THE MAGAZINE FOR RESPONSIBLE CAT OWNERS

UK £1.50/CANADA $2.75 JUNE 1990 $2.50

CAT FANCY

CDC00411

FLEA CONTROL
Do ultrasonic devices work?

CHOOSING A FRIEND
Tips on adopting a shelter cat

TURKISH VAN
A breed that loves water

—Plus—

Herbal medicine

Cats in Japan

0 72246 00411 06

BREED PROFILE

The Turkish Van

This lively, lovely breed has a legendary past.

By Nancy Scharfe

If your life seems to be lacking something—perhaps some excitement or pizzazz—my prescription is to take one Turkish Van, and call me in the morning. When you call, you will likely be lauding the praises of this exuberant, affectionate cat with the plumed tail. A Van is guaranteed to cure you of any depression and to win your heart forever.

Since Vans invaded our home, the word "boredom" has been eliminated from our vocabularies. Timber and Jasper, our Turkish Vans, have led us into a world of dizzying fun. When we find toys scattered around, we are not sure whom to blame. Did Melody, our 6-year-old daughter, leave out her Pound Puppy, or was it Timber, the "Super Turk"? We often see him whizzing through the house, a fuzzy white blur, clasping the stuffed animal in his mouth.

"Chase me, Melody, chase me," Timber seems to tease. Just as she reaches him, he zooms on to the next plaything. Turkish Vans do sleep, but I have yet to see Timber or Jasper stop long enough to nap.

The Turkish Van is the only breed of cat famous for its love of water. If raised to enjoy a swim in the pool, a Van will always relish any water play. Because of the breed's legendary history, Turkish Van owners often discuss the possibility that two Vans escaped from Noah's Ark and swam to Turkey, where they began a reign that has lasted for thousands of years.

Legendary Past

The beautiful, fun-loving Van has an interesting history. The breed is believed to date back as far as 75 to 387 AD. This belief arose from the discovery of a shield, typical of the kind carried by warriors of that period, that features an image of a white, semilonghaired cat with a red plumed tail and red markings on its head—a description that fits many Turkish Vans of today.

Turkish Vans originated in an area of Eastern Turkey known as the Lake Van region, where these cats have been enjoyed as pets for years. This origin probably explains the breed's appreciation for water; Vans are often seen swimming on hot summer days in Turkish lakes.

In 1955, Laura Lushington and Sonia Halliday, two British women traveling through Turkey, became fascinated by the breed. Upon their return home, they imported five Turkish Vans to England, successfully spearheading their own cattery and introducing the Turkish Van to Great Britain.

This enjoyable breed found its way to the Netherlands, France and other countries throughout Europe. In the 1970s, some Vans landed in the laps of a select few Americans. Because the breed was relatively unknown in this country, however, the first American owners encountered some difficulty registering the cats with the various cat associations.

In 1983, Barbara and Jack Reark of South Miami, Florida, imported a breeding pair of Vans from France and, shortly after, three Vans from the Netherlands. Matabiru Turkish Vans, the foundation cattery for American Vans, was born.

In the last five years, the Rearks have actively promoted the breed in North America and have helped establish a number of other foundation catteries in the United States. Subsequently, several other Americans have imported Vans from the British Isles and from other countries in Europe. The present preference is for English imports, which were underrepresented in the initial breeding stock for American Turkish Vans.

Considering the short time Turkish Vans have been in this country, their progress in the cat fancy is quite an accomplishment. The breed was granted championship status by The International Cat Association in 1985 and provisional status by the American Cat Fanciers Association in 1986. The provisional class is for any breed that has approved standards but is not yet accepted for championship competition. In the Cat Fanciers' Association, the Turkish Van is included in the miscellaneous class, which is a noncompetitive class for →

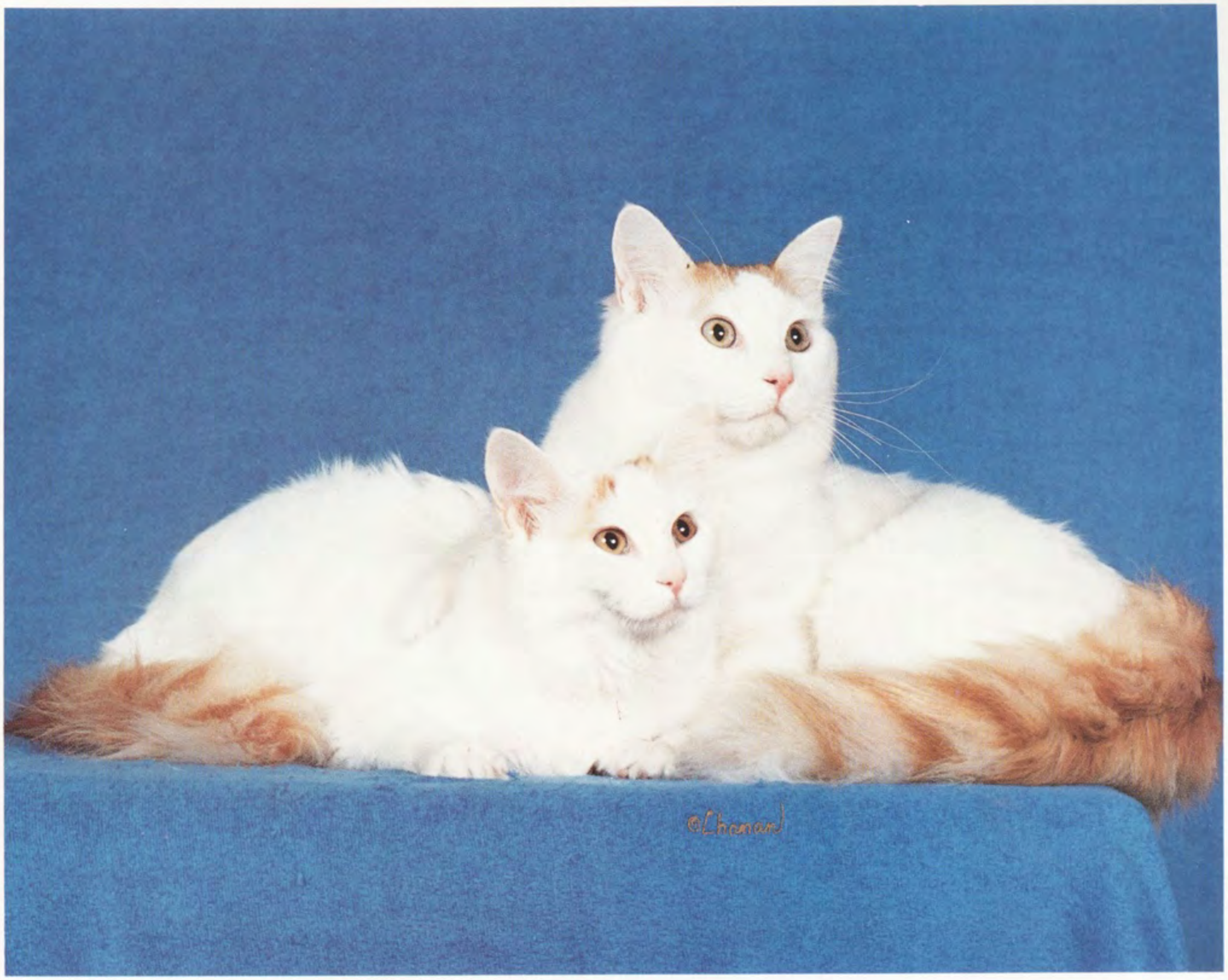

Photo: Chanan

Van kittens tend to mature rapidly. These littermates, Pairodocs Here's Trouble and Pairodocs Marigold, are 8 months old.

Photo: Nancy Scharfe

Vansalot Jasper, a blue-eyed auburn and white Turkish Van, has won more awards at cat shows than any other Van kitten. Jasper is owned by Nancy Scharfe of Illinois.

ON OVERLEAF: Champion Santir Candy Kiss of Pairodocs is a tortie and white Van.

CATFANCY

Photos by Chanan
©June 1990

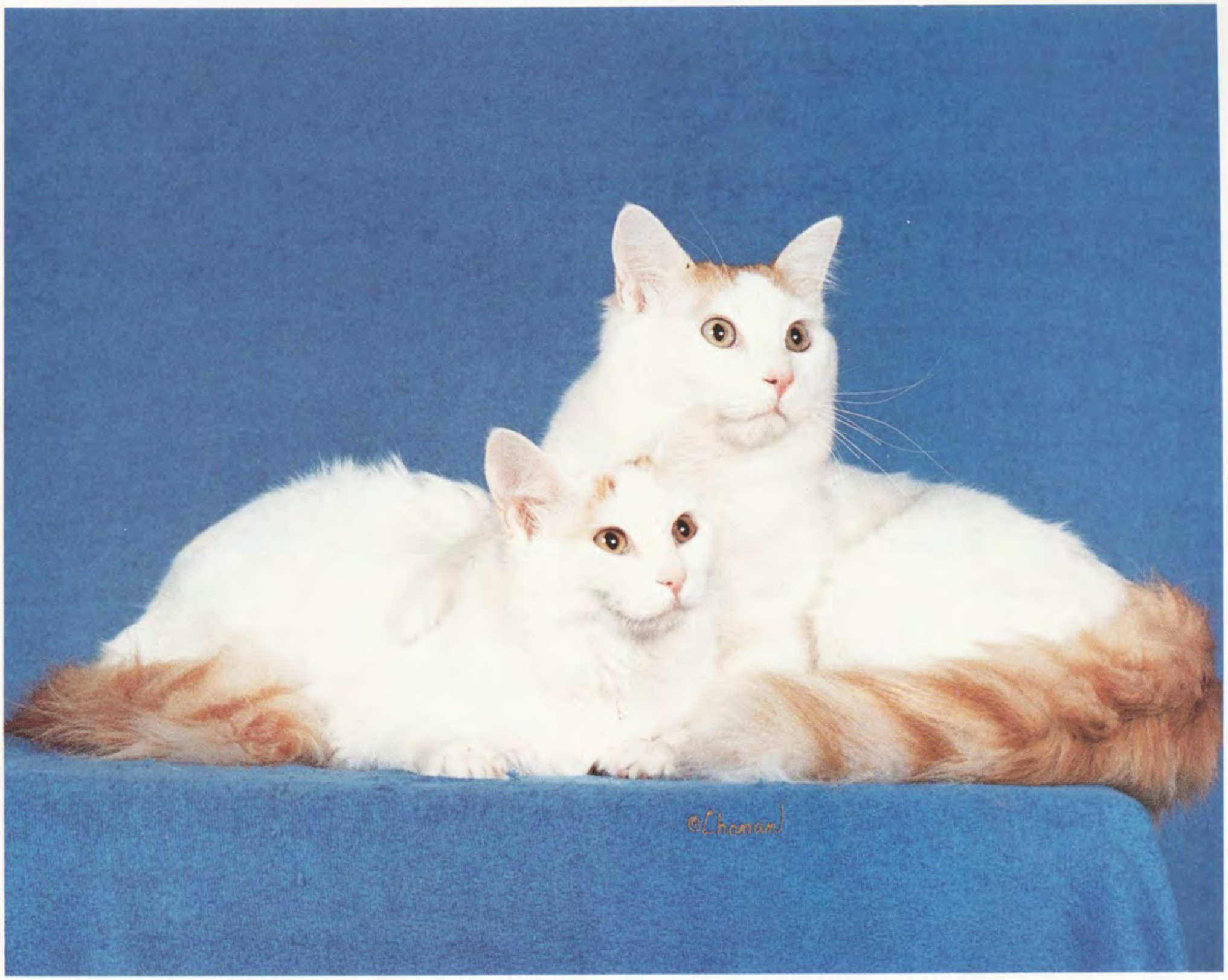

Photo: Chanan

Van kittens tend to mature rapidly. These littermates, Pairodocs Here's Trouble and Pairodocs Marigold, are 8 months old.

Photo: Nancy Scharfe

Vansalot Jasper, a blue-eyed auburn and white Turkish Van, has won more awards at cat shows than any other Van kitten. Jasper is owned by Nancy Scharfe of Illinois.

ON OVERLEAF: Champion Santir Candy Kiss of Pairodocs is a tortie and white Van.

any breed not yet accepted for provisional status.

A Distinctive Cat

The features of a Turkish Van are distinct. The cat is solidly built, muscular and noted for its ruggedness and strength. The body is long, with a sturdy feel and a full chest and shoulders. Male Vans tend to be much larger than females and to have heavier boning; a male can weigh up to 18 pounds. A female Van will have medium boning and weigh 8 to 10 pounds.

A Turkish Van's head is a broad, wide, modified wedge with rounded contours and high cheekbones. The ears are wide at the base and large in size; their inside coloration is shell pink. The eyes are a rounded almond shape, and desired colors are amber, yellow to gold, copper and blue. A Van may also be odd-eyed, with one blue eye and one amber, yellow, gold or copper eye. Sometimes a mature Van will appear to have a greenish cast to its eyes.

The coat of a Turkish Van is fine and silky, and lies flat. The cat has no woolly undercoat, but its coat changes with the seasons and will become quite long in colder climates. Male and female Vans alike will sometimes sport ruffs during long, harsh winters. As temperatures rise, a Van's coat will thin out until the cat appears to be almost shorthaired. The tail fur, however, remains long regardless of climate. If the tail were the thermostat of the breed, we would have permanently longhaired Vans.

The tail, one of the most outstanding features of a Turkish Van, is thick and muscular, and stands expressively. More than with any other breed, a Van's mood can be judged by its tail, which the cat artfully swishes around. The tail is usually held high, which, coupled with the valiant, swaggering gait typical of a Van, assures you of the cat's complete confidence and pride in itself.

The Van Pattern

The term "van pattern," which is used throughout the cat fancy to describe the markings of any cat that is mainly white but has a colored tail and patches of color on its head, was derived from the Turkish Van. With this breed, the color runs the length of the tail and may extend slightly up the cat's rump and onto its back. Small white spots or a white tip are allowed on a Van's tail.

A Turkish Van's body should be chalk white with no trace of yellow. A colored head patch in the shape of a blaze is preferred. Small patches of color on the upper body and on the outside of the feet and legs, up to the ankles, are acceptable. The mythical "Mark of Allah," which supposedly symbolizes the thumbprint of God, is often found between the shoulder blades of a Van.

Colors presently recognized for the head patches and tails of Vans are auburn, cream, black, blue, brown tabby, torbie, tortie, calico and dilute calico. Work with calico Vans is in the experimental stages and has produced positive results.

Turkish Vans are often compared to and confused with Turkish Angoras, but the two breeds are quite different. Angoras are slimmer and smaller than Vans. The Van is known for its van coloring, while most Angoras are solid colors, usually white, although there are some bicolor Angoras as well. The head shapes of the two breeds differ, too; the Van's head has a more sculpted profile.

In Turkey, cats considered true "Turkish Cats," mostly white Angoras, are kept at the Ankara Zoo to ensure preservation of the species. Although zoo officials are not necessarily striving for the configuration or body type of the Turkish Van as we know it, some van-patterned cats are kept at the zoo as well. Turkey has been strict in its laws governing exportation of the country's native odd-eyed white cat, but these laws do not include the bicolor Turkish Van. This has helped keep the gene pool for Vans sufficient.

Comic Curiosity

Turkish Van owners have been known to joke that they sometimes cannot tell if they own cats or dogs. Frisky and strong, Vans can play just as roughly as dogs can. More than one Van has been caught carrying in its jaws an item twice its size with no apparent difficulty.

Vans are creatures of intrigue. They seem to possess a comic curiosity that is attention-getting, to say the least. Vocal beings, they will carry on conversations with just about anyone or anything.

Vans are also inventive in their play habits. You could say that about many cats, but the way Vans go about playing, with the gusto of troopers, is unique. As they rocket across rooms or leap to unimaginable heights (ceilings have limited their potential), their endless surges of energy can leave you breathless.

If the Turkish Van has a flaw, it is this tendency to be overactive. You might find keeping up with a Van difficult, but you will always find its behavior humorous and forgivable. Jack and Barbara Reark describe their cats as "action-packed."

Turkish Vans require much the same care as other cats, with a few exceptions. Vans have hearty appetites and often consume their food with such vigor that their owners wonder if the cats actually tasted what they ate.

Grooming a Van is simple. Its coat requires only a quick comb-through every few days, which the cat usually enjoys, and an occasional bath as needed. Despite the breed's fondness for water, not all Vans are easy to bathe. Cats that are shown should be→

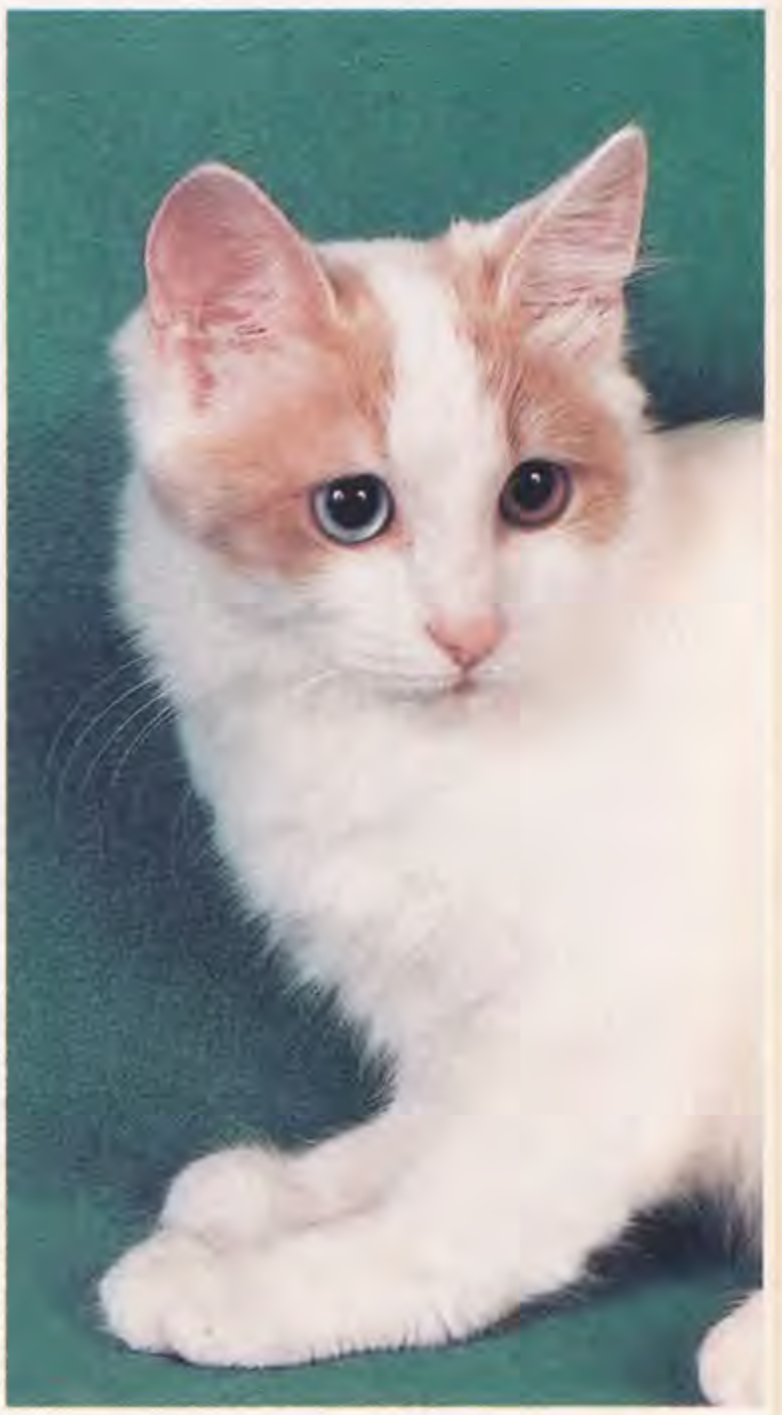

Photo: Vickie W. Jackson/courtesy of Dei von Saxe-Coburg

This lovely odd-eyed Van is Stellamaris Sofiya. She is owned by Sandra Gotch and Dei von Saxe-Coburg.

bathed regularly so they become used to baths.

Because it has no woolly undercoat, a Van's coat usually does not mat. It is basically self-grooming, but excess fur can be removed with a grooming glove. Overcombing should be avoided because the Van's fur can become flyaway or full of static.

Gaining in Popularity

Turkish Vans are fast gaining in popularity, and catteries have sprung up in many areas of the United States. More Vans are being shown and are doing well in the ring. If you go to cat shows, you can see fine specimens of the breed being judged. Many judges have been pleased to discover this interesting breed that is easy to handle and have commented on the quality of the Vans in their rings.

Several years ago, when Vans were first being shown, they had a reputation for exhibiting a few minor behavioral problems. Improved breeding programs and intensive socialization of Van kittens, however, have corrected these problems. The Van's temperament has come a long way. I like to think of it as sweetly assertive.

Photo: Joe and Debra Frahm

Vans are famous for their love of water. Here Matabiru Rio Rojo Ranya enjoys a dip in the pool with a young friend. Ranya is owned by Joe and Debra Frahm.

If you decide to bring a Turkish Van kitten into your home, odds are your kitten will be good-natured. Vans with the best dispositions are those treated like pets or like children. Breeders and exhibitors of Vans find that they raise much happier cats if they allow the cats the run of the house rather than confine them to cages.

Van kittens tend to mature rapidly and, if not spayed or neutered, can become prolific at an early age. Because the breeding program in this country has been limited so far, breeders choose prospective owners for their kittens carefully. After selling their kittens, breeders will usually stay in touch with the new owners; they believe this is an important practice in promoting the breed.

Although Turkish Vans have been around a long time, they are just now finding their way into people's hearts and homes. You, too, can experience the joys of living with a Turkish Van. You are sure to find the cat extremely affectionate and loyal. Your new cat will be a blessing to have around, fun to talk to (it really will talk back) and an excellent source of entertainment.

For more information about Turkish Vans, contact Carol Van Orden, secretary, Turkish Van Cat Club, Dept. CF, 1302 Exchange, Emporia, KS 66801.

URINE TROUBLE!

OUT!® Pet Odor Eliminator and
OUT!® Pet Stain Remover
Permanently removes new and old pet stains and odors.

- Safe, natural formula
- Money back guarantee
- Approved for use on the new stain-resistant fiber carpeting
- Available in your store's pet department

SAVE $1.00 on OUT!® Pet Products

To redeem: This coupon will be redeemed for face value plus 8¢ handling when received on the sale of any 16 fl. oz. container of OUT!® Pet Products. This coupon will be honored only if submitted by a retailer of OUT!® Pet Products. Invoices proving purchase of sufficient stock to cover coupons presented for redemption must be shown upon request. Any other use constitutes fraud. Facsimiles are not accepted. Customers must pay sales tax. Void when presented by outside agencies, brokers, or where prohibited, taxed or restricted by law. Good only in U.S.A., its territories and possessions. Cash value 1/100 cent. Limit one coupon per customer. Mail coupons to OUT! International, Inc.; P.O. Box 227215; Dallas, Texas 75222-7215. ©1989 OUT! International, Inc.

Manufacturer's Coupon Expires December 31, 1990 CF-06