



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Washington, DC
20250

JUL 31 2015

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Member, U.S. House of Representatives
401 Post Office Road, Suite 202
Waldorf, Maryland 20602

Dear Congressman Hoyer:

Thank you for your letter of July 14, 2015, on behalf of Mr. Anthony Hutcherson regarding the regulation and classification of domestic Bengal cats.

We understand Mr. Hutcherson's concerns, and we appreciate the opportunity to clarify this matter. Our Agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) considers Bengal cats and other cat-hybrids to be domestic cats. Our regulatory authority under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) applies to animals used for specific purposes—research, breeding for sale to the retail pet trade, commercial transport, or public exhibition. Under the AWA, any cat (*Felis catus*) or any cat-hybrid cross of domestic and wild cats is considered a domestic cat. However, our regulatory authority under the AWA does not apply to privately owned pets, such as the Bengal cats of concern to Mr. Hutcherson.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is responsible for enforcing the wildlife provisions of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), through which more than 120 Nations have agreed to eliminate illegal trade in endangered plants and animals. As Mr. Hutcherson indicates, certain Bengal cat-hybrids are classified as wild animals under CITES and are subject to the requirements of the Convention. Accordingly, we recommend that Mr. Hutcherson continue to work with FWS officials to resolve his concerns about the classification and regulation of those animals under CITES.

Thank you again for your interest in this matter. If you or your staff has further questions, please contact Mr. Christopher Needham, a legislative affairs specialist with our Agency.

Sincerely,

Kevin Shea
Administrator

cc: The Honorable Steny Hoyer
U.S. House of Representatives
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Washington, D.C. 20515-2004