

KORAT CATS



Korat breed seminar in Tienen, Belgium 2015 by Karin Dessne

Hi!

I am here to talk about breeding of Korats – the old natural breed from Thailand who brings luck to their human families. First, I'd like to present myself. I have enjoyed the company of Korats since 1987; that is, 28 years, and I started to breed 8 years ago. I live in Sweden, in the neighbourhood of Gothenburg. I and my husband live with seven Korats right now. Four of them are on this photo, a photo that shows how Korat often act as a team, and also what is meant by having an alert expression.

CURRENT BREEDING SITUATION



Elfi Kleive, Donatella Mastrangelo, me, Kåre Kleive

**A couple of breeders in the European countries, but many in Finland!
And new ones in Poland!**



The three active breeders of Sweden: Anne Frostander, Frida Åberg and me

One of the biggest challenges that I faced in the beginning as a breeder was the limited number of breeders. This is a challenge known to most breeders of Korats. The Korat is not a well-known breed – there are only a couple of breeders in many of the European countries, except for Finland where breeders are quite many.

Still, after years and years of showing Korats in Sweden, having a webpage, writing about them in various fora, and being written about in popular cat magazines as well as newspapers, people say to us: oh, what is this, I've never seen a Korat?

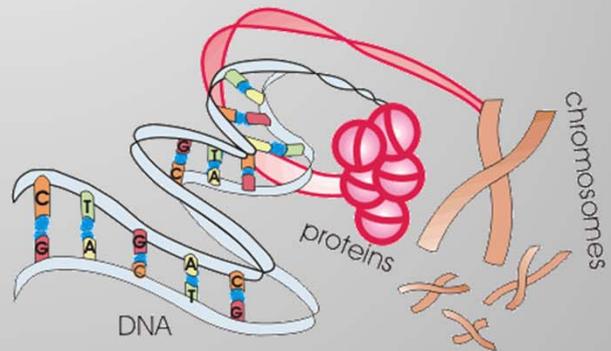
I have also talked to many breeders including Elfi Kleive – who brought Korats to Scandinavia in the 1970s – about this worrying situation. It is not easy to be a small breed in a world of information overload. On the other hand, the smaller scale of breeding may also be what enables us to collaborate the way we do.

It is sometimes a challenge to find buyers for our kittens; we have seen this in Sweden and I have seen it also in other countries where the breed is not that well-known. But once you've lived with a Korat, it is very obvious how fantastic they are, and when people lose their precious Korats they tend to search for a new Korat friend. Once a Korat – always a Korat.

Sometimes there seems to be a dwindling population of Korats, but new breeders emerge. For example, in 2011 four Korats arrived in Poland – and as far as I know they were the first Korats ever in Poland. Two came from Norway and two from Sweden (from me actually and those two – as far as I know – were the two very first Korats in Poland. I need to be a bit proud of that). These Korats moved to two different new breeders, who are now very active.

COLLABORATION FOR HEALTH AND GENE POOL

- GM NO MORE
- OCCASIONALLY FLAT CHESTED KITTENS, HEART CONDITIONS, TAIL FAULTS, ALLERGIES, ASTHMA
- LIMITED GENE POOL MAKES IT NECESSARY TO BE OBSERVANT
- SIZE OF LITTERS
- NEW IMPORTS FROM THAILAND
- FINDING A DATE
- KORATS ARE QUITE HEALTHY!



Like all breeds of cats as well as house cats, there are of course health issues regarding Korats too. The most known issues – but now eliminated – are GM1 and GM2, gangliosidoses. GM is a lethal genetic disease. It was found also in European Korats in the 1990s, but Korat breeders turned to researchers for help. A DNA screening test was constructed in 1998 and this resulted in that the disease since then has been eliminated.

Other issues as flat chested kittens and heart conditions have occasionally been seen as well as occurrences of tail faults, allergies and asthma. If such health issues reoccur regarding a specific cat or perhaps a line, one should consider stop breeding from that cat or line. But, talking about lines when it comes to Korats is really not especially relevant as all lines are quite related although breeders of course do strive to add new genetic material. Our gene pool is limited and fragile so it is important to detect a serious genetic disease quickly to be able to eliminate it, and minor issues might indicate that a more serious fault may emerge later. It is a balance between keeping the gene pool as varied as possible and being vary of genetic threats. Most diseases often depend on both genetics and environment, but it is really important to be observant and careful.

Korats usually have litters of 2-5 kittens, but there are also sometimes litters of 6 or 8, I have seen this recently on social media, actually two litters if I remember correctly. Breeders collaborate to bring for example new imports from Thailand and such collaboration is necessary to bring new blood to avoid too much inbreeding. When it comes to breeding a small breed it is sometimes a challenge to find a suitable date for your cat, and by this I primarily mean a date that will not cause inbreeding that may result in health issues. However, social media, contacts and also the database pawpeds.com assist us in this. Breeders send their litter data (pedigrees) to be stored in pawpeds where it is possible to test mating cats to see the rate of inbreeding.

Still, all in all, despite being such a small breed, Korats are very healthy, and I think the Korat is one of the healthiest breeds. My oldest Korat became 19 years and 9 months, and several of my Korats friends have had Korats that also have lived that long. I often read about Korats in social media that are old and quite healthy for their age.

GROWING UP



Now something about kittens and growing up. The first row of photos shows a male kitten growing up, and the second row a female as a kitten and as an adult. As you can see the eyes are amber from the beginning and develop to green. This might take up to 3-4 years to develop although it may develop early, already when the cat is about a year old. However, that early is quite rare. It is more common that it takes years for the eyes to be really green. The green colour is that of the peridot stone, or the young grass; that is, warm green. It is traditionally also described as the colour of the shining dewdrop on a lotus leaf. You can also see how the bone structure of the head develops.

This particular male developed his green colour already when he was about 1 year old, but it intensified later on, and I mean got more intense although the correct colour was there early. At the last photo he is seven years old.

Korats tend to often have a teenager phase where the body is a bit more slender and the bone structure of the head is not fully developed – it may appear "thinner". The teenager phase lasts till about 1 year of age.

GROWING UP



This photo shows another male when he is 6 months old (to the left) and three years later (to the right) when 3 years and 6 months old (neutered).

KEEPING A NATURAL LOOK

THERE IS SUCH A THING AS TOO BIG EYES

THE FOREHEAD SHALL NOT BE ROUND (SIMILAR TO BURMESE) – THE KORAT IS A HEART-SHAPED BEAUTY

COAT IS NOT ALL SILVER – IT IS SILVERTIPPED

SIZE IS ABOUT HARMONY

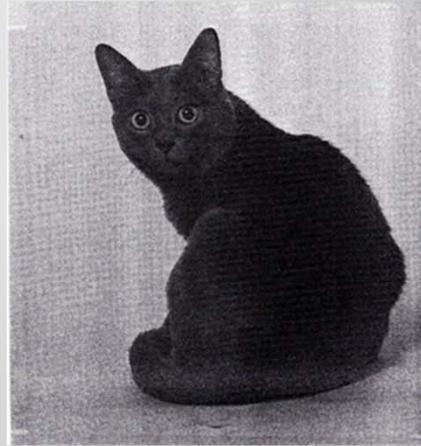


PHOTO FROM ELFI KLEIVE USED TO SHOW EYES IN BREED PRESENTATION IN 1990, BORÅS

I really need to say something about a development of looks that I feel may threaten the natural beauty of Korats. In the 1980's and early 1990's I showed my very handsome Korat male. Judges liked him a lot and said that he was splendid, although he was not at all interested in them; instead he turned his ears everywhere but forward. They said he was so good-looking. Then, ten years later or so, I showed him as a veteran – this was in the mid-2000s – and then some judges said his eyes could be bigger. It was the same cat and the same standard. So what I have seen is a change of how to consider eye size. I think it is important to keep a natural beauty – which is what a Korat is – and to prevent a trend of too oversized eyes. Yes, they shall be oversized and yes, they shall be well-opened and alert, but it is also crucial to keep in mind that the Korat – according to the standard – should look alert – not staring. Also, it is important to consider that unneutered males do not generally have smaller eyes, but they might look smaller as their cheeks are more dominant. One should find some sort of "rather over-sized (standard expression) eyes and head harmony"...

When I talk to Elfi Kleive (who brought Korats to Scandinavia) – besides that we agree on that too big eyes make Korats look strange – she is also concerned about foreheads and coat. As I understand it, she says that there has also been a tendency that some people prefer foreheads that make a Korat look more like a Burmese, and I have seen photos of such a Burmese look in some Korats, but I don't know whether this is a wide-spread problem. She also says that it is important to know that the coat is not all about silver, but also about the steel-blue colour; it is about unfinished silver and a steel-blue with a silver-tip. Each hair should be lighter at the root, and then it shades to darker steel-blue to end with a silver tip.

After 28 years of Korat company I have also seen that there is now a bigger difference between males and females in size, and this might be a sign that could be a cause for concern. My first female weighed over 4 kilos and she was by no means overweight. I rarely see females of that size anymore, but I know that there still are females of that size. The common size now is that they weigh between 2.5 – 3.5 kilos. Furthermore, the important thing to remember – although we don't want females weighing 2 kilos – is that what to consider is that a Korat should have a muscular harmonious body fitting the individual cat.

KORAT TEMPER



NEEDS COMPANY!

HOW MANY IS A
GOOD NUMBER?

PARENTING TOGETHER

SOCIAL AND
STUBBORN – WANTS
TO BE THE CENTRE OF
THE UNIVERSE

RULING AND LOYAL
PERSONALITIES

Finally I want to say something about the Korat temper. Korats are cats who want company almost all the time, by humans as well as another cat. Some Korat keepers say that their experience is that keeping more than 4-5 Korats is problematic as they are dominant cats. Other Korat keepers say that it is possible, and I am one of them. I did not plan to live with 7 Korats – I am a breeder who is very emotionally attached to my cats and have problems parting from kittens – but now they are 7. And it works, but I need to be an active leader and not a passive keeper. They are like a lion pride. They have their hierarchy to uphold, but they mostly rest together on my legs in a typical Korat pile. A Korat pile is a well-known phenomenon among Korat keepers. As you can see the photos show a Korat pile as well as how they – even in their outdoor fenced garden – prefer human company.

When I have had kittens, all cats participate in parenting when the kittens are a bit older. I let them greet each other early on when they are tiny, but then just to let them smell and know that they are there. Then, when they start to move around more to explore the world they spend their days together (not nights). As they grow older and bigger they can be together all the time. The first photo shows how they take care of each other. Once, one of the females decided that she ought to adopt the kittens and she even developed hormones enough to develop bigger nipples although without milk.

Korats are very social and very stubborn, and my experience – and in accordance with what I've learned from other Korat keepers – is that they really need to be raised as they grow up. Left to their own strong will, they will definitely rule their humans as they see fit. Even though they are firmly and lovingly raised, they will still be ruling personalities which is why Korat keepers often say – lovingly of course – that they are the slaves of their Korats. Which is, after all, as it should be. Korats are the most loyal friends you could ever imagine to be lucky enough to have! And, that is also in accordance with their ancestry as lucky and wealth-bringing cats!

KORAT SHOW TEMPER



TO THE LEFT: RATHER
TYPICAL



TO THE RIGHT: SOMEWHAT
UNUSUAL

A Korat's show-temper is a bit different from the home-temper. At home my experience is that they only talk when they have something important to say, but at shows there are important things to say in abundance – so they are known to be talkative! And they talk loudly and decisively to speak their mind.

It is probably wise to get a Korat used to shows early on. Sometimes it is ok right from the beginning, but it may also take some time. This is Minoe – one of my cats – who now loves shows. It has not always been the case – she thought shows were really unnecessary. You can see in the photos how her attitude has changed...

On the show table, well, Korats do not like to be hold, they want to be in charge. So it is wise to be firm, but at the same time to let them believe that they are somewhat in charge.

Once Minoe, the boss at home, was in the panel and she meowed loudly and was really upset because the assistant kept holding her so she was unable to do what she really wants to – roll on the table. As one of the judges looked at her and let her down on the table again she saw her chance and threw herself down immediately – at last happy again! But she is a bit unusual, not only as a Korat, but also generally as I don't see many cats behave like her on shows... Nowadays, she just wants to throw herself belly up on the table...

THANK YOU!

A TINY PAW



This is a photo I love that shows a tiny kitten still with bluish in her eye colour.
If you have any questions I will be happy to answer!

Thank you for listening!