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# Bengal

The Bengal is a relatively new cat breed, with rosetted or spotted markings. It originates from the Asian leopard cat (ALC) who resides in South and East Asia. The Bengal cat must be at least 4 generations away from the ALC to be considered a Bengal, otherwise considered a hybrid. Be prepared to spend a premium for a kitten with more "desirable" ALC traits, e.g.: white belly, rosetted spots, spotted tail, horizontal flowing coat, etc.

## Domestic Cats Like The Bengal[]

* The Serengeti cat - developed from crosses with Oriental Shorthair or Siamese with the aim to produce a domestic cat mimicking the appearance of a Leopard, without actually incorporating Serval genes by hybridization.The Toyger - developed from crosses with domestic cats with the aim to produce a striped "toy Tiger".The Cheetoh - an attempt to blend two existing domestic breeds of spotted cats with defined characteristics (Bengal and Ocicat), into a third breed.

## History[]

The earliest mention of an ALC/domestic cross was in 1889, when Harrison Weir wrote in "Our Cats and All About Them":[1]

However in 1927, Mr Boden-Kloss wrote to the magazine "Cat Gossip" [2] regarding hybrids between wild and domestic cats in Malaya:

The earliest mention of a confirmed ALC/domestic cross was in 1934 in a Belgian scientific journal, and in 1941 a Japanese cat publication printed an article about one that was kept as a pet. Jean Mill (née Sugden), the person who was later a great influence of the development of the modern Bengal breed, submitted a term paper for her genetics class at UC Davis on the subject of cross breeding cats in 1946.[3]

The 1960s was a period when many well known breeders, including Jean Sugden, produced ALC/domestic crosses, but records indicate that none of them took it past the F2 stage. Several zoos in Europe also produced a number of F1 ALC crosses. During this period there was an epidemic of feline leukemia virus and it became known that many wild cats seemed to have a natural immunity to the disease. As a result of this, Loyola University began a research program in the 1970s to investigate if this natural immunity could be bred in or replicated.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s there was a great deal of activity with hybrids, but there was no significant effort to create an actual breed from them. A number of Cat clubs formed that oriented on hybrids and a few oriented specifically on something William Engler, a member of the Long Island Ocelot Club and a breeder, called a Bengal.

Club newsletters were published, detailing the production of Bengals and Safaris (a domestic cat/Geoffroy's Cat cross), and members of these clubs bred some second and third generation Bengals. These were registered with the American Cat Fanciers Association (A.C.F.A.) in 1977 as experimental and were shown at several A.C.F.A. cat shows throughout the 1970s.

Around this time, Jean Mill (née Sugden) began to renew her breeding efforts.

She contacted Dr. Willard Centerwall in Riverside who had produced a number of F1s using domestic tabbies at Loma Linda University for his Centerwall project into Feline Leukemia. Once the F1s had donated blood samples for his research, he needed homes for them. He gave Jean 4 hybrids. She later received another 5 hybrids from another source, but from the same Centerwall project.

Mill did not use local domestics to create her first Bengals. She felt the ALC was a genetically superior animal and wished to avoid weakening this element. Around 1982, Mill and her husband made a trip to India where a zoo curator showed them a feral Indian Mau. This is how the famous rosetted domestic called "Millwood Tory of Delhi" came to be found in virtually all Bengal pedigrees. Greg and Elizabeth Kent were also early breeders, who developed their own line of Bengals using ALCs and Egyptian Maus. This was a very successful line and many modern Bengals will find it in their pedigree.

Jean Mill and the Kents worked hard to popularize the breed, and when the public saw the result of their work, word spread quickly. As the number of breeders and owners grew, it led to the formation of T.I.C.A.'s Bengal Breed Section. T.I.C.A. adopted the first written breed standard in 1986 and the first Bengal Bulletin was published in Nov/Dec 1988.

Shortly after The International Bengal Cat Society (T.I.B.C.S.), the Bengal Breeders Alliance (B.B.A.) and the Authentic Bengal Cat League (A.B.C.L.) were formed. These organizations exist to promote good breeding practices, discourage unscrupulous breeders, and attempt to educate people about the Bengal breed.

Although it has become a popular breed, with over 60,000 cats registered with T.I.C.A., not all cat registries accept them - in particular the Cat Fanciers' Association, one of the largest cat registries in the world, does not accept any hybrids.

* The British government agency, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has proposed revising regulations under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 to remove licensing requirements for keeping of Bengal cats in the United Kingdom.[4]

There are currently several varieties of domestic cat being developed from the Bengal:

* The Serengeti: developed from crosses with Oriental Shorthair or Siamese with the aim to produce a domestic cat mimicking the appearance of an African Serval, without actually incorporating Serval genes by hybridization.The Savannah, which does include serval genes.The Toyger: developed from crosses with domestic cats with the aim to produce a striped "toy Tiger".The Cheetoh: an attempt to blend two existing domestic breeds of spotted cats with defined characteristics (Bengal and Ocicat), into a third breed.

## Description[]

Bengal cats have "wild-looking" markings, such as large spots, rosettes, and a light/white belly, and a body structure reminiscent of the Leopard Cat. The Bengal's rosetted spots occur only on the back and sides, with stripes elsewhere. The breed typically also features "mascara" (horizontal striping alongside the eyes), and foreleg striping.

The Bengal cat is usually either classed as a brown-spotted or snow-spotted (although there are more colours, brown and snow are the only colours of Bengal that the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) recognise. Within brown Bengals, there are either marble or spotted markings. Snow Bengals are also either marble or spotted but are also divided into blue-eyed or AOC (Any Other Colour) eyes.

The International Cat Association (TICA) recognizes several Bengal colours (brown, seal lynx point, mink, sepia, silver) and patterns (spotted and marbled) for competition. In the New Traits class, other colours may be shown, as well as longhairs.[5]

The Bengal is a high energy cat that requires an active, experienced cat owner who can spend lots of time with it. The feline is very curious and on the go and enjoys lots of activity and stimulation, due to this Bengals are not ideal lap cats. Bengals will often enjoy walking on leash and are loving and loyal, but usually do not live well with lesser active cats. The bengals love running around in the middle of the night.

After three generations from the original crossing, the breed usually acquires a gentle domestic cat temperament; however, for the typical pet owner, a Bengal cat kept as a pet should be at least four generations (F4) removed from the Leopard Cat. The so-called "foundation cats" from the first three filial generations of breeding (F1–F3) are usually reserved for breeding purposes or the specialty pet home environment.[6]

## Gallery[]

## References[]

## External links[]

* The International Bengal Cat SocietyGuide on Bengal CatsBengal Cat GuideBengal Genetics