

Feline Coat Colors

Feline coat colors can be divided into two categories: deep colors and dilute colors. The four recognized deep colors are red (commonly called orange), black, chocolate (dark brown) and cinnamon (light brown). Each deep color has a corresponding dilute color. The dilute versions are cream (often called buff or tan), blue (grey), lilac (lavender) and fawn. Deep colored hairs are jam-packed with pigment globules, whereas dilute hairs feature the clumps of pigment unevenly distributed throughout the hair shaft resulting in less-intense color. White hair has no pigment at all.

Early on, cats of Western heritage like the British shorthair or the Maine Coon were only found in red or black and their dilutes, cream and blue. Eastern cats (think Burmese and Siamese) were primarily chocolate and cinnamon and their dilutes lilac/lavender and fawn. Western colors seemed to have invaded the Orient before Eastern colors began showing up in Western breeds. Through selective breeding, however, there are now many color varieties seen throughout the cat breeds.

Courtesy of ASPCA