

**RECOMMENDED  
BREEDING POLICY  
FOR THE TURKISH  
GROUP OF CATS**



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# **A BREEDING POLICY FOR TURKISH CATS**

## **BREED CODE “TUV”**

### **Introduction**

This breeding policy accompanies and supplements the Turkish Registration Policy and should be read in conjunction with that document.

The aim of the breeding policy is to give advice and guidance to ensure breeders observe what is considered “best practice” in breeding. The overriding objective is to improve the Turkish cat, working to meet all aspects of the Turkish Standard of Points, ideal for the breed and colours recognised.

Turkish Vans and Turkish Vankedisi originate from a geographically isolated area of eastern Turkey, specifically the area surrounding the city of Van, and Lake Van itself. The first of what we now recognise as Turkish Vans to be seen in Britain were introduced in 1950s, with further additions from the 1980s onwards. The first Turkish Vankedisi was imported from Turkey in the 1990s, and another in the 2000s to coincide with the Preliminary Recognition of the Turkish Vankedisi by the GCCF. In order to expand upon this relatively limited gene-pool, further Turkish cats have subsequently been imported from Europe and America. All forms of Van cat are now under the protection of the Turkish government. There is a breeding programme for the all-white Vankedisi cats at the Van Cat House within the grounds of Van University

A naturally occurring breed, in the UK the fur should be long soft and silky to the roots. The coat is noticeably shorter in the summer; in the winter it is much thicker. The neck and chest ruff become even more pronounced with maturity. The breed does not have an undercoat, but with snow lasting at least six months of year in their homeland, the silky coat becomes thicker and longer as required and also somewhat waterproof with feathering on the ears and tufts on the feet.

Turkish cats are large muscular felines; the strength and power is evident in their substantial body and legs. The breed does not gain full maturity until

three years or more, therefore allowances must be made for age and gender. Individual cats should convey an impression of a well-balanced, well-proportioned and strong appearance in which no one feature is exaggerated.

All varieties of Turkish Van and Turkish Vankedisi should conform to this general type standard.

**Head** - Substantial broad wedge, nose medium to long, straight but with a barely perceptible dip in profile.

**Ears** - Moderately large, well feathered, fairly close together and set high on the head.

**Eyes** - Large and oval, alert and expressive. To be of the requisite colour with pink rims

**Body** - Long and sturdy, broad, muscular and deep-chested, especially the males.

**Legs and Feet** - Legs well-boned and medium in length. Feet neat well rounded and tufted.

**Tail** - Full brush, length to balance with the body.

As a naturally occurring breed, there is currently is no permitted outcross (see Registration Policy). Turkish Vans and Turkish Vankedisi may be interbred without restriction, except as noted within this policy.

## Genetic Make-up

The genetic makeup of Turkish Cats can broadly be defined as follows

Turkish Van	BBC <i>i</i> illSSww
Turkish Vankedisi	BBC <i>i</i> illSSW-

Generally the only difference between the Turkish Vankedisi and the Turkish Van is the epistatic *W* gene, the Turkish Vankedisi being either *WWSS* or *WwSS*, and the Turkish Van being *wwSS*. Good breeding policy should avoid the *WWSS* genotype by only mating Turkish Vankedisi with Turkish Vans, i.e.

*W.SS* x *wwSS* => *WwSS* or *wwSS*

Genetic traits of Turkish cats that are outwardly observable include those of coat length, coat colour & pattern, and issues to do with hearing ability (deafness).

## **Coat Length**

Genetically, Turkish Van cats and Turkish Vankedisi cats defined by this policy are longhair cats, although in their native Turkey the distinction is not made so readily, and both shorthair and longhair forms are inter-bred. However the recessive nature of the longhair allele "l" dictates that only longhair cats are produced when two longhairs are mated, therefore there is no possibility of non-conformity being introduced by imported cats.

Shorthair cats may not be registered as Turkish Van or Vankedisi.

## **Coat Colour**

### *Turkish Van*

Cats are predominately white, but with coloured markings over a small proportion of their coat. This "van" pattern is a result of being homozygous for the white spotting "S" gene, modified by polygene effects to give a high-white incidence. The random nature of the "S" gene implies that a wide degree of variation in the proportion of colour on a cat is possible, although extreme cases are not recommended for breeding purposes.

### *Turkish Vankedisi*

Cats are differentiated from Turkish Van cats by their completely white coat, with a total absence of any other colour markings. This is due to the presence of the epistatic "W" gene which completely masks the presence or otherwise of the genes responsible for the "van" pattern, and may be heterozygous or homozygous. Progeny that inherit the "W" gene from one or more parents will have a completely white coat and should be registered as Turkish Vankedisi. Progeny that do not inherit a "W" gene from either parent will show coloured (non-white) patches on their coat, and should be registered as Turkish Vans.

## **Deafness**

It is generally accepted that white cats are more prone to deafness than coloured cats, and this is assumed to be directly linked to the presence of the dominant allele of the "W" gene, as carried by Turkish Vankedisi cats. Not all

white cats are deaf, and the modifying factors that determine whether a cat is deaf or not cannot be directly controlled in a breeding program, however by selectively choosing hearing cats for breeding purposes the natural progression should be to avoid any increase in the incidence of deafness across generations. For this reason all Turkish Vankedisi used for breeding are required to take a brainstem auditory evoked response (BAER) test, which is required to show that the cat is not profoundly deaf.

It should be observed that Turkish Vans and Turkish Vankedisi are a naturally occurring breed at point of origin, and the associated degrees of deafness are part of this natural progression. The purpose of this policy with regard to deafness is to ensure that the health, safety, and overall welfare of breeding cats and their offspring is maintained.

Consequent to the heightened probability of deafness evident in white cats, it is recommended that Turkish Vankedisi cats are only mated to Turkish Van cats.

There is some discussion over the possibility that cats exhibiting a high-white spotting effect may also have an increased susceptibility to deafness. However this effect is what gives the Turkish Van its unique appearance, and to inhibit such traits would destroy the individual character of the vat cat. The incidence of deafness in van-patterned cats is not considered to be significantly higher than for any other coat pattern, and no specific action is deemed necessary to regulate this possibility for all the reasons given above.

## **Breeding System**

Listed above are the main genes that help define the Turkish cat through the expression of pattern, colour and coat, but of course there are a large number of other genes that together create the distinctive physical shape and confirmation.



*12 day old tortie Turkish Van*



*12 day old auburn Turkish Van*

In order to ensure the maintenance of the good Turkish breed type already achieved, while allowing scope to further improve aspects of type, coat, pattern and colour, to meet the ideal described in the Standard, breeders need to have a clear, definite and well understood **breeding system**. This means the development and management of a breeding programme in which certain cats are affirmatively selected to be bred to others, for predetermined reasons. Equally important, it also means that breeders allow no matings until they have given careful consideration to the outcome.

**Health must be the overriding consideration in any Turkish breeding programme. All Turkish Vankedisi used for breeding purposes must be BAER tested. Both A and B blood groups are apparent in Turkish cats, blood typing is recommended by the Turkish BAC, thus avoiding the possibility of Feline Neonatal Isoerythrolysis.**

**The good and bad features of the individual cats should be assessed and weighed against each other before any mating. This should also include temperament.**

**When planning a breeding programme, breeders must realise that doubling of the good traits in a cat also results in doubling the defects; the breeding of cats with similar faults should be avoided at all costs otherwise there is a danger of fixation.**

The prime motive is to improve the quality of the breed as measured against the Standard and also to gain success on the show bench.

The skill in breeding lies in the choice of the individual cats and how these cats may be mated with each other – these two acts should be regarded as completely separate, although interconnected.

## **Selection**

The phenotype of the individual cat is made up of a large number of genetic characteristics of varying expression. The ideal Turkish cat is one in which the expression of each of these characteristics is just right in the eyes of the breeder – this means that an intermediate expression will be required for some characteristics, but a more extreme expression required for others. This expression is controlled by selective breeding. However, selection by itself is not very efficient in eliminating heterozygous genotypes (the producers of variation and diversity) – it is one of the tools available, but has its limitations.

## **Inbreeding**

Inbreeding is an inclusive term covering many different breeding combinations and degrees of relationship – including the more distant, less intense. It is consistently more efficient in eliminating heterozygous (varying and diverse) genotypes and increasing homozygous (same) genotype, thereby ensuring a greater likelihood that kittens will closely resemble their parents. Used here, the term does not mean close, purposeful, inbreeding of closely related cats (brother/sister, father daughter), but rather the moderate form that results from the mating of not too distantly related (but not directly related) cats (first cousins, half-brother/half-sister, second cousins, etc.). Some in-breeding is essential to stabilise conformation around a definite type. In-breeding is the act of mating individuals of various degrees of kinship, and if continued it produces ever increasing homogeneity in the offspring.

It is important to monitor the percentage intensity of inbreeding for any mating – use this consideration as a key part of the decision making process when considering any mating, and remember: ***“The more intense the in-breeding, the more careful must be the selection”. “Loss of innate genetic variability must not be too great”.***

The overall approach should be one of balance and moderation in the degree of inbreeding coupled with consistent selective breeding with a clear objective in mind – i.e. improvement of key aspect and/or the elimination of weak traits or defective genes.



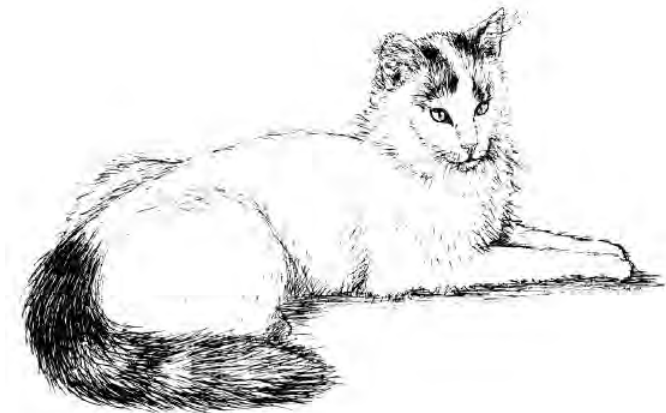
**Anomalies** – the problem of the genetic anomaly is something of which all breeders should be aware – this is not to suggest that such anomalies are common but the cat must be expected to have its quota of defects just as are found in other animals.

The golden rule is that health is paramount and must be constantly and consistently monitored; any evidence of weakness or the emergence of lack of vigour must be dealt with immediately through modification of the breeding system. No cat with any evidence of health problems or lack of vigour should be used for breeding.

*For further reading on cat genetics and breeding practices refer to: “Robinson’s Genetics for Cat Breeders & Veterinarians” by Vella, Shelton, McGonagle and Stanglein, published by Butterworth & Heinemann.*

### **BAC Recommendation**

Turkish breeders are encouraged to work closely with other like-minded breeders to devise and implement a planned breeding programme aimed at improving the variety in question. The placing of kittens/cats in homes on ‘breeding terms’ is to be discouraged. Breeders are urged to observe the recommendations of the GCCF, and the advice of their own veterinary surgeons regarding cat welfare, the importance of neutering, health, inoculations and FELV and FIV testing. The Turkish BAC and the GCCF Genetics Committee are keen to offer advice and guidance to promote and support such breeding programmes.



## **Type**

Type should be paramount when selecting for breeding with Turkish cats. A balanced natural cat, with no one feature exaggerated is the ideal. Preference for type should be selected over perfect van pattern for example.

## **Coat**

Turkish Van and Turkish Vankedisi cats are classed as semi-longhair breeds. Genetically, these belong to the same group as longhairs, however that term has traditionally been reserved for breeds such as Persians.

Turkish Vans & Vankedisi have a single coat, i.e. no woolly undercoat. In winter the coat is long and silky, with the males in particular developing an impressive ruff around the neck, although in summer the coat can be substantially shorter. Some variation in length and texture may be observed from one specimen to another, however the basic need is for a coat that predominantly looks after itself as befitting of a naturally occurring breed. This is true whether the coat is thick and plush, or longer and more flowing.

Breeding cats should be chosen to avoid coats that have a tendency to mat, are coarse to the touch, or are excessively short (but see comments above about summer coats).

The random nature of the white spotting gene that gives the Turkish Van its predominantly white coat means that it is difficult to select breeding pairs that are more likely to produce the ideal van-pattern. However several breeders will suggest that there is a tendency for the head markings to reduce in size from parent to child, and therefore a heavier marked queen might be chosen in order to counter this.

Some Turkish Vankedisi have shown a degree of yellowing along the top edge of their tail. This appears to be line related, and whilst an allowance is made in the Standard of Points to accommodate it, it is undesirable and should ideally not be present in breeding Vankedisi examples.

## Eye Colour

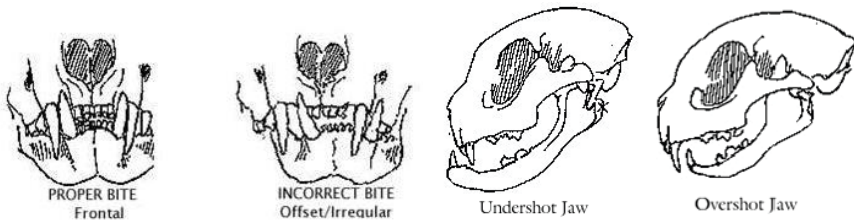
Eye colour may range from pale to medium amber, blue eyed or one eye blue the other medium amber. In older cats there has been a tendency for both the blue and amber eye colour to fade over time. The blue fading towards grey and the amber taking on a greenish tinge. This can be controlled to some extent by selecting breeding cats that have a strong eye colour, and where the fading effect is less prevalent in the lines. This is a natural progression however and to a degree is acceptable.



*Acceptable eye colour combinations in the Turkish Van and Vankedisi Cat*

## Bite

Incorrect bites are not normally an issue in the Turkish breed. However as in all breeds, there are enough incidents to necessitate breeders monitoring their cats and kittens regularly and carefully to ensure this anomaly does not become endemic.



## Registration

*As of the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2000 the below **Turkish Van** colours were granted Championship status by the GCCF, the Auburn Turkish Van having held this status since 1969. All with the three eye colour variations of amber, blue or one of each.*

*The White **Turkish Vankedisi** was granted Championship status in 2014, all with the three eye colour variations of amber, blue or one of each.*

AUBURN TURKISH VAN - Amber-eyed	TUV d 62
AUBURN TURKISH VAN - Blue-eyed	TUV d 61
AUBURN TURKISH VAN - Odd-eyed	TUV d 63
CREAM TURKISH VAN - Amber-eyed	TUV e 62
CREAM TURKISH VAN - Blue-eyed	TUV e 61
CREAM TURKISH VAN - Odd-eyed	TUV e 63
BLACK TURKISH VAN - Amber-eyed	TUV n 62
BLACK TURKISH VAN - Blue-eyed	TUV n 61
BLACK TURKISH VAN - Odd-eyed	TUV n 63
BLUE TURKISH VAN - Amber-eyed	TUV a 62
BLUE TURKISH VAN - Blue-eyed	TUV a 61
BLUE TURKISH VAN - Odd-eyed	TUV a 63
TORTOISESHELL TURKISH VAN - Amber-eyed	TUV f 62
TORTOISESHELL TURKISH VAN - Blue-eyed	TUV f 61
TORTOISESHELL TURKISH VAN - Odd-eyed	TUV f 63
BLUE TORTIE TURKISH VAN - Amber-eyed	TUV g 62
BLUE TORTIE TURKISH VAN - Blue-eyed	TUV g 61
BLUE TORTIE TURKISH VAN - Odd-eyed	TUV g 63
BROWN TABBY TURKISH VAN - Amber-eyed	TUV n 21 62
BROWN TABBY TURKISH VAN - Blue-eyed	TUV n 21 61
BROWN TABBY TURKISH VAN - Odd-eyed	TUV n 21 63
BLUE TABBY TURKISH VAN - Amber-eyed	TUV a 21 62
BLUE TABBY TURKISH VAN - Blue-eyed	TUV a 21 61
BLUE TABBY TURKISH VAN - Odd-eyed	TUV a 21 63
TORTIE TABBY TURKISH VAN - Amber-eyed	TUV f 21 62
TORTIE TABBY TURKISH VAN - Blue-eyed	TUV f 21 61
TORTIE TABBY TURKISH VAN - Odd-eyed	TUV f 21 63
BLUE TORTIE TABBY TURKISH VAN - Amber-eyed	TUV g 21 62
BLUE TORTIE TABBY TURKISH VAN - Blue-eyed	TUV g 21 61
BLUE TORTIE TABBY TURKISH VAN - Odd-eyed	TUV g 21 63
TURKISH VANKEDISI - Amber-eyed	TUV w 62
TURKISH VANKEDISI - Blue-eyed	TUV w 61
TURKISH VANKEDISI - Odd-eyed	TUV w 63

## Gallery



*Two laid back young Turkish Males, showing typical type.  
A white odd eyed Vankedisi and an amber eyed Turkish Van.*

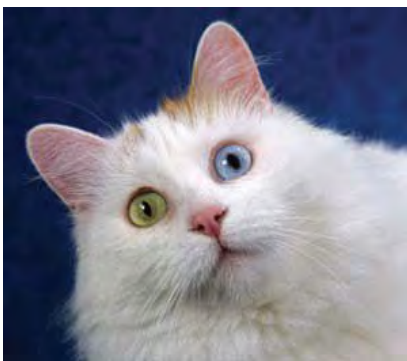
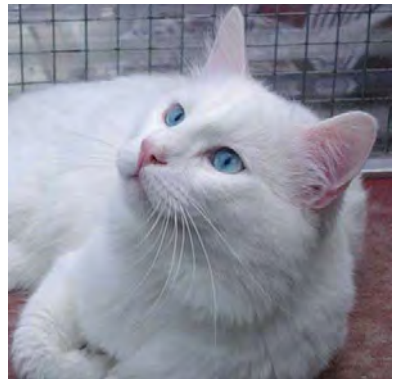


*An example of a perfectly balanced amber eyed Turkish Van Male.*



*Amber eyed tortie Turkish Van.*

*Blue eyed Vankedisi Male*



*Odd eyed Turkish Van Female*



*Black and Auburn Turkish Van Kittens*



*8 week old Vankedisi Kittens*



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