

Many of the street cats to be found in downtown Abu Dhabi are (probably) purebred – members of a breed called the Arabian Mau, which was recognised by the World Cat Federation only in 2008 largely as a result of the lobbying of the Middle East Cat Society and especially its president Petra Mueller. As a breed, the Arabian Mau is native to the Middle East and has physiological characteristics that suit its environment – the original habitat was probably deserts. They include a muscular body and long legs, a head that has a distinct chin in profile, large ears, and fur that is shorter and rougher than on most domestic European cats. It only mates with other Arabian Maus, and so those characteristics have been passed through generations without any help from man. There are three officially recognised colour types – all white, all black, and mackerel tabby – though tabby brown with dark brown stripes on the back is apparently quite common and we've seen a ginger cat that is claimed to be an Arabian Mau. 'Mau' just means 'cat.

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