ROSIE - ARTICLE 1

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| **BENGALS**by Rosie Alger-StreetThe Bengal cat is a breed developed from a hybrid which was at first known at the Leopardette, This was produced by matings between domestic cats and the Asian Leopard Cat, The name Bengal was officially chosen later because of the association with the latin name for the Asian Leopard cat, felis bengalensis.There have been many attempts to breed domestic cats with wild species. Cross species breeding usually produces hybrids which are not fertile. However, the domestic cat has some close relations in the wild with whom the relationship is that of different subspecies or races of the same basic cat. Such matings may long ago have helped produce some of the variations in the domestic breeds. Felis bengalensis does not fall into this category, and is a different species so it is surprising that fertile kittens should have resulted. It was not that simple though, as tests have thought that one pair of chromosomes involving the male side do not match. As a result, it is only the females who are fertile in the early generations. Male offspring are totally sterile for the first generation and have only about a 2% chance of being fertile in the second generation. The third generation are thought to have between a thirty to fifty percent chance of being fertile. Therefore in order to progress the Bengal breed from the Asian Leopard Cat, female cats only can be used successfully until about the fourth generation.In the late 1970’s, Dr. William Centerwall, a paediatrician and geneticist at the University of California, began research on Asian Leopard Cats because they seemed to have a natural immunity to feline leukaemia. Unfortunately this immunity was not passed down beyond the first generation hybrid and the research was later abandoned with the advent of the Feline Leukaemia Vaccine.In 1981 a local cat lady called Jean Sugden-Mill, who had previously done some work with these outcrosses, obtained eight female Leopard Cat/Domestic Shorthair hybrids, produced during this research. The sires that she used with these females were a brown spotted tabby rescued by a Los Angeles cat shelter and a bright orange spotted feral cat found living in the rhinoceros enclosure of Delhi Zoo. Other breeders also became involved and crosses used included Egyptian Mau, Ocicat, Abyssinian, Bombay, Burmese and British Shorthairs.In 1983 The International Cat Association, TICA, gave the new breed recognition and in 1991 it achieved Championship status. It reached Britain in the early 1990’s and was granted Preliminary status by the GCCF in 1997.

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 | The Bengal is the only domestic cat that has been bred totally for temperament. It is a loving intelligent domestic cat with some charmingly different features borrowed from its wild ancestors. It has puffed whisker pads produced by widely spaced canine teeth, (originally used for tearing meat). The nose is wider than most domestic cats as it has more oscillating membranes (for smelling). It can have quite pronounced 0celli on the back of the ears - a pale spot on each ear like a thumb print (so that predators think that its eyes are open and don’t attack from behind). |

It has a fascination for water that can be almost addictive and a cry like a small jungle cat. The overall appearance is that of a small wild cat, but with a loving disposition. It gets on extremely well with other cats, love dogs and children and is bold and outgoing. Many will retrieve and love climbing and play-hunting. It does not need any special grooming and eats ordinary cat food.The Bengal is a large cat having a sleek, muscular long body with high hind quarters, the forelegs being slightly shorter than the hindlegs, a medium long thick tail which is carried low and large rounded feet. The head is smaller compared to body size than with most domestic cats and the ears are medium size and rounded with a wide baseThe coat is short, thick and plush with a luminous sheen. It is unique in the cat world that Bengal’s with high quality coats display a phenomenon referred to as “glitter”. This gives the Black/Brown Bengal an appearance of gold dusting and likewise the Snow Bengal a pearl dusting.The dominant gene is the spotted Bengal where markings may be a random pattern of spots, or may be arranged in horizontal bands. Some cats show rosettes of spots like those of leopards and jaguars. Spotting continues on the belly, where the ground colour should be lighter. The tail is ringed, legs barred and there are lines from the eyes across the cheek bones and over the top of the head, sometimes with an “M” mark on the forehead. The tail tip and the paw pads must be dark. The dilutes are a marbled pattern, which should be random, (as is illustrated in the picture), and Snow. Snow Bengals can be both spotted and marbled. Another very interesting feature borrowed from the wild is that some kittens can go through a fuzzy stage at about 2 months. This is where the guard hairs grow to partially difuse the spots and disguise them from predators whilst they are growing. Sometimes it can take as long as three years for the coat to come to full fruition.

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| **COLOURS:**Black/Brown Spotted; Black/Brown Marbled; Snow Spotted; Snow Marbled.The background colour to the coat can be from a rich orange colour called rufus to a pale grey depending on the background of the orginal cats used in the cat’s pedigree. The background colour of the Snows can vary from creamy white or Ivory to a very pale tan. |

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