

## Introduction

In general, any reference to “Turkish Van” should also be considered to include Turkish Vankedisi cats where applicable.

The Turkish Van is a naturally occurring semi long haired breed from the rugged region of the Middle East, centred on Lake Van, where the climate varies to extremes. The breed is known for its distinctive pattern, a white cat with a strikingly coloured head and tail. The "top-and-tail" markings, even when seen on other breeds of cat, are frequently referred to as "van patterning". The Turkish Vankedisi is distinct from the Turkish Van only in that it bears no coloured markings, being a pure white cat.

The Van region is surrounded by mountains and its high plateau is subject to extreme changes in temperature. The breed does not have an undercoat, but with snow lasting at least six months of year in that area, the silky coat became thicker and longer as required and also somewhat waterproof with feathering on the ears and tufts on the feet. However, when the exceptional heat of summer arrived, the extra coat would be quickly shed. This is replicated in cats in this country, to a slightly lesser degree.

It is a large, muscular cat; the strength and power is evident in the substantial body and legs. The breed does not gain full maturity until three years or more. Individual cats should convey an impression of a well-balanced, well-proportioned, and strong appearance in which no one feature is exaggerated. The weight should be appropriate for the bone structure and frame.

## Handling

Turkish Vans should have a well-adjusted temperament, but may not be as tolerant as some other breeds and will let you know if they are unhappy. They will feel most comfortable with all four feet on a firm surface, but when held they should be kept close to the body in order to impart a feeling of security and protection. Do not tip a Turkish Van onto its back, since this will make them feel vulnerable and less in control.

For the above reasons, Turkish Vans may not enjoy being “stretched” along an arm or suspended in mid-air. Keeping the cat’s rear feet on the table whilst lifting the front feet may be more acceptable to the less confident cat, when assessing body length etc.

## Judging

### Eye colour

Eye colour is described as either blue or amber, although there will be variations according to age.

The blue eye is a sky-blue colour, not as deep as a Siamese, and tending towards a lighter grey-blue in a mature exhibit.

The amber eye colour is less stable, and often fades with age towards a light brown or green. A green tinge is perfectly acceptable, and in their native Turkey is even preferred.

Some discretion should be given for eye colour in older cats, although it should clearly relate to the base colour within the above guidelines.

### Coat colour

Within the Turkish Van breed, the red (ginger) colour is always referred to as auburn, with its dilute counterpart being referred to as cream. Creams can be further described as a hot (darker) cream or a light

cream, however the distinction from auburn should always be obvious. In poorly lit halls it may be useful to identify an auburn cat (or red of another breed) as a reference, especially when considering hot creams.

For auburn/cream Turkish Vans, there is no separate classification of solid versus tabby, therefore it is not required that a tabby pattern be evident in the head markings or the tail markings. Auburn/cream cats should NOT therefore be withheld on if the rings are not visible on the tail.

In the case of other (non-auburn/cream) colours of tabby cats there should be some evidence of a tabby pattern in the head and tail markings, although for very small head markings some discretion can be made. The rings in the tail may not always be obvious, in which case it may be helpful to look down the length of the tail from its tip towards the body so that the lighter and darker regions are more concentrated.

For tortie cats It is not mandatory for each head marking to contain both colours. However the tail must contain both colours.

### Coat length & texture

The coat of the native Turkish cat is seasonal, and this trait is still recognisable in our Turkish Vans today. Due to our different climate in the UK some cats may appear “locked” into their Turkish summer coat, whilst others will adopt the long thick winter coat necessary to endure the harsh Turkish winters.

In all cases the coat should feel soft and silky, with no woolly undercoat. The longer, more plush coat is preferred, but a shorter coat should not penalise an otherwise good cat.

Mature cats will develop a ruff around the neck and chest, although this is not a requirement. This is more pronounced with the winter coat, and is a trait often seen in pictures of adult Turkish Vans. Again, an absence of ruff should not penalise a cat, although judges may find a ruff more pleasing to the eye, and reward it accordingly.

Some Turkish Vankedisi cats exhibit a slight yellowing of the coat on the upper edge of their tail, and in extreme cases down their spine line. The origin of this is not known, is undesirable, but it is NOT a withholding fault.

### Van pattern

The Turkish Van has leant its name to a style of coat pattern known as the “van” pattern. This is a high-grade white-spotted pattern in which the coat is almost entirely white except for the tail and parts of the head. In some breeds this is also known as a “harlequin”, although strictly speaking “van” is an extreme case of “harlequin”.

Genetically, this high-grade white is a consequence of having two “S” spotting genes, coupled with some polygene effects unique to the breed that result in the van pattern. This is different to the dominant white “W” gene that gives the Turkish Vankedisi its pure white coat, although it is hoped that underneath the Vankedisi pure white, lies a van pattern. In other words, the Vankedisi should also have two “S” genes, and should therefore produce van-patterned (or pure white) offspring when mated with a Turkish Van.

The random spotting nature of the “SS” pair makes it impossible to breed for a perfect van pattern, which means that the proportion of show quality kittens produced is low, something of the order of 20%. The probability of producing a perfectly marked Turkish Van is lower still, maybe 1% or 2%. For this reason, we have to not just state our “ideal” van pattern, but also provide guidance on how to consider deviations from this to a lesser or greater degree.

The Turkish BAC is very aware that numbers of cats on the show benches is low, with many shows having no Turkish Vans present at all. Part of the reason for this is the scarcity of the breed, but part is also due to the lack of well-patterned show-quality cats. The interpretation of the Standard for coat-pattern varies between judges, and whilst the Standard does indicate that some transgression is permissible, this is left open to interpretation by the judge. By providing the following guidelines, the BAC hopes that this interpretation can be made more consistent, and more encouraging to exhibitors.

All measurements are in relation to an adult cat, and should be scaled accordingly for kittens. These are guidelines, so discretion is still allowed.

- 1) In considering the pattern across the whole cat, any *major* departure from the ideal should be accepted in no more than one location. Two or more *major* departures should be penalised to a degree based on how it impacts the overall poise and presence of the cat. (Note that the ears together would be considered as a single location, as would the two eyeliners.)
- 2) In considering the pattern across the whole cat, any *major* or *minor* departure from the ideal should be accepted in no more than a total of three locations (i.e. 1 major + 2 minor, or 3 minor). More than three departures should be penalised to a degree based on how it impacts the overall poise and presence of the cat.
- 3) With regard to colour below the eyeline, a major transgression could be colour up to a finger-width below the eyeline, going around below the ears. A minor transgression could be small amounts of colour up to a pencil-width below the eyeline and around the side of the head.
- 4) With regard to colour on the ears, a major transgression could be colour covering up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of both ears. A minor transgression could be colour covering up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of both ears.
- 5) With regard to colour creep up the back from the tail, a major transgression would be a fist-sized patch of colour. A minor transgression could be two fingers of colour up the back.
- 6) With regard to body spots, a major transgression could be one or more spots, each larger than a 2p coin. A minor transgression could be up to 3 spots, each no larger than a 1p coin. A cluster of spots might be considered to be a single location, but spots on distinctly different parts of the body should be considered as having different locations.

When assessing such transgressions, please give consideration to the length of the coat, and how a small spot of colour at the root might appear bigger when the long hairs extend down the body.

None of these guidelines should overrule the stated withholding faults in the Standard, so for example a vertical white blaze must always separate the head markings, and the tail must not be partially white. Again, if in doubt, look to the root of the hair, particularly at the base of the tail.

The Turkish BAC will be very happy to discuss these guidelines, and their interpretation with any judge of our cats. We hope you find these comprehensible and helpful.