

## Tarsus Çatalburun Breed of Turkish Hunting Dog (Turkish Pointer)

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### Abstract

In its homeland, this kind of Turkish pointer dog is known as “Çatalburun” that means "fork-nose". This dog is a rare hunting breed, closely associated with Tarsus province of the South Anatolian city of Mersin, but rarely found elsewhere. As of today, it is estimated that their number is about 200. Tarsus Çatalburun has been neither standardized nor recognized as a dog breed to this day. This dog breed is quite uniform in type and a valued local partridge hunter. It is readily identified by its “split-nose”. Their owners prefer Tarsus Çatalburun dogs because they are good hunter, intelligent, very loyal; have small body and good relations with people. The aim of this study was to call attention to Tarsus Çatalburun dogs whose number is critically low in their homeland and to encourage and increase the scientific researches involving these dogs that were addressed very few in scientific publications.

**Key words:** Hunting Dog, Tarsus Çatalburun, Turkish Pointer.

### Tarsus Çatalburun Irkı Türk Av Köpeği (Türk Pointeri)

#### Özet

Türk Pointerleri, kendi anayurtlarında “Çatalburun” olarak bilinirler. Bir güney Anadolu kenti olan Mersin’in Tarsus ilçesinde daha yaygın olarak görebileceğimiz bu eşsiz av köpeklerine başka yerlerde rastlamak güçtür. Bu gün, ırk olarak kayıt edilmemiş ve standartları belirlenmemiş bu köpeklerin, sayılarının 200 civarında olduğu tahmin edilmektedir. Bir örnek yapılarıyla, yerel keklik avcısı olan bu köpekler yarı burunları ile tanınırlar. Sahiplerinin Tarsus Çatalburunları tercih etmelerinin sebebi, çok iyi bir avcı, zeki ve sadık olmaları; insanlarla ilişkilerinin iyi ve küçük bir bedene sahip olmalarıdır. Bu çalışma ile anayurtlarında oldukça az sayıda yetiştirilen bu köpeklerle dikkat çekmek ve bunlarla ilgili sınırlı sayıda yayınlara katkıya yönelik araştırmacıları teşvik etmek amaçlanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Av Köpeği, Tarsus Çatalburun, Türk Pointeri.

### Introduction

All breeds of dog have been organized into ten different groups based on their function, and, to some extent, their origin by the World Canine Organization (FCI = Federation Cynology International). However, these dogs are divided into four fundamental genetic subdivisions as a result of genetic analysis (15).

There have been a lot of different breeds of hunting dogs throughout the human history due to changing hunting techniques. Hunting dogs diverge in groups such as hounds, gundogs, retrievers, sight hounds and spaniels

(8). Dogs from the gundog group (sporting) are the most recognizable of all breeds. The objective of every breed in this group is to help in retrieving and hunting game, whether it is feathered or furred. Common points among these dogs include their easy-going temperaments (although there are slight variations) and much less noise they make (11). The name of pointer was firstly mentioned in England around 1650s. They are very popular because of their excellent ability to catch a scent and to point out the direction of a game (12).

Even in very old resources, it is reported that a two months old pointer puppy could be trained for hunting. These dogs find a game to point out by either ground scent or wind scent. The ground scent points are used at shorter distance

The Spanish Pachon Navarro, very similar to Tarsus Çatalburun dog, is a kind of Braque hunting dog. This means that they point out their game. These dogs are characterized by their ability to point out the direction to which a game is located. This ability makes them great and unique hunting companions (2).

In a study on three breeds of hunting dog, the estimated heritability ( $h^2$ ) for the scored hunting performances of seven traits (hunting eagerness, speed, style, independence, seeking width, ability to work in the field and cooperation) were varied from 0.006 to 0.28 (5).

Native breed is described as pure bred animal living in the same region for at least 40 years or six generations (14). Tarsus Çatalburun has been neither standardized nor recognized yet. This breed is quite uniform in type and a valued local partridge hunter (4). The Federation of Cynology (FCI) and some associations have been established in Turkey for Turkish dog breeds especially outstanding shepherd dogs in recent years (6). However there has not been yet the recording process for Çatalburuns.

The purpose of this study was to support the scientific researches that contribute to describe Çatalburun dogs as a breed and, to provide a perspective for breeding these dogs in the future.

### Origin

Although there is slight scientific evidence, it is known that Turkish Pointer, Tarsus Çatalburun dog as a hunting dog has been bred for many years in Tarsus province and villages around. According to narratives and photos of curious and hunter families, these dogs have lived in the vicinity of Tarsus since 1930s. As of today, it is estimated that their number is about 200. It can be said that the Spanish Pachon Navarro is the most resembled dog to Çatalburun in the world due to their nose structure and general appearance. A similarity between these two dogs could be due to their history. Because both Spain and Tarsus had been dominated and affected by the Abbasid-

and the dog moves with his nose close to the ground. Both points are used at a long distance by dogs that hunt with a high head, and they like to go along with the wind without a stop (9).

Umayyad since 8th century and then Ottoman period. Çatalburun dogs might have been taken from Turkey to Iberian Peninsula by Arabs during this process (3).

### General Characteristics

Çatalburuns are excellent friends for hunting since they remain quiet for a long time. These dogs are also a good candidate for search-rescue, narcotic and police dog when combined with the abilities of intelligent reading from their eyes and scent tracking from air and ground. The Turkish General Directorate of Security realized this situation and sent a team to Tarsus immediately to take these dogs to Centre of Dog Training in Ankara (4).

Çatalburun dogs can be kept indoors or in small gardens without disturbing anybody. They do not bark very much. They play with children as if they are children themselves and do not bite and are not dangerous at all. They do not make any noise or bark when you pet them. They have never bitten any children and are very sensitive towards babies and children. They do not bite even if they are hurt by the children. They are very obedient. These dogs have a unique build. It is not very tall, rather squat (Fig.1). The shape of the nose is different from other dogs. The nose is divided into two parts (from middle toward forehead). So, this dog seems to have two separate noses (Fig.2). Maybe the area of mucous membrane inside is larger due to the split nature of nose forming a larger moist region that could increase its sense of smell. The noses of these dogs are moister than those of other dogs (13).

It was reported that mean height at withers of male and bitch are 53 and 48 cm, mean body length of male and bitch are 55 and 52 cm, mean body weight of male and bitch are 22 and 19 kg, respectively in Tarsus Çatalburun dogs (10). Their life span is about 10-13 years (7). The hair of outer skin is short, smooth and flat and seen in a variety of colours, but most common in white-based colourings with darker patches, ranging from yellow, orange and wheaten to red, brown and black shades, as well as tricoloured (1).



**Figure 1:** General appearance of a Tarsus Çatalburun dog



**Figure 2:** View of the nose structure of Tarsus Çatalburun dog

(Photo: Murat Yüksel)

Similarly, the Pachon Navarro has the standard features of a split or double nose. They are very brave hunter and have superior tracking abilities. They ranged from 48 to 57 cm tall and weigh anywhere from 27 to 33 kg. The Pachon Navarro has a large and substantial head. They seem ideal hunting companions because of their ability to point out the direction to which the game is located. Their coats are generally short haired but could have longer coats as well. The longer coats are commonly silky in texture and give the dog a furry view. The short haired dog is commonly seen. Their coats are usually observed in either a white and liver or a white and orange color combination. Their coats more often are not marked, implying that the coat is freckled with a certain color. They are very friendly and faithful, and, can be used as house pets as well because of their sunny disposition (2).

### Hunting Characteristics

Çatalburun hunting dogs are very intelligent animals compared to the other hunting dogs. It adapts to hunting at very early age. These dogs, both male and female, learn and start to hunt when they are 6 or 7 months old. Hunters use these dogs for hunts that hide on the ground, rocks and in the bushes without flying. For example, it is sometimes impossible to distinguish a quail with a naked eye but this dog can easily smell it with his unique nose. The games are generally birds that have wings and can fly but there are also rabbits that live together with partridges and francolins. Francolin is the most difficult game to hunt since it is very clever and cunning. Çatalburun finds the bird from its scent and makes it fly from wherever it enters and in whatever bush it hides. So, this dog hunts it in a best and easiest way. Birds and rabbits stay motionless in one place where they adapt to their natural environments because they know instinctively that this will hide them. Çatalburun tracks the game from its scent and find it motionless. It informs its owner that there is a game there while at the pointing position. At that time, it stops wagging its tail and waits above the bird or rabbit as if it is not breathing. You would

think the dog had become petrified, but this situation is called “pointing”. It is very rare that the dog catches the game but with command “go pounce on it” it jumps on the game to catch it. The dog makes the game fly or run away, that time the hunter naturally shoots the game. If it has already caught the game, then it brings the game to its owner. Well-trained Çatalburun dogs bring and deliver the game to their owner live without even harming its feathers (13).

Tarsus Çatalburun breed of hunting dog can track the scent by air and ground. Their rate of using the airborne and ground scent are 79% and 95%, respectively and their rate of using both styles is 70 % (7).

### Conclusion

It can be said that scientific studies are clearly required on genetic relationship of Çatalburun with the other pointers. For this the sequence analysis of mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosomal markers can be used. Detailed researches for determining the breed standards of Tarsus Çatalburun dog with hunting abilities and nasal structure should be performed. Also, the comparison with other pointers, especially Spanish Pachon Navarro, should be done due to

the anatomic and histologic similarities between them. Although no clear medical problem was reported about abnormality in nasal structure of these dogs, research is needed on this issue too.

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