



# Tonkinese

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# The Tonkinese

## About the Tonkinese

Tonkinese cats are very affectionate and smart, and are considered by many to be one of the most trainable breeds of cat. Tonkinese kittens are very intelligent and will therefore take well to training. Training is important for them; without clearly defining the rules to a Tonkinese, you are opening the door for them to get into all kinds of mischief.

The Tonkinese cat is a cross between a Burmese and a Siamese, with a medium build and slim but muscular body. Tonkinese are sociable, gregarious cats who enjoy the company of people as well as other animals. They are sometimes said to be more like dogs than cats, in their desire for affection and companionship.

Tonkinese cats were first bred in the U.S. in the 1950's, and were originally called Golden Siamese cats. The breed did not begin to become popular until the 1960's, and "Tonks" have been growing in popularity ever since.

## General Characteristics

Tonkinese cats have muscular bodies that are medium in size. Their wedge-shaped heads are not overly pointed, and their ears are wide set. Their large eyes are not as oval shaped as Siamese, but are not completely round, either. Their eyes range in color from blue to green, with greenish-blue being the preferred color for show cats. Heavier than they appear due to their muscular build, Tonkinese usually weigh between 5 and 12 pounds. They have short coats, with distinctive markings. Like Siamese, they have "points" that are darker than the rest of their coats. These darker points, on the mask, tail, ears, and legs, blend gradually into the lighter body color. Tonkinese cats come in a variety of solid colors, including brown, blue, chocolate, lilac, red and cream. They may also have any of these colors in a tortie coat of a base color with cream or red hairs mixed in. Tabby Tonkinese cats have solid markings on a background of agouti, or ticked, hairs.



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Average Weight	5-12 pounds (2.5 – 5.5 kg)
Average Litter Size	6 kittens
Coat	Short coat in solid colors, or tortie or tabby patterns. All have distinct point markings of a darker color.
Temperament	Affectionate and friendly; good family cat.
Compatibility with Children and Pets	Does very well with children and pets.
Health Concerns	Tonkinese cats are a hardy breed and rarely suffer breed-specific health problems.

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## Selecting Your Tonkinese – Adoption or Breeder

Deciding whether to adopt a pet from a shelter or rescue group, or purchase a pet from a breeder is a personal choice. Whichever you decide, be sure to research the source and find out as much as you can about how the cat has been cared for up to this point. Breed clubs and online groups are good sources of information about breeders and shelters.

### A Few Words About Adoption

Your local ASPCA or municipal animal shelter likely has a variety of cats available for adoption. If breed is not important to you, shelters like these can be excellent sources for an adoptable cat. If, however, you are committed to finding a Tonkinese, you may need to do a more specific search. There are groups that specialize in rescue and adoption of Tonkinese cats; check the Internet for a group near you. Your local vet may also be a good resource for locating groups or individuals who have cats for adoption.

Finding a Tonkinese available for adoption or rescue may take longer than locating a cat through a breeder. Your persistence will be rewarded, though, with the good feelings that come from providing a loving home to a Tonkinese in need.

Some shelters or rescue groups charge a small fee for processing the adoption; others ask that you make a donation to their organization. Most shelters require you to spay or neuter the animal. Overall, the expense of taking in a rescue cat is usually much lower than the cost of buying one outright.

### A Few Words About Breeders

A good breeder will always have at least as many questions for you as you have for him. A breeder who cares about his animals will want to know that each cat is going to a good, loving home. You may find that you have a lot of initial contact with a breeder over the phone or via email. When you actually meet with the breeder, you may have your choice of only a few or several cats, depending on the size of his breeding operation.

Always make sure your breeder keeps sanitary and pleasant conditions. The cats should appear well-cared for and well-fed, with ample space to play, and clean cages. Look for a cat with clear eyes and a shiny coat. The cats should be active and alert. Be wary of a breeder whose cats are overly timid or aggressive. The cats should be well socialized and appear healthy and happy.

Get any agreements from the breeder in writing, and be very wary of a breeder who refuses to do so. Any reputable breeder should also provide you with a written guarantee regarding your animal and should clearly explain any return policies.

The Internet can be a good resource for locating a Tonkinese breeder. You can also check with local Tonkinese clubs in your area, and ask your vet for recommendations. There are national and sometimes regional groups and professional societies for cat breeders. You may wish to find a breeder associated with a club such as the Tonkinese Breed Association. While not all cat breeders will belong to such groups, membership in a group like this may be an indication of how seriously the breeder takes her work. Ask other cat



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owners for recommendations for a breeder, or consult listservs and other websites devoted to pet cats.

## How to Choose Your New Tonkinese

An important decision is whether to bring a kitten or an adult cat into your home. It's no secret that Tonkinese kittens are cute and cuddly, but they are also a lot of work. If you cannot devote a serious amount of time and patience to house training and socializing a kitten, consider adopting an adult cat. Make this important decision before you begin looking at cats. When an adorable Tonkinese kitten is curled up in your lap, it can be very difficult to think of anything but taking her home.

When selecting a cat, it is important to find out as much as you can about how the Tonkinese was raised to this point, to have an idea of any health problems or behavioral issues that may not be readily apparent.

There are several signs of a healthy cat. Among these are the following:

- Healthy skin and coat
- Clear, bright eyes
- Energetic and playful demeanor
- Clean ears

## Preparing For Your Tonkinese

There are several items you will need to care for your new Tonkinese. Some examples of these include food and water bowls, good quality food, grooming products, litter and litter boxes, toys, and books on cat care.

Your Tonkinese will need a place to eat and drink. Cat bowls are often made from plastic, ceramic or stainless steel, all of which are durable. It is important to put the bowls in the same place each day, so your cat knows where to find his food and water. Cat bowls should always be made from safe, non-toxic materials.

Cat food is the basis of your Tonkinese's nutrition, so feeding him the right food and in the right quantities is critical. Healthier food means a healthier cat. Cat food comes in three main forms: hard dry food, canned wet food, or semi-moist food. Check with your vet or breeder for recommendations based on the age and health of your cat.

Grooming products can include brushes, combs, and topical treatments like shampoos and flea prevention products. With their short coats, Tonkinese cats do not need much grooming. When trained early to get accustomed to being brushed, most Tonkinese will quickly grow to love the attention that comes with grooming. Start with just a few minutes each day, until your kitten is accustomed to the attention and activity. Cat shampoos can include flea and tick formulas, detangling formulas, deodorizing formulas, and more. It may take some patience and practice to bathe your Tonkinese or apply topical treatments. Be prepared with all necessary supplies and be ready to give your cat plenty of praise and maybe even some treats.

Litter boxes come in simple pan styles, enclosed "privy" types, and even automatic-scooping models. Whichever type of litter box you select, there are certain factors to keep in mind. The sides of the box should not be too high, especially when used for young kittens or older cats. Some cats like



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privacy while using the litter box, so a covered model is best for them. Others, however, do not like to feel enclosed and will not use a litter box with a cover.

Cat litter comes in three basic forms, clay litter, clumping clay litter, and crystals. While there are other types of cat litter on the market, these are the most prevalent types. Clay litter is a traditional choice and works well for many kittens. Clumping clay litters absorb the moisture from the urine and form clumps which can be scooped out like solid waste. Crystal cat litters are fairly new on the market. Regardless of the type of cat litter you select, be sure to keep the litter box scrupulously clean.

Don't forget something for your Tonkinese to play with. As kittens and mature cats, Tonkinese cats are naturally very playful creatures; giving them their own toys to play with can protect your curtains, shoes, and even your own feet. There are toys that mimic prey, toys that smell enticing, toys that bounce, toys that hold treats, and on and on and on.

A few good books on raising cats, purchased at a pet or book store or borrowed from your library, can be invaluable. Knowledgeable pet owners have happier, healthier pets!

### **Your Tonkinese Through The Years: The Tonkinese Kitten**

Tonkinese kittens are born with light coats that gradually darken as they get older. It may take up to eighteen months for the cat's full color to develop.

Kittens should be fed two small meals a day, to aid in digestion. A high-quality food specifically formulated for kittens will help your Tonkinese to get a healthy start in life. Get your Tonkinese used to being groomed as a kitten; it will make life easier for both of you as the cat matures.

Immunizations are important to your cat's health. Core feline vaccinations are feline panleukopenia, also known as feline distemper, feline calicivirus (FCV), and feline herpesvirus type 1 (FHV-1). For cats over 16 weeks of age, one modified live virus dose of each is recommended. A booster shot should be given at one year, and every subsequent three years. Kittens under 16 weeks of age should receive parenteral (not through the digestive tract) dose at 6-8 weeks, 9-11 weeks, and again at 12-16 weeks of age. Feline rabies is also a core vaccine. An inoculation with killed rabies vaccine should be given to kittens at 12-16 weeks of age. A booster shot should be given at one year, and every subsequent three years. Some veterinarians administer recombinant vaccines rather than killed; discuss the differences with your vet.



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## Your Tonkinese Through the Years: The Tonkinese Adult

Tonkinese cats reach maturity between two and three years of age; spayed and neutered cats mature sooner. Don't necessarily expect your Tonkinese to start acting mature, though; these cats will stay playful and inquisitive all their lives.

As your cat matures, switch him from kitten food to a high-quality adult cat food. This will meet all of his nutritional needs and help to keep him healthy. Be sure to bring your Tonkinese to the vet annually, for a "well cat" check up. Stay current on your cat's vaccinations, to ensure the health of his immune system. Feline panleukopenia, also known as feline distemper, feline calicivirus (FCV), feline herpesvirus type 1 (FHV-1) and rabies vaccinations should be given to adult cats every three years.

## Your Tonkinese Through The Years: The Tonkinese Senior

As cats age, their immune systems become less able to fight off infections and disease. Be sure to bring your Tonkinese senior to the vet each year to have her health checked. Tonkinese cats are normally a healthy breed, and there are no breed-specific issues to be concerned with. Normal aging issues among cats include hyperthyroidism, hypertension, and diabetes. Some of these can be avoided through proper diet and regular exercise.

## Medical Considerations

Tonkinese cats are a fairly hardy breed. As kittens, they are somewhat prone to minor colds or upper respiratory infections, but these do not usually become serious. As adult cats, there are relatively few health issues to be concerned with, other than those normally associated with an aging cat. Tonkinese cats can be somewhat prone to gingivitis, so proper dental care throughout the life of the cat is important.

The average litter size of the Tonkinese is six kittens, although very large litters are not uncommon for this breed. The average life span of a Tonkinese is around 15 years. Properly cared for, many Tonkinese cats live to their late teen years.



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