

**T**he Chartreux is an ancient breed with a long history, but is still relatively unheard of in the UK. However, due to the breed's calm, affectionate, and inquisitive nature, it shouldn't be long before these cats find themselves in more family homes across Britain.

The breed club was only formed last year by lifelong dog lover, Goran Nilsson, who took a chance on the Chartreux and fell in love with the breed's charming and inquisitive personality.

"After my elderly Labrador was put to sleep in 2013, I decided I wanted another pet: a smaller, cuddly one who I didn't have to take for walks!" jokes Goran, from Ashford, Kent.

"A French friend told me 25 years ago that in France they have a cat breed they call the 'dog-cat'. He never mentioned the name of the breed, so I didn't know what I should look for when I searched on the internet, but eventually I found Chatterie de l'Etoile du Soir in Lower Normandy (a well-known breeder of the Chartreux)."

He continues: "Of course, I didn't know if the Chartreux they were breeding was the

French 'dog-cat', but I took a chance and reserved a male kitten, Jay.

"My wife and I fell in love with him and the breed, and I think that the Chartreux ticks all the right boxes. They are very affectionate, although they're not lap cats, as they're not constantly trying to crawl on you. They're just a real delight to have around and I can't fault their personalities.

"They are friendly towards everyone, including visitors, but they tend to bond with one person. Jay and I are mates; he is always trying to 'help', and when I come home, he always likes to meet me by the door."

### CLEVER KITTIES

Goran also explains that the Chartreux is very intelligent and Jay has learned the commands 'no', 'stay', and 'sit', will play hide-and-seek, and recognises sentences such as 'Do you want to go out in the garden?'

"I applied to have the breed recognised by the GCCF in May 2015 and it gained status five months later," explains Goran, who, with a couple who also owned a Chartreux, co-founded the Chartreux Cat



**They have sweet faces.**

Club UK in October 2016. It is now a provisional member of the GCCF.

"As we had the first registered male in the UK, I thought that it would be nice to also have the first registered female and the first registered kittens," says Goran. "We got our queen, Lilly, in October 2015 and she gave birth to five lovely kittens in December last year. The way Jay behaved as a dad was extraordinary; he spent a lot of time with both mum and the kittens, even cleaning the kittens' bottoms!"

He continues: "I recently took Jay and a female to the National Pet Show, and they proved to be really popular with visitors — many were attracted to their soft coats and beautiful eyes.

"Based on the experience at the show, I think they're going to become more popular. The little girl was passed around; she was so calm and took it all in her stride, although she was flaked out by four o'clock!" ▶

## They've got the look

The Chartreux is sometimes confused with the British Shorthair, due to its semi-cobby body and full cheeks, but these cats definitely have an identity of their own. The males have well-developed jowls and are generally larger than the females, who tend to be smaller but still well muscled. They have large, beautiful eyes which vary from yellow to copper in colour. Their coats are only ever blue, but the colour can range from pale to deep shades. It has often been said that the breed looks like it's smiling, due to its full whisker pads and firm chin, which allows the cats to have sweet expressions.

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## History and origins

Although the origins of the breed are unclear, it's believed that its ancestors originated in the mountainous regions of Turkey and Iran. They were brought to France by returning crusaders in the 13th century and the country adopted the breed. It is possible that these cats were named after the luxurious Spanish wool, 'la pile des Chartreux', because of the woolly nature of their coats.

Natural colonies were known to exist in Paris and in isolated regions of

France until the early 20th century. However, after the First World War, French breeders became interested in preserving the cats, as no major breeding colonies of pure Chartreux existed. One colony was found living on an island off the coast of Brittany by Christine and Suzanne Léger, who began monitoring the cats and eventually began selective breeding. The modern Chartreux descends from these cats.



**A beautiful, male Chartreux.**

Image: Robert Pickett/www.jandphotos.com