



# Foundation Savannah Cat FAQ

by Jennifer Miller

## What is a Foundation Savannah Cat?

The origin of the Savannah breed began with the cross between The African Serval Cat and the domestic cat. Some of the early felines used in these matings include:



**F1 Savannah (Serval x Domestic)**

Oriental Shorthairs, Egyptian Maus, Serengetis, Maine Coons, Bengals, Bengal Crosses, and non-pedigreed domestic cats. As the breed continues to progress, later generation Savannah females are more often taken back to the African Serval instead of the misc. other breeds, and later generation fertile Savannah males are bred to all generations of Savannah females. The first three generations resulting from the Serval x Domestic cat are considered "Foundation

Savannahs". The terminology regarding the early generation Foundation Cats can become somewhat confusing for even an experienced Savannah enthusiast.

## What do "Filial", "F1", "F2", "F3" and "SBT" mean?

The term "filial" comes from the Latin word filius or "son". The genetic meaning of the word filial is "of or relating to a generation or the sequence of generations following the parental generation."

Today's Savannah breeders refer to F-1 as the first generation cross between the Serval and the domestic cat. The F-2 is the second generation cross (the offspring of the F-1 and the domestic cat). The F-3 is the third generation (the offspring of the F-2 and a domestic cat).



**F2 Savannah (F1 x Domestic)**

- F-1 Serval parent X domestic cat parent
- F-2 F1 parent X domestic cat parent (has a Serval grandparent)
- F-3 F2 parent X domestic cat parent (has a Serval great-grandparent)
- F-4 F3 parent X domestic cat parent (has a Serval great-great-grandparent)

**But this is just the early beginnings for the Savannah Cat!**



**F3 Savannah (F2 x Domestic)**

The Savannah Cat is not the fully recognized breed of cat until it has at least three generations of straight Savannah cat to Savannah cat breeding in its pedigree. The SBT Savannah cat must also be at least four generations removed from its African Serval ancestor.

When the above criteria have been met, the Savannah is no longer a foundation Savannah cat -- the Savannah has finally reached SBT (studbook tradition) status!

Savannah breeders are working hard to progress the Savannah cat to SBT status.

The Savannah breed must progress this far in order to be fully recognized by The International Cat Association (TICA), the registering body for the Savannah Cat. The SBT Savannah cat is the true breed of domestic, pedigreed Savannah cat.

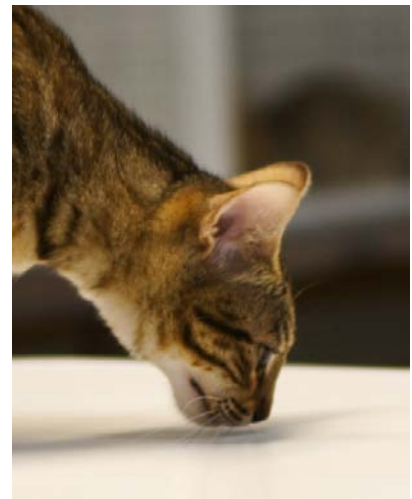
The International Cat Association (TICA) considers the "SBT" (studbook tradition) Savannah, eligible for competition in the show ring and a fully accepted domestic cat.

The following table outlines the steps needed to progress to SBT status:

- F-1 Serval parent X domestic SBT Savannah parent
- F-2 F1 parent X domestic SBT Savannah parent (has a Serval grandparent)
- F-3 F2 parent X domestic SBT Savannah parent (has an Serval great-grandparent)
- F-4 F3 parent X domestic SBT Savannah parent (has a Serval great-great-grandparent)

## **Why are no male Foundation Savannahs used in breeding?**

The first four Foundation generations generally produce infertile male offspring. There are a few exceptions to this rule but for the most part, only female Foundation Savannahs have proven to be fertile and thus the Foundation males are adopted into qualified homes.



**F4 Savannah (Savannah x Savannah)**

## **How does the temperament differ between a Foundation and a later generation or SBT Savannah?**

### ***F1 Savannahs***

While F1 Savannahs usually have good litter box habits for early generation cats, they also have the very high energy levels and the extraordinary athleticism of their African Serval sires. For this reason they can be hard on a house and its belongings. They are typically going to bond with one or two people and will avoid most everyone else. Like their African Serval sire, they can be “hissy” or “swat” with their paws when irritated. Though they are not typically aggressive, they will also not usually socialize well with children or strangers. When visitors come over, F1 Savannahs will most often avoid them, or find a safe place up high to watch. Even with the one or two people they are bonded to, they are rarely going to enjoy much physical petting. They will want to play, be around their favorite person, and will have an amazing amount of energy, but will not be lap cats and will never enjoy being held. Trips to the vet with an F1 Savannah can be stressful and difficult.

### ***F2 Savannahs***

The F2 Savannah is often a little more social, often enjoying interaction with the whole family, though a significant percentage of F2 Savannahs will have a personality more like that of the F1 Savannah. The F2 still doesn't tend to want to be held, and is rarely a lap cat, but it usually enjoys being petted. The F2 Savannah loves to play all day and has an abundance of energy and athleticism, similar to that of the F1 Savannah. When visitors come over, the F2 may be standoffish at first, but it's not uncommon for them to warm up to strangers if given a little time. Vet visits may be a little more manageable, but may still be a handful.

### ***F3 Savannahs***

The majority of F3 Savannahs will easily bond with their immediate families, and are often social with visitors who come to the home. Some F3 Savannahs even enjoy being held and may choose to sit in your lap. They are extremely intelligent and athletic who enjoy human interaction and creative games. The breed is very young, so there will be a wide variety of “looks” at the F3 and later generations. This and later generation Savannahs are highly recommended for most pet homes, as they will have the wonderful look of the Savannah paired with a more outgoing, friendly personality.

### ***F4 to SBT Savannahs***

The F4 and later generations are very similar to the F3's in temperament. They are going to act like a domestic cat in most ways, while still retaining the Savannah intelligence and energy levels. They are social and outgoing cats who enjoy meeting strangers and usually don't shy away from new experiences. Compared to other domestic cats, they are going to be one of the more intelligent breeds with tremendous athleticism.

## **How does this all relate to the Foundation Savannah?**

Typically, any offspring of the African Serval will inherit at least some parental traits. As each generation moves away from the Serval cat heritage, some of those traits may be removed or lessened to some degree. The Foundation Savannah is often leery of new situations because nature has instilled a cautious intelligence in their wild ancestors. They need a stable and secure environment and typically do not adapt to variations within their everyday life. The commitment to a Foundation Savannah must be considered to be life-long because they often only bond to one or two people, and will usually be pretty standoffish with everyone else. They are not your traditional pet cat and there needs to be a clear understanding of the environment and lifestyle one needs to achieve in order to form the trusting relationship that may be possible with them. When faced with an uncomfortable situation (often involving loud noises, quick movements, or strange people or situations), they typically show a shyness and look for a safe and quiet place. This may be any area of their home where they have chosen as a safe and secure environment, perhaps a separate room or a remote cat tree where they can be "alone", until they feel safe and secure. Every Foundation Savannah is different, with individual personalities and different reactions to every situation.

The Foundation Savannah is an intense feline with many aspects of the Serval cat behavior that can make a fascinating addition to the appropriate home. However, those same idiosyncrasies can make life very uncomfortable for both owner and cat if the household is unprepared or unable to accept them on the Foundation Savannah's terms. The closer the Foundation Savannah is to the Serval cat, the stronger the instinctive behaviors and the less likely they can be modified to fit the owner's expectations. **A true Foundation Cat enthusiast does not expect the cat to change to fit the owner's lifestyle, but rather is willing to change their lifestyle to accept the behavior of the cat.** In general, while later generation Savannahs adapt readily to new situations, new people and new places, Foundation Cats find it more difficult to do so and are much more easily stressed by those changes.



**Foundation Savannahs**