

Black and Chocolate Himalayans

by Helen Lehan, National Himalayan Cavy Club, © 2010

I have been breeding Black Himalayans for about 7 years now. The appeal for me is simple, they are very striking and very cheeky. It is impossible to ignore them in a crowd of Guineas; they are the ones creating mischief or squeaking the loudest.

Himalayans are born pure white, however, over the first few days you can see the pads colouring up. On the Black Himalayan they turn grey and on the chocolate himalayans they turn a pinky colour.



These Black Himalayan babies are a few hours old. As you can see they have pink ears and feet and no marking on their noses.

In the first week you can tell if their pads are going to colour up fully or if they are going to be miss-marked. This is easier with the Black Himalayans than with the chocolate himalayans but it is still about 4 to 6 weeks before you can tell properly. At 12 weeks old they are almost completely marked but some can take longer.



This Black Himalayan is 4 weeks old. You can see that the ears and the end of the nose are now black and, very faintly, you can see where the smut is going to be on the face. The paws are now starting to look black but the claws are still pale. Over the next few weeks, the white hairs will become black.

The pictures below show a miss marked Himalayan and a Black Himalayan.



Miss Marked Himalayan (Erica)



True Black Himalayan (Sootie)

As you can see although the miss marked Himalayan seems to have black pads they are much paler than the true Black Himalayans.

Below is a Chocolate Himalayan's paws, these are much paler but you can see they are like a milk chocolate colour.



(Yes these are all my pigs that are daft enough to sit like this while I take photos of them, no one was harmed honest)

Miss-marked feet is a disqualification, however when they are under 5 months old there claws still appear white at the tips and this is taken in to consideration by the judges, if the claw is white at the very root them this is a disqualification at any age.

Other disqualifications are white patches in the markings, i.e. the smut and the ears and unpigmented areas on the feet.

This breed will show themselves very well and enjoy contact with people, they love the fuss and attention and the males know for sure what to do in the presence of a lady!!!!



This is Sootie, he is third generation of my line, he is the grandson of my original boar, Sooty, and he is now a dad himself. This picture was taken recently and his points are very faded due to the heat of the summer.

Most Himalayans are affected by the heat, which means that in summer it is very difficult to show them, however you find everyone is in the same boat. This is also taken into account when judging, an experienced breed/ judge can tell very easily if this fade is due to the weather or it is poorly marked. Most of mine go a charcoal colour on their points, Sootie is one of the better ones I have during the summer months.

The colour change is due to the atmospheric temperature of the animals, if they are very cold they will show very deep black, if they are warm or hot they will show charcoal grey to white. Some himalayans are white during the summer and jet black during the winter. So the colder the better for himalayan breeders!

This is also why when Himalayans are born they are pure white, due to the heat that is generated in the womb. They are the only breed that are born a different colour and also the only breed that the markings are affected by temperature.