



pre-adaptation for domestication. Although Bengals are active animals, they do not exhibit a higher incidence of behavioural problems than other pedigree cats.

Unlike the Bengal, the Savannah is only recognised by a few associations. There are a limited number of breeders (2 to 3) in Flanders. There is even less scientific information pertaining to these and other hybrids. The potential risk of damage to wild fauna due to predation is estimated to be greater in Serval crossings than in other pedigree cats.

**The Flemish Animal Welfare Council recommends a ban on the keeping of hybrid cats.**

An exception must be provided for **Bengals from the F5 generation onwards**.

These may be considered domestic cats and included on the **positive list** of non-production mammals that may be kept.

To support this exception, these cats must:

- be identified and registered;
- possess a DNA passport;
- possess a parental control test result (in the case of an imported animal: a genetic sample of the animal and its parents).

**The keeping of Savannahs, Bengals from F1 to F4 generation and all other hybrids of wild cat species or subspecies** is therefore prohibited.

The Council proposes a transitional phase in which hybrids such as these that are currently being kept in Flanders can continue to be kept until they die, but cannot be used for breeding purposes.

To support this transitional measure, these cats must:

- be identified and registered;
- have been sterilised;
- possess a DNA passport.

*FOOTNOTE: GAIA (Global Action in the Interest of Animals), West-Flemish animal shelters, East-Flemish animal shelters, Antwerp animal shelters and Limburg animal shelters do not agree with this opinion.*

*They believe that the breeding of hybrid cats emphasises their wild origins, which is reflected in the nature of the breeding product. Owners are insufficiently aware of the animals' needs for expressing their natural instincts. Keeping them indoors or in a limited space is detrimental to their welfare. GAIA and the shelters are consequently of the opinion that keeping hybrid cats, including Bengals, should remain prohibited. The current population must be registered and sterilised to prevent further breeding. Their keeping must comply with the housing conditions determined by the Council. If the owner cannot comply with this following a transitional period, the animals must be seized. Shelters seek adopters for confiscated or unwanted animals who comply with stringent welfare and housing conditions.*