CFA BENGAL CATS

2020 CFA Bengal Breed Standard
JUDGES BREED SEMINAR 7-25-20

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- CFA Bengal Standard – 2020
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WHAT MAKES CFA BENGAL CATS UNIQUE?

1. We are true to the original vision of Jean Mill.

2. We celebrate inspiration from many wild cat species.

3. Domestic temperament.
The Bengal

Magnificent and cuddly, this breed is a domestic reproduction of a leopard.

By Jean Mill

HAVE YOU EVER visited the zoo and longed to caress and cuddle the magnificent wild cats? The dream of owning one clashes with reality. It is impractical, unwise and illegal to keep a tiger or a leopard as a pet, but an approximation of their beauty in miniature, can be privately owned.

Domestic reproductions of leopards are called Bengals. They are hybrid descendants of crosses between the domestic cat (Felis catus) and the 10-pound wild leopard cat (Felis bengalensis) indigenous to the jungles of Southeast Asia.
This issue of the Bengal Bulletin (Foundation Look Book) is a classic on several levels. It awes us with stunning pictures showing the breathtaking beauty of the individual Asian Leopard Cats that underlie the Bengal breed of domestic cat. It also documents some of the appearance differences in the bloodlines each has initiated. These photos help us to realize that not all leopard cats have heavy whisker pads, or rosetted coats, or short fur, nor even rufous coloration. All are beautiful, and the photos give us an opportunity to become better acquainted with the characteristics deemed valuable by our standard.

These photos also underline the reasons why the ALC cannot be used as the yardstick by which we measure our evolving domestic breed. Since they differ from one another, one would have to ask, "Which leopard cat?" "Which characteristics?" shall we emulate. And it is apparent that there must be some visible features in Bengals which distinguish them from their wild ancestors, for the sake of judges in the show rings, veterinarians, as well as government officials charged with regulating the wild species. Would you feel comfortable lifting a strange animal that looks EXACTLY like a dog, trusting your flesh to a stranger’s assurance that it is a dog and NOT a pure wolf?? Furthermore, none of the leopard cats pictured boasts a glittered coat, nor the ultra-soll pelt that Delhi contributed and that we prize so highly in our breed. In fact, there are now SBT Bengals that many observers might deem MORE beautiful than a pure ALC.

Thirdly, these photos make it obvious that we have a very wide genepool already contributing to our breed; genes indigenous to wide geographical origins as well as genes of very different character. In truth, we probably have the widest genetic diversity within our breed of any domestic breed in existence. Indeed, even our varied domestic contributors included Tony of Delhi from half way around the world!! It is a wonder that we have been able to derive bloodlines in so few years that breed pretty much true to form.

These first two decades of effort have been exciting through working closely with the beautiful foundation generations. Together, we have learned a great deal about Bengal inheritance, much of it by trial and error. The next decades should see a concentration on producing the sweet tempered SBT Bengals that we aspire to, showing close approximation to our standard. Originally the challenge lay in producing any hybrids at all; then it became to isolate and replicate the genes we sought from the foundation cats. Now the challenge lies in carrying those genes down from the ALC to 4th, 10th, and 20th generations without losing 'the look'. It is easy to produce gorgeous F1s and F2s; but not so easy to have healthy, equally spectacular F6s! Thus, the most important Bengals now are those we see at the shows, for they are helping to meet that challenge at the SBT level. Why would anyone want to go back to square one to make more F1s? By the time today’s baby F1 has grandgrandchildren for the show ring, the breed will already be there with stunning little ‘eccentrics’. All the time, money, difficulty, and tragedy of producing the new bloodline will not be worth it. One would be wiser to invest those many thousands of dollars NOW in the best SBT kittens available and to join the excitement of producing the best and sweetest at today’s shows!! Push a pencil and see: first you must buy the ALC and hope that it will sire hybrid kittens. ($9000) Then, if it costs about $100 to keep a cat a year (1999), it will cost about $1000 to rear the ALC to adulthood and keep him his lifetime. It will cost another $1000 to keep the F1 female for her 10 year lifetime. It will cost the same $1000 to keep the F2 female; and another $1000 to keep the F3 female. Add to this your own time in caring for them (10/day for 4 years ~ $14,600) plus vet bills. You will sell a few kittens during this time, but foundation queens don’t have many kittens... not like the SBTs do. If instead you started with top SBTs and spent the same upkeep money, you could be 4 years further toward our goal, would have a name in the show rings, and would have sold many more top kittens. Or profit from someone else’s efforts and buy an F2 or F3 female from well-chosen ancestry to save yourself time, effort, and tears.

We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to these beautiful ALC contributors to our breed. But for every ALC that has contributed, there have been many others that were fed and housed and cared for that never produced hybrids at all. I myself have owned nearly a dozen! There were many F1 queens that have no progeny in our genepool, and many F2s as well that failed to replicate themselves. These were all dead-end efforts but represent several years of care per cat leading to disappointment. This Bengal Bulletin celebrates our enormous successes, won at great cost. It inspires us and points the way to even greater successes with the SBTs that follow.
2. **Inspiration from Many Wild Cats.**

- Leopard
- Jaguar
- Snow Leopard
- Clouded Leopard
BLACK LEOPARD
IRIOMOTE CAT
KING CHEETAH
CHEETAH
3. DOMESTIC TEMPERAMENT
A tale of 2 sisters

CLARICE

KODIAK
CLARICE
2.61% Wild

KODIAK
4.66% Wild

BLUE = 2 Domestic Alleles

YELLOW = 1 Domestic & 1 Wild Allele

RED = 2 Wild Alleles

Provided by:
Dr. Chris Kaelin
Stanford University
DEFINING TRAITS
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The Bengal is a medium to large cat with a sleek, muscular build. Boning is substantial. Hindquarters slightly higher than shoulders. The tail is thick, with rounded tip, and carried lower than the back. The Bengal’s head, expressive nocturnal look, and stunning markings give the breed a wild appearance. The coat is like no other: short, soft, silky to the touch, luxurious, and preferably glittered. Bengals are alert and active, with inquisitive, dependable dispositions. Males are generally larger than females.
• HEAD..........................30 Pts
• BODY.........................20 Pts
• COAT & COLOR...........25 Pts
• PATTERN.......................25 Pts

TOTAL... 100 Points
HEAD
30 POINTS
HEAD – 30 Points

- Skull: 5pts
- Muzzle: 6pts
- Profile: 4pts
- Ears: 6pts
- Eyes: 6pts
- Chin: 3pts
SKULL/SHAPE

1. Modified wedge
2. Longer than wide
3. Small in proportion to body
4. No flat planes
5. Allowance - Jowls on mature males
SKULL & HEAD SHAPE

- 21 mo
- 8 mo
SKULL & HEAD SHAPE
Less Desirable

Too large and Shorter than width

Too long and flat planes

Too large and Shorter than width
MUZZLE

1. Full and broad
2. Prominent Whisker pads
3. Nose large and wide
4. Slightly puffed nose leather
5. Nose bridge extends above eyes
MUZZLE

4 mo

7 mo
NOSE
1. Gently curved forehead to nose bridge.

2. Nose may have a slight concave curve.
PROFILE - Less Desirable

Strong planes – no gentle curve

Strong brow creating flat planes, too deep a nose curve

Note: Long-haired (Cashmere) in AOV
EARS

1. Small to Medium
2. Wide Base
3. Set far apart
4. Tilt forward – profile view
5. Thumbprint on back (Ocelli)
EARS

Less Desirable

Too tall & set too close

Too tall
EYES

1. Round to oval
2. Nocturnal look
3. Large but not bugged
4. Widely set – slight bias to ear
5. Richness & depth of color preferred
EYES
Less Desirable

Too small
CHIN

1. Strong
2. Substantial
3. Aligns with tip of nose in profile
CHIN
Less Desirable

Too shallow

A bit too far back & shallow
BODY
20 POINTS
BODY – 20 POINTS

Boning  
5 pts

Musculature  
5 pts

Profile  
5 pts

Tail  
5 pts
BONING & MUSCULATURE

- Sleek Muscular build
- Substantial, never delicate
LEGS & FEET

1. Medium Long
2. Slightly longer rear legs
3. Hindquarters slightly higher
1. Thick
2. Tapered at end
3. Rounded tip
4. Medium in length, in proportion to body.
TAILS
Less Desirable

Tail set high and too thin

Tail too thin

Tail kink is Disqualify
COAT & COLOR
25 POINTS
COAT & COLOR – 25 pts

Texture – 10 points

Coat Color – 10 points

Eye Color – 5 points
TEXTURE – 10 PTS
BROWNS
BROWNS
Less Desirable

Heavily ticked & lower contrast

Very Low Contrast
Note: Silvers with Black outer rings are usually non-agouti carriers. Most Silvers are shades of grey similar to the girl in the middle.
CHARCOALS

Apb/a
CHARCOALS

Apb/Apb
CHARCOALS
A pb/A pb
LYNX POINTS

3 mo and 9 mo
MINK

7 mo and 2 yrs
SEPIA
SNOWS
Less Desirable

Heavily ticked Mink but with high contrast

Lower Contrast Mink

Lower Contrast LP
PATTERN
25 POINTS
PATTERNS
Rossetted/Spotted

Contrast/Clarity
10 pts

Pattern
15 pts
Rossetted Patterns:
- Donut, Clustered (Paw Print), Pancake, Clouded, Arrowhead etc.
- Random Spot Pattern &/or Horizontally Aligned (preferred)
- Two colors (or tones for some colors)
IT’S JUST FUN

Rossetted Tails
Rossetted Bellie’s Hearts
Paw Prints
HANDLING
HANDLING:

1. **Clear tabletop** (when possible) - Bengals are both a long and active breed.

2. **Favorite toy** – Discover their favorite toy before you bring them out (if possible). This can aid in handling them. Usually toys with animal smells are best – Strips of fur, feathers or leather work well but so do the cellophane wing teasers if the sound is just right.

3. **Distraction** - for Bengals that don’t like coming out, you can use this toy to distract them by having them face the back of the cage where you dangle the toy.
4. **Toy** - Having the toy ready when you have them on the table right away keeps a Bengal’s mind busy and will aid in your ability to act as their conductor.

5. **Handling** - Pulling your Bengal with one hand under them at their waistline and the 2nd hand either under their front chest (by front legs) is ideal but not always easy.
HANDLING:

6. **4 on the Floor** - Some Bengals prefer their bodies to be fully under their control on your table.

7. **Scratching Pole** - Under your control, use the toy to entice your Bengal up on the pole to climb and stretch. It keeps them interested and allows for you to evaluate the structure and build of all aspects.

8. **Confidence** – Handle them with confidence.
HISTORY:

- 1963, Jean Mill crossed a domestic Cat with an Asian Leopard Cat “ALC” (Prionailurus Bengalensis)
- 1970’s ALC crossed with Domestic Cats and hybrids were shown in CFA and ACFA
- 1980, First Bengal registered in TICA
- 1986, Jean Mill registered 14 “Leopardettes” as Bengals
- 1990’s – Present, Bengals are one of the most popular pets and show cats
- Bengals show in Championship in TICA, GCCF, FIFE, ACFA as well as the Australian & South African Cat Fancy Orgs.
- 2016 – Accepted for Miscellaneous Status in CFA
- 2018 – Advanced to Championship Status CFA
HISTORY:

Many Cats were used to create todays Bengal:

- Asian Leopard Cat *Prionailurus bengalensis* - Gave us rosettes, glitter and many other favorable (and unfavorable) traits
- Indian Mau
- Egyptian Mau
- Ocicat
- Abyssinian
- Burmese
- American Shorthair
- Domestic Shorthair
RESOURCES:
WWW.CFABENGALS.COM

PHOTO CREDIT:
-Helmi Flick Photography
-Diana Starr Photography
-Larry Johnson Photography

And many CFA Bengal Councilmembers!
QUESTIONS?

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