Nestlé Purina and the ESFM combined their passion and expertise in feline medicine and nutrition to organise the first feline medicine symposium in Eastern Europe. The one-day event, which toured Prague (Czech Republic), Moscow (Russia) and Lublin (Poland) last autumn, was collectively attended by about 600 veterinarians who benefited from the latest scientific and clinical knowledge from internationally renowned experts. This high attendance clearly reflects the keen interest of practitioners in their respective countries for feline medicine.

The symposium speakers, Professor Danièle Gunn-Moore (University of Edinburgh), Dr Andy Sparkes (Animal Health Trust) and Dr Deb Greco (Senior Scientist at Nestlé Purina), covered key feline topics such as FLUTD, dyspnoea, triaditis, renal failure and diabetes.

The symposium has allowed fruitful contacts to be established with vets passionate for cats, and the intention is to build relationships between the ESFM and veterinary cat groups internationally. For further details, contact Christian Lehl, at Nestlé Purina, e-mail: christian.lehl@purina.nestle.com

AAPF Position Statement

Hybrid cats

The American Association of Feline Practitioners opposes the deliberate breeding of non-domestic cats to domestic cats with the purpose of producing exotic looking or novel hybrid cats.

The AAPF recognizes that hybrid cats are gaining in popularity. Commonly seen hybrid cats include the cross between the domestic cat and the Serval, called the Savannah, the cross between the domestic cat and the Asian Leopard Cat, known as the Bengal, as well as Geoffroy’s Cat and Jungle Cat crosses.

The AAPF opposes the breeding of hybrid cats for the following reasons:

Welfare issues for non-domestic cats in captivity

- Ownership of non-domestic cats in unlicensed hands has a long history of welfare concerns. (see AAPF position statement on ownership of non-domestic felids, at www.catvets.com)

Public safety

- There is a risk to the public when unlicensed individuals house non-domestic cats. (see AAPF position statement on ownership of non-domestic felids, at www.catvets.com)
- There is a risk to veterinarians and their staff members unfamiliar with these hybrids and not appropriately trained to safely handle these cats. Veterinarians are encouraged to refer these cats to veterinary facilities more familiar with them.
- This risk may extend to hybrid offspring.
- Rabies vaccination of hybrid cats may not be valid in some jurisdictions.

Public interest

- True hybrids? When consulted in the purchase of a potentially high dollar animal, veterinarians should explain to pet owners that hybridization cannot be determined by a visual exam. Only specific testing which involves chromosome numbers can differentiate the true hybrid from a false hybrid or imitation hybrid because species of cats have differing chromosomal numbers. A DNA-verified pedigree extending back to the exotic cat foundation would be necessary to determine the authenticity of the hybrid.

- Veterinarians have an obligation to discuss with pet owners the potential for:
  - Public safety concerns.
  - Welfare issues of keeping non-domestic cats in captivity.

Lack of evidence to support species advancement

- The development of hybrid cats does not enhance the welfare of either species.
- As hybrid cats are not production animals, there is questionable benefit to people, other than their exotic or novel appearance.
- Production of hybrid cats also promotes illegal trade and removal of exotic cats from their natural habitats for breeding purposes.