as bone marrow transplants, have been attempted but are not commonly used.

HCM

Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (Pawpeds, HCM) is the most common heart disease in cats, affecting both purebred and domestic cats. HCM is a hereditary heart condition where the heart muscle, especially in the left ventricle, becomes abnormally thickened. This impairs the heart's ability to pump blood effectively and can lead to serious complications such as heart failure, fluid in the lungs, blood clots, and sudden death.

Symptoms may include lethargy and reduced appetite, shortness of breath or rapid breathing, rapid heart rate, breathing difficulties, hind limb paralysis (due to blood clots). To diagnose HCM, echocardiography (ultrasound of the heart) is the most reliable method. It is often discovered during routine health checks when a heart murmur is detected.

HCM is genetic but not congenital – it typically develops after 6 months of age, often between 2–4 years. Certain breeds, such as Maine Coon, Ragdoll, and Norwegian Forest Cat, are at higher risk. Genetic tests are not available for the Norwegian Forest cat, so annual heart screenings are recommended for breeding animals and at-risk cats.

There is no cure, but medications can help manage symptoms and improve quality of life. Cats with mild HCM may live long lives without symptoms, while severe cases require close monitoring (Romstad & Vatne, 2025).

Other disorders

The NSR and breeders in Norway are aware of TR (FORL/Feline Odontoclastic Resorptive Lesions) occurring in the breed, as well as entropion, but these are not a breed specific genetic disease and does not yet occur in an alarming number in our breed. However, lines where this occur should be considered removed from further breeding.

Entropion

Entropion refers to an abnormally shaped eyelid defect in cats (Bjerkås, 2015). It is inheritable and the condition most often affects both eyes but might be on only one eye too. The eyelid will roll inward, causing the fur to rub against the cornea.

This is painful, and the cat may keep its eyes partially closed. In addition to persistent discomfort, entropion can also lead to corneal ulcers. It is usually the lower eyelid that is affected. You will see this from an early age, but in some cat's, it will not be prominent until they are fully grown. It sometimes can be the result of the cat having other problems with the eye and the deformation is a result of this. A short nose (brachycephalic cats, short and wide skull) will often have entropion in the eyelids near the area close to the nose.

TR (FORL/Feline Odontoclastic Resorptive Lesions)

FORL is a common and painful dental condition where a cat's tooth structure begins to break down and resorb, often starting below the gum line and progressing toward the crown (Anicura). Lesions form, typically near the root, and can eventually destroy the entire tooth. It most often affects premolars and molars.

The exact cause is still unclear, but contributing factors may include genetics, immune system disorders, excess vitamin D in some commercial cat foods (a debated theory) or dental disease or inflammation.

Cats are good at hiding pain, but signs of FORL may include difficulty eating or chewing on one side, dropping food or preferring soft food, pawing at the mouth, excessive drooling, bad breath, red or inflamed gums, decreased grooming.

To diagnose FORL dental X-rays is required, as lesions can be hidden below the gum line. Tooth extraction is the most common and effective treatment for affected teeth. pain management and professional dental cleanings are also important. There is no cure, and affected cats may develop new lesions over time.

However, FORL, together with gingivitis and periodontitis, is a growing problem in our breed as in all other breeds. Breeders must focus on this and try to stop the inherited part of it by breeding health. We should also be more aware of what we give our cats to eat, as the teeth and gums need to work. Dental problems can also come from acids from the digestive system.

There are additional considerations to be aware of when breeding cats, diabetic problems, food allergies, kidney-problems etc.

The happy cat.

But the health is more than just diseases, it is mental health as well as physical. The Norwegian Forest cat has a desire to be out in the nature, and we should let them if possible. If they can't be safe outside, make them a cat yard to play in, or take them on walks on a leash. If this is not possible you must provide them lots of space inside. They need to run and climb and play! They are hunters by nature and have strong instincts and need to get the hunter out of their system at times.

Do not overfeed them. They already have a big body to grow into, adding extra and unneeded weight might hurt them in the long run. Joints and bones in growth that must endure them falling, jumping and playing round, may get damaged if the cat is overweight. Not giving them enough nutriment is just as bad! They need a lot to grow right and have energy! So, it is crucial to find the balance.

As cats are meat-eaters, they need to have a lot of proteins in their food instead of carbohydrates. Cats do not cope well with carbs, as they cannot digest them as well as dogs or humans. They need proper cat food, and some will benefit from a specialized diet.

Water is just as important. The cat is by nature a desert animal, and as a hunter it would get most of its water from the game it would catch. Living indoors with us, we need to make sure they drink enough. We do so by giving them several clean drinking bowls or fountains. A lack of water may lead to problems with urine infections, crystals, or kidney problems. A supplement of wet food is recommended to avoid this.

In general, looking out for changes in the cat's behaviour and habits is useful. If in doubt, contact a veterinarian.

A healthy cat is a happy cat!

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