

AAFP 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 AAFP 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 AAFP 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 AAFP 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 AAFP 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.



Four-month-old F1 Savannah cat. Picture, Wikimedia Commons

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.

From time to time the AAFP will respond to emerging new knowledge or issues that are of concern to veterinary professionals caring for cats. Our position statements, which represent the view of the association, are available at:
www.catvets.com/professionals/guidelines/position/