

Want a Taste of the Wild Side? This New Breed May Fit the Bill

If you like the looks of a jungle feline, but still want a cuddle buddy at night, you owe it to yourself to check out this new breed officially recognized in 2012. Unique and beautiful, they have a winning 5 out of 5 personality.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- On a scale of one through five of cat characteristics, the Savannah breed gets a solid five in several categories, including adaptability, intelligence, energy level and affection
- If you're considering one of these exotic cats, please locate one from a local rescue, not a breeder
- Savannah kitties enjoy being with their human family members, taking walks, sleeping with you and reminding you if you get distracted of how clever they are, as playing jokes on you are not out of their realm of understanding
- Being highly sociable and easy to care for, these kitties get along well with others, including other kitties, friendly dogs, children and even people they're not familiar with
- Like every other animal, Savannah's have the potential of developing health problems, but much less so if you put them on a regimen of high-quality fresh, species-appropriate food

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A relatively new breed, the Savannah first came about when a small male serval was introduced to a female domestic feline in 1986. A breeder heard about the combination and decided to create a whole new breed, which was officially recognized by The International Cat Association (TICA) in 2012.

If you are interested in this very popular breed, adopt them from a rescue location, never from a breeder.

All kitties are special, but this breed is unique and beautiful with its distinctive characteristics. One of them is a bit of a wild streak, which is what these cats represent in their "limited-edition" breeding. Here's how it works, according to Vet Street:

"(They're) created by crossing African Servals with domestic cats and then breeding the offspring to cats such as Egyptian Maus, Oriental Shorthairs, Savannahs, Ocicats and others."¹

Physical characteristics include a long neck, body and legs; tall, pointed ears on a small head; a short, fluffy tail; and a "hooded" brow. The Savannah's coat is generally gold or silver with bold symmetrical spots and bands of black on his haunches, tail, legs, body and even his ears. They can also be tabby-colored or black smoke with faint "ghost spots" detectable under the overall black color. Not overly large, they're about the same size as other average-sized **domestic cats**.

Like every other cat, they're cute when small, but take on an exotic, regal air as they start to mature. If raised with them from the time they're very young, young Savannahs bond well with adults and children, friendly dogs and other pets. Vet Street describes a few things potential owners should note:

"The Savannah is an active, confident cat who enjoys interacting with people and other cats. Intelligent and curious, he is always looking for something interesting to do, the more adventurous the better. Provide him with plenty of tough, sturdy toys and frequent playtimes, or you will probably discover that he can be quite destructive."

Savannah — Smart and Sociable with a Good Sense of Humor

One endearing quality about this breed is their propensity to bond with family members. You might find your Savannah kitty wandering into rooms where the humans are, whether they're studying, watching TV or sleeping.

Here's another interesting trait: Savannah enthusiasts say this breed can even appreciate a good joke, such as learning how to set off your radio alarm so you'll have to respond quickly to shut it off. They've been known to climb up on cupboard tops, curtain rods and bookcases, and just as you walk underneath, push something so it will fall down on you. Vet Street adds vital information so you'll know what to look for in this breed:

"He demands a lot of interaction and will find ways to make you give it to him if you aren't on the ball enough to provide it without asking ... He likes to hide, assuming that you can't see him, and then tag you when you're not looking. Or he might drop his favorite toy into whatever you're drinking, to make a splash and cause you to have to fish it out."

These types of antics are the product of a quick mind, and Savannahs fit the bill. The "triple threat" of high energy, high intelligence and curiosity (boredom?) causes them to set up scenarios requiring your response. It may be worse if you don't take the time for regular interaction with your kitty. He craves it, so spend quality time interacting with your kitty.

If you want your cat to curl up at the foot of your bed — or under your chin — a Savannah may be the choice for you. She may drag her favorite toy into your bed or carefully creep up past to your prone form to find the opening in the covers and push her nose in so she can be warmer and closer to you. It's just one example of how much these cats love attention. While she's very affectionate, she can also be inventive in the ways she reminds you of her presence in case you forget to pay attention!

How to Help Your Savannah Be a Happy Kitty

There aren't many cats who don't appreciate the cat trees, tunnels and toys that make their waking hours more fun and interesting, especially indoors, but the Savannah may be one who requires such diversions. These cats have an inherent skill for climbing, so a vertical tree with tall shelves or perches will be entertaining for both of you — him climbing and you watching his amazing skills.

Savannahs are athletic, with an inborn sense of adventure and eagerness to learn new things, including tricks associated with clicker training. To prevent boredom-based behaviors, set aside time each day to create physically and mentally challenging activities for this high-energy breed.

You'll be surprised how adept they are at brain-challenging puzzles, games and tricks, and performing them, as well. Make sure you give him a treat when he does a good job. Being both sociable and energetic, they do very well on walks in a harness.

Taking Care of Your Savannah

Having relatively short hair, there's not much required in the way of grooming your cat; he'll take care of most of that himself, other than a luxurious brushing once a week, teeth brushing, trimming their claws, gently inspecting their ears and cleaning them regularly. The sooner you start these rituals when they're young, the more you — and they — will enjoy and not be intimidated by it.

Like every other animal, Savannah's have the potential of developing health problems, but much less so if you put them on a regimen of high-quality fresh, species-appropriate food, not dry kibble, which is nearly always comprised of starches that could bring on diabetes or other problems. Carbohydrates should make up no more than 10% of the calories consumed from their overall diet.

Along this vein, exercise is important for pets as well as humans, so make sure your Savannah (and every other cat) gets a 20-minute workout in daily. A healthy cat is a happy cat, and being the active, vigorous cat a Savannah is, keeping him that way should be a breeze. If you're considering adding a Savannah to your home, make a visit to a breed-specific rescue organization in your area.

Sources and References

¹ [Vet Street 2001-2017](#)
