



## General Description

Often called 'the swimming cat', the semi-longhair Turkish Van is an ancient natural breed thought to have originated in the eastern part of Turkey. They have a unique texture to their cashmere-like coats that make them waterproof which lets them enjoy swimming and other water games. These active, robust cats are uniquely patterned in that traditionally the cat is mostly white with color primarily found on the head and tail-although they also come in solid white (sometimes known as Van Kedi). They were originally found near Lake Van which is what gave them the breed name that differentiates them from the Turkish Angora-a distinctly different breed that also originates in Turkey. The Turkish Van cats are a rare breed even in their native homeland where they are regarded as a regional treasure.

## History

This ancient breed has existed in the isolated mountainous area of the Eastern Anatolian region since the Middle Ages and the isolation is thought to have helped preserve its unique features until it was discovered by the West in the mid-1950s. At that time, Laura Lushington and Sonia Halliday were touring Turkey in 1955 photographing people and places of interest to tourists. While there, they encountered some longhaired white cats with auburn (red) markings on the head and tail. They were given two unrelated kittens-a male and a female-who traveled with them. When they stopped near a stream or pond to cool down from the heat, they were amazed to see the kittens paddling around in the water. On their return to England, they took the two kittens with them and began to promote them as a unique breed. The rarity of the cats even in their native homeland means there are few cats available for export but breeders around the world have worked together to preserve the magnificent cats. TICA granted them championship status in June 1979.

## Personality

While loyal, loving and affectionate, the Turkish Van is highly intelligent and highly active meaning it can have some mischievous ways. Their powerful hind legs mean they are great jumpers and climbers so expect to find them atop the bookcase or in some other aerie they have located as a great place to ensure they can see everything going on in their world. They love to play games and will learn to retrieve, amusing you at the same time with their antics as they catch toys in mid-flight or turn somersaults in their enthusiastic chases. They love to run and run and run - as much as they love to play with the water that so fascinates them. Curious and companionable, Turkish Vans want to be with you participating in whatever is happening and so they follow you from room to room. They get on well with dogs and other animals that respect their right to be the boss. While they love to be with you and will choose to curl up in your lap to enjoy a stroking session, they are not a breed that wants to be picked up and held or cuddled for long periods.



## Traits

The Turkish Van is a combination of white and colored patches with the colored patches restricted primarily to the head and tail. This pattern exists in other breeds and is known as the Van pattern however all Turkish Vans have this pattern with the exception of the solid whites (also known as Van Kedi). The body is a glistening chalk-white and the rich colors are on the head and the long magnificently plumed tail. (A tail that it tends to hold erect and waving when engaging in one of its favorite pastimes-running!) While the colored patches can be any of the traditional solid colors, the original color was a very rich red (auburn). Eye color is amber, blue or odd-eyed-in Turkey, the odd-eyed cat is the preferred but the original cats used to found the breed had amber eyes. The coat is semi-longhaired with no undercoat. It has a unique cashmere-like texture that makes it repel water and dirt. As the cat matures, the coat gets more and more lush. In response to the extreme temperature ranges found in the mountainous region around Lake Van, the Turkish Van has adapted by shedding its long coat for a shorter cooler one in the hot summer season, and in the winter, it grows tufts of hair between its paws to protect it from the cold. The semi-longhaired coat does not tangle easily however it is a good idea to brush them regularly to remove loose dead hair and help prevent furballs. Their coats repel dirt to a large degree so they do not need a lot of bathing but many of them enjoy water and so also enjoy a bath.

These are large, agile cats with a substantial, powerful strength to their bodies. They take from 3 to 5 years to reach their full maturity and when they do males range in weight from 10-20 pounds with females ranging from 7-12 pounds.