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# Savannah Cat

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## Physical Characteristics

The Savannah is an unusual, exotic breed of domestic cat that looks much like its ancestor, the African Serval, but is smaller in size. One of the features that make this breed so unique is its strikingly bold and spotted coat, which can vary from brown, tan or gold with black or dark brown spots; silver with black or dark grey spots; black with black spots; and black tipped silver with black spots.

The Savannah's fur can also have the classic marble pattern, snow coloration, and other diluted colors. Their overall look depends greatly on generational breeding and genetic dilution.

The Savannah has a lean muscular build, a short, thick tail, a long neck and long legs. These features give the feline a tall appearance, but it is actually medium sized and tends to weigh less than other similarly sized domestic cats. One of its other most striking features is the shape of its hooded eyes, which are flat on top, and its large, tall ears that are situated right at the top of its head.

## Personality and Temperament

This very active cat is curious, assertive, and an adventure-seeker. It requires a lot of interaction and attention on a daily basis, either with its companion human(s) or other companion cats. This cat is also very loyal, and will develop a strong bond with people.

The Savannah is not a lap cat, but will show affection to its human family by following them around the house and giving them frequent head butts. They love to play in water, and are easily trained to walk on a leash with a harness. They also love to play active games such as fetch. Because of these traits, Savannahs are thought to have "dog-like" personalities.

## Health and Care

Despite their exotic appearance, Savannah cats are one of the healthiest breeds and have no known established health problems. Due to their direct lineage from Servals, care should be taken to establish whether they have inherited the Serval's tendency to have a proportionately small liver for their body size.

Care should also be taken by veterinarians to not administer ketamine during medical treatment, as ketamine is metabolized through the liver and has been known to cause potentially serious health complications for this breed.

Special attention should be given to the Savannah's diet to guard against a deficiency of taurine, a particularly dangerous condition resulting from lack of the amino acid taurine, which is found in meats and fish and to which the Savannah is believed to be especially prone. Because of this, it is recommended the Savannah cat be provided with a high protein, low or no grain diet (especially corn). High concentrations of taurine can be found in meat, poultry (which can be partially boiled), fish, and premium cat foods.

Overall, Savannah cats are healthy, hardy and athletic, and are considered to be one of the healthiest of the domestic feline breeds.

## History and Background

The first documented Savannah cat was born in April 1986, when Bengal cat breeder Judee Frank paired her eight-pound female Siamese Sealpoint cat with Ernie, a thirty-pound male Serval cat belonging to Suzy Wood. Neither one expected the unusually beautiful and graceful offspring that resulted, which Suzy took home with her. The kitten was christened "Savannah," after the African grasslands that are home to the Serval's ancestors. This kitten became the first F1 (first generation hybrid cross).

With Savannah, Suzy was able to breed the first known F2 (second generation) Savannah cat. The feline's unique physical traits and dynamic personality attracted the attention and interest of Patrick Kelly, who then obtained one of the kittens. Patrick Kelly wanted to produce a new breed of domestic cat, and enlisted the aid of cat breeder Joyce Sroufe to assist him.

By painstakingly researching the steps needed to create a feline breed that would be recognized by the national cat registry, Patrick Kelly and Joyce Sroufe were able to successfully produce a new feline breed. Together, Kelly and Sroufe are credited with writing and presenting the Savannah breed standard to The International Cat Association (TICA) in 1996. Kelly and Sroufe were successful, and as of 2001, the Savannah cat has been recognized as a New Advanced Breed Class.

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