

Deciding to include a wild cat in a domestic cat breeding program, a domestic cat breed's creation and in a domestic cat registry should be done with as much forethought, contextual understanding and consideration of the conclusion when enough of those very precious unique genes have been delivered to the breed population. Ongoing and robust discussions, articles and education by all stakeholders are key to the positive progression of thought and action.

Absent those ongoing actions and conscious decisions by a fully engaged body of breeders & leaders – misunderstanding, exploitation and misuse between parties, of those very precious genetic resources and the individual wild cats from which the genes are derived occurs. This is a most disappointing outcome for breeds where the vast majority of breeders seek to improve the conservation trajectory for wild cats in general and the species used in the creation of domestic breeds specifically.

TICA was created as a domestic cat registry, to promote household pets and breeds intended to be companion animals in all their diverse and beautiful forms. TICA registration, promotion through various new breed classes and championship is recognition of a stable and uniform domestic cat breeding population. Any breed, any breeder may at any time outcross to any domestic cat to improve genetic heterozygosity from TICA's inception to this moment.

The acceptance of the Bengal Cat for registration (1983) and championship (1991) was a financial boon for the young registry, increasing registrations, show entries and TICA's cache. Intrinsic to this relationship was the goal of Bengal Cat breeding programs to produce a domestic cat (by lay, legal and scientific measures) and TICA's role as an international domestic cat authority and genetic registry to recognize attainment of domestication with SBT coding and championship status. Success by those measures was achieved. By 1998 vigorous conversations were occurring among Bengal Cat breeders (Bengal Bulletin 1998) to cease outcross to Asian Leopard Cats because of the social, regulatory and welfare ramifications.

The universal biological definition of species (able to produce fertile offspring of both sexes when bred together) coincided with TICA outcross registration codes, providing SBT validation to enter the show hall and in the vast majority of cases indicating fertility. Since 1991 the number of domestic x wild cat hybrid offspring has been dwarfed by all other registration categories based on TICA registration statistics.

TICA must take proactive steps to fully engage and fully inform all stakeholders in a process to recognize, understand and change the practices that diminish all TICA recognized breeds as domestic cats – as a registry, as a membership Association and especially as individual breeders. That decision takes time and is personal.

Stakeholders need to know owners and breeders of Bengal Cats especially; Savannah and Chausie as well, have contributed immensely in scientific collaboration to feline research, far exceeding other breeds. The outcomes from these TICA communities are responsible for discoveries, support and greater understanding in veterinary medicine, feline genetics (pattern, colors, ASIP, glitter, fertility), speciation and evolution.

Stakeholders need to know more wild cats are routinely registered annually in TICA than some championship breeds.

Stakeholders need to know more Servals have been registered in TICA since 2001 (registration acceptance) than Asian Leopard Cats since 1986 (first year more than 1 Bengal was registered).

Stakeholders need to know veterinary organizations, scientific research organizations and legal organizations have statements against hybridization of wild cats, thus diminishing TICA's standing internationally and institutional ethos.

Stakeholder need to know these communities have supported TICA through difficult times as members, volunteers, officials and representatives over a very long period. Now is the time for TICA to invest considerable time to an ongoing effort to address the issue in a manner with greatest benefit to the breeds inspiring the dedication.

I suggest that process include but not be limited to the following over time:

- A moratorium on registration of wild (non-domestic) cats not associated with a championship breed (Bengal, Chausie, Savannah) Sept. 15, 2020 to be reconsidered at the Annual 2021, amending the proposal before the board;
- Require DNA profile by ISAG accredited laboratory of all wild cats registered from May 1, 2021 forward, kept on file at TICA EO;
- Require DNA parental verification by ISAG accredited laboratory of all F1 domestic x TICA registered non-domestic from May 1, 2021 forward, kept on file at TICA EO;
- Increase cost of registration of wild cats to \$100 from a Sept 15, 2020 forward;
- Provide annual breed statistics to all breed committees with a wild cat outcross by registration status (00S, A1S, B2S etc. to SBT) yearly and cumulatively to inform decisions and provide context;
- Produce at least one annual meeting (virtual or in person) with leaders in veterinary medicine, feline genetics and regulatory authorities to specifically present to and dialogue with breeders utilizing non-domestic cats and TICA leaders of policies, facts and progress;
- Include required statement for the registration of a F1 domestic cat x wild cat hybrid litter or individual "this breeding was done with the goal of validation and appreciation of the domestic cat as a companion animal"
- Accept the Felid Taxonomy Advisory Group definition of domestic cat throughout its rules, by-laws and practices
- Increase understanding and publish the empirical fact "domestic cat breeds DO NOT need a wild cat outcross to attain or improve genetic heterozygosity. Genetic diversity exists within the domestic cat population to assure heterozygosity into perpetuity. TICA enthusiasts can influence and improve populations through informed selective breeding, rigorous evaluation, increasing awareness and ongoing collaboration with scientific communities."