Maine Coon cats are a popular [breed](http://www.mcbfa.org/breedinfo.html) of cat kept as pets in America. They are found competing in cat [shows](http://www.cfa.org/Breeds/BreedsKthruR/MaineCoon/MCArticle.aspx) across the country due to their luxurious coats and colors and markings. Professional groomers are often employed to maximize the beauty of this breed. But what can pet owners do themselves to care for and groom their Maine Coons?

The first thing is to become as familiar with the breed as possible. There is a lot to learn and to be aware of. To own a Maine Coon cat is a wonderful experience. They have been called “[gentle giants](http://www.acfacat.com/maine_coon_synopsis.htm)” and this is very true. While they do get along with other cats in the household, especially when raised together as kittens, older Maine Coon cats appear to bond to [one](http://www.maine-coon-cat-nation.com/maine-coon-cat-behavior.html) special person. This person is usually their owner and caretaker; the one who regularly feeds, grooms, and play with them. It is not unusual for a Maine Coon cat to appear aloof to strangers, and they may not like to be petted or picked up by them. But these are extremely intelligent and curious cats, who observe their world cautiously by both sight and scent. Some Maine Coons may allow themselves to be held for a time, but they are not “lap cats”. They purr when stroked, and “[chatter](http://www.maine-coon-cat-nation.com/maine-coon-cat-behavior.html)” rather than “meow” for attention, or when seeing birds.

Adult Maine Coon cats retain a kitten-like playfulness when it comes to batting at hanging items, chasing small balls or wads of paper across the floor, or in stalking and pouncing games. One type of behavior apparently unique of this breed is that it will [retrieve](http://www.fanciers.com/breed-faqs/maine-coon-faq.html) small objects tossed or rolled away from it, just like a dog.

Female Coon cats normally weigh between 9 and 12 pounds; but male Coon cats may range from 13 to 18 [pounds](http://www.fanciers.com/breed-faqs/maine-coon-faq.html). Regular veterinary visits will not only establish your Maine Coon’s weight but create a chart or other record to see how that weight fluctuates over time. The owner must pay careful attention to the veterinarian’s advice on diet and type of cat food.

Because of their large frames, Maine Coon cats may appear to be obese when in fact they are not. Their thick coat of fur, large bones, and muscles make them big cats but not necessarily fat ones. However, in order to prevent obesity Maine Coon cats must be given a relatively fat-free diet (consisting mainly or entirely of [dry cat food](http://www.fanciers.com/breed-faqs/maine-coon-faq.html)) and get plenty of exercise; especially as they age. Older Maine Coons may become lethargic and less apt to run or climb or leap off furniture; especially if [hip dysplasia](http://www.fanciers.com/breed-faqs/maine-coon-faq.html) exists

Adult Maine Coon cats may reach a height of 16 inches while on all fours, and may reach a length of up to 48 inches from nose to tail. The Maine Coon cat has a rectangular [shape](http://www.acfacat.com/maine_coon_synopsis.htm) and a broad chest; and a long, furry, tapered tail similar to a raccoon’s that may be as long as 14 inches itself. In fact a male purebred Maine Coon named "[Stewie](http://news.nationalpost.com/2010/10/20/worlds-longest-cat-revealed-and-other-notable-animal-world-records/)" from Reno, Nevada, was cited by the Guinness Book of World Records as the "Longest Cat", measuring 48.5 in. Unfortunately, Stewie [died](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57567826/worlds-longest-cat-dies-in-nevada/) of cancer at age 8 in 2010.

Maine Coon cats are adapted for [winter](http://www.fanciers.com/breed-faqs/maine-coon-faq.html) weather in several ways that affect their care and grooming The Maine Coon is a longhaired, or medium-haired, cat with a very long soft or silky [coat](http://cffinc.org/files/pdf/MAINECOON.pdf). Its texture may vary with coat color. The length is shorter on the head and shoulders, and longer on the stomach and flanks with some cats having a lion-like [ruff](http://www.fanciers.com/breed-faqs/maine-coon-faq.html) around their neck. Their dense water-resistant fur, and adaptation for sitting or moving upon ice and snow, is longer and shaggier on their underside and rear; and their long, bushy raccoon-like tail is resistant to sinking in snow. The Maine Coon’s tail can be curled around their face and shoulders for warmth and protection from the elements; and also curled around their backside like an insulated seat cushion when sitting down on a snow or ice surface.

Maine Coon cats possess large paws, rarely (nowadays) ones that are [polydactyl](http://www.fanciers.com/breed-faqs/maine-coon-faq.html#Char) (having extra toes). Large paws facilitate walking on snow and ice, with the pads often compared to snowshoes. Maine Coons grow long tufts of fur between their toes help keep the toes warm. Sometimes an owner will see what appears to be a white “claw” hanging down from a Coon’s paw, but which turns out to be a downward tuft of fur. These can be easily trimmed away.

Coons also possess heavily furred and long tufted ears; the tufts growing from inside help keep their ears warm. This breed’s long curved claws need constant sharpening, so one or more [scratching posts](http://www.animalbehavior.org/ABSAppliedBehavior/article-applied-behavior/why-cats-scratch-things) are highly recommended!

It is common to find what appear to be the Coon’s (and other breeds’) claws coming off as it scratches. But there is no cause for alarm. This is a natural process of shedding the nail’s [sheath](http://www.vetstreet.com/our-pet-experts/why-does-my-cat-shed-his-claws), and actually beneficial for a cat. When this happens, the nail has grown beyond the blood supply, so the outside sheath is discarded to make room for a newer, sharper version. This appears to happen to each claw about every two to three months in the average housecat.

In fact, having scratching boards with large bases to lay upon will go a long way to curbing a Coon’s tendency to otherwise claw an owner’s furniture. The owner may take their Coon to a vet or professional cat groomer to have its nails trimmed ([declawing](http://www.vetstreet.com/our-pet-experts/the-case-for-outlawing-cat-declawing) is not recommended) or do this themselves. It is important to gain the trust of your Maine Coon enough to trim the claws yourself; especially upon the back paws which the cat cannot see and will balk at having trimmed.

It is said by some that minimal grooming is required for the breed, compared to other long- haired cats. But this causes a problem. As the Maine Coon constantly grooms itself, it is apt to swallow or inhale much of its own fur. Hairballs result from this and occurs often enough to warrant giving medication to Maine Coon cat. There are both liquid and paste [hairball laxatives](http://www.vetstreet.com/hairball-laxative) that bind hair in the cat’s stomach and intestines where it can be passed out of the anus, bound with feces.

Maine Coon cats need plenty of hydration. Water seems to be the best fluid for cats; not milk, as was once commonly thought. Some Coons have a real affinity for [water](http://www.maine-coon-cat-nation.com/maine-coon-cat-behavior.html) and like to play in it, or to pick up a piece of food or a toy and dunk it in water! This they can accomplish because the pads of their paws can actually fold around an object and grip it; a trait that also makes them great climbers. Maine Coon cats only need a bath about once a year, as they keep themselves remarkably clean through self-grooming. An owner just needs to be sure that their pet is thoroughly dried and warmed after a bath to prevent their catching cold.

Much of the care one gives to their Maine Coon cat is basic common sense. The one thing they need most of all if constant attention and love. Don’t let their [apparent aloofness](http://www.fanciers.com/breed-faqs/maine-coon-faq.html) fool you. For the right person a Maine Coon will give back all the love it receives and much more.