



# The Savannah Cat Club

## Savannah Information & History

*Thanks to SavannahCatBreeders.com for their contribution.*

The Savannah is a new breed of cat originally created by crossing an African Serval with a domestic cat. The purpose is to produce a unique domestic pet with the stunning wild exotic appearance of the Serval, but having the predictable litter box habits and temperament, and the easy care and feeding requirements of a domestic cat. This is intended to fulfill the desire for an unusual exotic-looking pet companion, but without the many difficulties posed by actually keeping an exotic animal.

Savannahs are, as a rule, friendly, intelligent, outgoing, active and playful cats, with a well-developed inquisitive nature. Some say they are "dog-like" in their devotion to their owners, and often they will want to check out whatever you are doing. They can be trained to go for walks using a "walking jacket" or harness, but should enjoy the outdoors only on the end of a leash or from inside a secure outdoor enclosure. Some like to play "fetch" – but keep in mind that larger Savannahs are probably better off with small sturdy dog toys, instead of tiny flimsy cat toys that they may accidentally ingest. Savannahs love heights and even enjoy playing with and in water. When introduced young, they will adapt well to living with dogs, other cats, and well-behaved children.

Your Savannah pet, like all domestic household pets, should always be neutered or spayed. Although early generation Savannah males are sterile, neutering is healthier in the long run, and prevents some unpleasant habits such as spraying from developing.

Savannahs can range in size from eight pounds to occasionally over 20 pounds when mature. Males are most often larger than females. Coat colors range anywhere from golden to tawny brown or a cooler grayish-beige, silver, solid black (melanistic) or smoke (black with white undercoat). Their patterns may be spotted or marbled, though only the spotted pattern is accepted for showing based on TICA's Savannah Breed Standard.



### Generations

Special terminology is used when referring to the earlier generations of our foundation Savannahs, as a measure of how close they are to their Serval ancestor. The F1 is the first generation: their parents are a cross between a Serval and a domestic cat. The F2 has a Serval as a grandparent; the F3 has a Serval great-grandparent and so on. Males are most often sterile until the fifth generation (F5), but females are fertile at all generation levels. F1, F2, F3 and F4 females are generally bred to domestic males.

Domestic males used as outcrosses are typically spotted breeds - including Bengals, Oriental Shorthairs, Egyptian Maus, Ocicats or some combination of the above. Serengetis (Bengal x Oriental Shorthair) are also used in breeding programs.

F1 Savannahs are the hardest to come by. Breeders producing F1 Savannahs must have the proper facilities to care and house a Serval, and must have the time and knowledge required to care for tiny

newborn F1 kittens. This explains their relatively high prices. In subsequent generations, this is not a problem.

There are nearly 1000 registered Savannahs in the world at this time. As more fertile males at the F5 and greater generations are born, the breed will increase and will be able to retain more of the beautiful Serval-like looks in later generations, while keeping that wonderful unique personality, along with the sweet domestic tractability and ease of care.



## Servals

The African Serval (*leptailurus Serval*) is a medium-sized wild spotted cat found in Sub-Saharan Africa. They inhabit wetlands and grassy savannahs, where their main prey is rodents, frogs, birds and other small animals. They weigh between 25-40 lbs when mature and average 20" at the shoulder. They have black spots and markings on a golden to dark tawny background. Servals have tall deep ears set close together on top of the head, long legs, and a moderately short ringed tail. They have been called the "poor man's Cheetah," though they are much smaller and not at all related to the Cheetah. They have been privately owned in the U.S. for years, and kept as pets in Africa for much longer than that. They are reputed to have a more outgoing personality than many wild cats and often bond strongly to their owners.

However Servals are not ideal house pets. In the wild, Serval mark their territory by spraying urine, and even neutered Servals may mark their territory - or even "their" people. They often do not have decent litterbox habits, and they require a special diet. Because they bond so strongly with their owner, Servals will have trouble adapting to a new home if for any reason they have to move after becoming an adult. Since they can live for up to 20 years, Serval ownership is a long-term commitment, and certainly never one to be taken lightly.

Servals are very active, can leap six feet high easily, and require plenty of room to run and play. Typically, a specially constructed, fenced outdoor enclosure with minimum size of 20 feet by 20 feet and six to eight feet tall.

Servals are in every way an exotic animal; they require special permits to own, and are illegal in many cities and a few states. Savannah cats are an ideal alternative for people who admire Servals, but who for many reasons, cannot or should not own one.

## History

The first recorded successful breeding of a Serval to a domestic cat took place in the early 1980s, when Judee Frank, hoping to give her Serval a little company, inadvertently produced a little kitten from the unexpected union. The resulting F1 female, named "Savannah" later had some F2 kittens, but the breed did not progress any further at that time.

Though the Savannah owes its current success to the dedicated efforts of many people through the years, Joyce Sroufe was the first breeder to seriously begin producing Savannah kittens, the first take the



Savannah down to later generations, and the first to produce fertile Savannah males. Nearly all agree that Mrs. Sroufe deserves the credit as founder of the breed.

In 1994, Mrs. Sroufe produced her first successful litter of Savannah kittens, and has been breeding them ever since. The first Savannah breed standard was presented to TICA's (The International Cat Association) board of directors in February 1996, but due to a moratorium on new breeds, the Savannah was not granted New Breed status at that time.

In 1997, Joyce Sroufe attended a TICA show Westchester New York along with Spanky, a Savannah of her breeding. (Spanky is owned by Sue Bowden and has been featured at many cat shows and has been on many television shows.)

In part, due to an interview she gave and subsequent media coverage on Savannahs, 5000 people turned out. Joyce, Sue, and Spanky have been invited back every year for this show. This was the leading edge for the wave of popularity Savannahs have enjoyed.

Savannahs were accepted for registration in TICA in February 2001. A year later, Savannahs at the F3 generation and later became eligible for showing in TICA's new breed evaluation classes. The response of judges and the public has been very favorable, and the Savannahs, with their elegant and exotic looks and sweet personalities, have been a huge hit wherever they go.

The Savannah breed achieved advanced new breed status with TICA in May 2004.



### Showing

Savannah cats are accepted for registration in TICA (The International Cat Association). Savannah cats and kittens four months and older that are of the F3 or later generation (bred for three generations or more away from their Serval ancestor) may be entered in TICA cat shows in the Advanced New Breed evaluation classes.

The next goal will be working toward being accepted for championship status. Savannah breeders anticipate reaching that major milestone sometime in the near future.