

# SAVANNAH MYTHS AND OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

WRITTEN BY BRIGITTE COWELL

## MYTH #1—ALL SAVANNAHS ARE HUGE!

This is an unfortunate falsehood spread by some websites and uninformed &/or less-than-honest people.

Savannah size can vary from close to the very tall Serval ancestor to the more average domestic cat height. The most consistently large generation is of course the F1 generation as it has the Serval parent contributing half their genetic make up. Interestingly though, some of the tallest Savannahs around are F2 generation, but the range of sizes in the F2 generation is more variable. There are some pretty nice-sized F3s but further on most Savannahs of lower generations (and that is the

MAJORITY of the Savannah population) are simply taller and longer than the average domestic.

Of course most breeders have produced a nice big Savannah and if we all wished to do so we could take a picture of that tall cat walking with a petite toddler and photograph it so that the cat was walking in front hence exaggerating this cat's size...but most Savannah breeders feel it is more ethical not to create such a false image of our breed. This unfair impression of the breed's size leads to buyer disappointment, and sometimes I fear the expectation of size can lead



*This large Savannah boy is not typical of his Breed!*

to the new owner not valuing the other great traits of their Savannah (exotic looks and great personality) because they are upset because it is not the Labrador-sized kitty they were dreaming of.

## MYTH #2—SAVANNAHS ARE 'WILD AND DANGEROUS'

For many people, "wild" equates with "feral", they figure that the exotic cat heritage must express as aggression and dominance. This is simply not true.

The African Serval is known to be one of the most "domesticatable" of the exotic cats, the reason it is more commonly kept as a housepet than most other wild cats. Savannah Rescue does NOT recommend this at all, it is still a wild cat and as such unpredictable and

not easy to live with. Nevertheless the fact remains that it is more gregarious and interactive with humans than most other wild cats. And most importantly it doesn't view the human as prey. So by crossing this exotic cat with a domestic cat we do not get an F1 Savannah that is difficult to handle, antisocial or dangerous. We get a very high energy, interactive, housepet that although more suited to some pet house-

holds than others, makes a wonderful loving pet for many.

It is Savannah Rescue's opinion that F2 and onwards are better pets, F1s are more intense and more determined to have their own way than most cats and therefore take a more experienced and prepared household. Much like not all people should have certain dog breeds, I would counsel one about deciding on a Beagle as pet for example. I love my beagle, but he's a lot of hard work!

### SAVANNAH TRUTHS

- Domestic cat breed originating from a wild ancestor crossed with a domestic cat
- Currently accepted as Advanced New Breed with the International Cat Association (TICA)
- High energy interactive cat breed that if not stimulated may design own entertainment in your home

## MYTH #3— ASHERAS ARE NOT SAVANNAHS

Although presented by Lifestyle Pets Inc as a distinct proprietary blend of Serval, Bengal and domestic cats, the three Ashera cats that were confiscated at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam were definitively determined (by DNA parentage testing) to be F1 Savannahs bred by Chris Shirk of Cutting Edge Savannahs from his Serval and his Egyptian Mau female.

It seems that Asheras were indeed Savannahs marketed heavily for an exceedingly inflated pricetag. Buyer beware, do your research!

## MYTH #4—ALL SAVANNAHS ARE SUPER-EXPENSIVE



Yes, the early generations of Savannahs are expensive. They are difficult to produce and a lot of work goes into them. The later generations, the F4s and F5s are a different situation. Being mainly domestic (an F5A is theoretically 97% domestic heritage for example) they are just as easy to produce and raise as a domestic cat.

Therefore you just might see lower generation Savannahs offered for the same prices as many domestic cat breeds...and possibly by the same kinds of lower-quality breeders for cut-rate pricing. If a Savannah is offered for very very little money, there just might be a reason for it! That's not to say that if a cat

is priced very high it must be of good quality of course. There's extremes both ways, and people that advertise "supreme" branding that are outrageously priced are as much to be avoided. Always do your research and ask questions about why a kitten is priced high or low.

## MYTH #5—SAVANNAHS NEED TO HAVE A RAW DIET

Savannahs do not require any care that another domestic cat breed doesn't also need. Savannah breeders recommend a

high quality diet of course, but it doesn't have to be raw meat.

Sure there are Savannah breeders that prefer to feed

their cats a raw diet, but there are also Birman, Ocicat and Tonkinese cat breeders that do the same and swear their cats are

healthier for this diet. It's easy to assume that these things must be true due to the "wild heritage" of the Savannah.

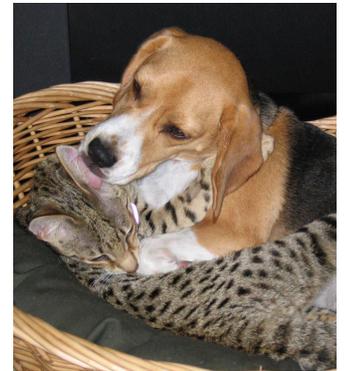
## MYTH #6—SAVANNAHS CANNOT BE AROUND SMALL CHILDREN OR PETS

Along with the assumption that because they have "wild" heritage then they must be dangerous, some folk assume they must be kept in cages and away from other pets and small children. The reality is that Savannahs are no different from any high energy domestic cat breed, and all small children should be supervised around pets. Children can move and act unpredictably, they can decide to see how soft a cat's eyes might be if

they poked them, or how hard they can pull the tail before they get a reaction...all things that might get a child scratched when the kitty is startled. A Savannah is unlikely to be at all different in this case, therefore we recommend children are supervised around all pets and taught to interact properly.

Most Savannahs live in houses not only with humans but with other pets, in particular other cats and dogs. They do very

well with dogs, maybe as they tend to be on the more confident outgoing end of cat personalities. Like most cats though, they think fish tanks and mice cages are toys, and would love to get into their toy and play more directly. Therefore we recommend that all those kinds of pets are kept in very secure accommodations, and possibly with a door between them and the kitty when not supervised.



## MYTH #7—SAVANNAHS ARE SUPER-PREDATORS

The Australian Government passed a ban on Savannahs due to an ill-researched "report" gleaned from online sources, none of those sources actually included Savannah breeders nor cat judges that had some experience with the

breed. They believed a few sensational websites that claim outrageous sizes for their Savannahs, and put that together with a presumed innately superior hunting ability and came up with a "super-predator" that would climb their trees and kill

endangered koalas. Laughable though it seemed to those of us that live with these cats, this ban passed! Due to this action, many people now claim that the Savannah is indeed some sort of superior predator cat, yet no actual proof has ever been presented

to back up such a claim. The Savannah is high energy therefore likely to be enthusiastic, yet being an indoor pet is no more likely to be efficient as a hunter than any other domestic cat.

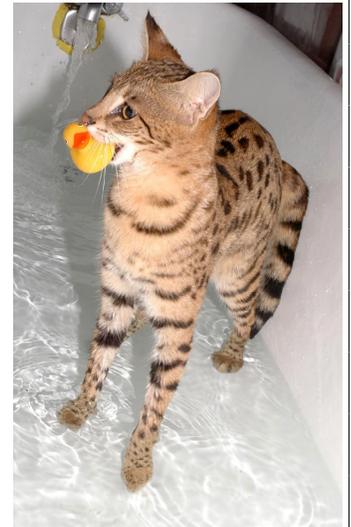
## MYTH #8—ALL SAVANNAHS LOVE WATER

Servals hunt in creek beds, they will hunt for small fish and frogs. Therefore there is the assumption that all Savannahs are going to inherit a love of water. This is not true, just like because your grandfather or great great grandfather was an Olympic athlete does not mean you will be breaking any world track records.

It does however seem that a lot of Savannahs are comfortable with water in a way that

most domestic cats are not. They may still not be impressed when you dunk them in a bath, but they may join you in the shower to bat at the spray and they may get under the tap in the bathroom making it impossible to wash your face easily at night. How much of this is due to Serval and how much is due to them being a highly interactive and enthusiastic personality breed, I don't know. In any case, when you get your Sa-

vannah kitten, don't assume it will enjoy being thrown into a full bathtub. Run the tap and see how interested your kitten is... make the water luke-warm in temperature and inviting. Run a bath with a couple of inches and throw in some ice cubes or bath toys. It can be very amusing, but only if your particular kitty enjoys water sports!



## MYTH #9—SAVANNAHS ARE HYPOALLERGENIC

This particular myth is not confined to the Savannah, I've read this about the Bengal also. I'm not sure if this is because some think that there is wild cat heritage therefore this would mean hypoallergenicity. Or else the fact that

these are both low-shedding breeds of cat might mean that people tend to react less to them than other cats and assume it is "hypoallergenicity". If you are allergic to cats, be very careful! There is no substantiated data on these cats

and allergies. You may have less reaction, it most likely depends on what triggers your allergies and what threshold you have to that allergen.

"SAVANNAHS BEHAVE JUST LIKE ANY OTHER HIGH-ENERGY DOMESTIC CAT, JUST THEY LOOK DIFFERENT!"

## MYTH #10—SAVANNAHS NEED SPECIAL HOUSING

This comes back to the "wild" heritage of the breed, and the assumption that what is true for a wild cat is true for the domestic cat breed derived from that wild cat. People assume that due to the wild ancestor, the Savannah will be unpredictable hence will not live in a house like a regular domestic cat. This is simply not true. Every generation from F1 through F100 is suitable to live in a house.

Savannahs may not be suitable for every house, their energy and exuberance may make

living in a house with a lot of breakable antique vases a bad fit for example. We as breeders and rescuers sometimes suggest "Savannah-Proofing" as something similar to toddler-proofing a house from floor to ceiling but mainly as a way for you to keep your valuables safe and intact while you work out just how klutzy your Savannah might be and just how much fun your belongings might be to them. Some assume that because some breeders and pet owners have built outdoor enclosures that are accessible by

their Savannah pets that this means they "have" to have this. Almost all domestic cats will enjoy access to an outdoor run, there's something very pleasant and attractive about being able to sit outside in the fresh air and watch birds and chase insects, this is not unique to the Savannah cat!





[WWW.KIREMBO SAVANNAHS.COM](http://WWW.KIREMBO SAVANNAHS.COM)

Email: [brigitte@kirembosavannahs.com](mailto:brigitte@kirembosavannahs.com)

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## MYTH #11—SAVANNAHS NEED AN EXOTIC ANIMAL VETERINARIAN

Many websites state that Savannahs need special veterinary attention; only killed vaccines, no ketamine, etc and many assume that the same vet that treats exotic cats is going to understand a Savannah better. In reality, many domestic cat breeders also advocate only killed vaccines and to avoid ketamine as an anesthetic. The only difference between the average domestic and a Savannah is really that they look “wild” and hence a vet that has never met one before might be worried and extra-cautious, while a vet that treats wild cats on a regular basis wouldn’t give them a second glance.

Be sure before taking your Savannah to the new veterinarian that they are prepared to see your cat. There are some ill-educated vets out there that fear such a new breed, and have preconceived notions about how “wild and dangerous” they are. It is not a good start to any owner-vet relationship if the vet is predisposed to be fearful and reactionary to your cat. Direct your new vet if they ask to information about this breed, and encourage them to speak to your cat’s breeder if they have questions.

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## MYTH #12—SAVANNAHS DO NOT FAITHFULLY USE LITTERBOXES

This is yet another case where people assume that what is true of the wild cat ancestor, it must be true of the domestic cat breed derived from that cat. Again, this is simply not true. Savannahs of all generations, from

first to last, use their litterbox as faithfully as any other cat breed. Maybe more than some breeds.

Cats of all breeds are individuals, and sometimes some cats have issues with

the litterbox. Often there is a good reason, and by simple testing or deduction, the situation can be remedied. First step is always to take the cat to the vet to check for a health reason, then there are a number of behavioral

strategies that commonly work. Your vet can likely direct you to some, the internet will give up many advice websites and feline behavior therapists are also a wonderful source of information.

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## THE TRUTH ABOUT SAVANNAHS

So where can you find ACCURATE information about Savannahs? What are “reliable” sources?

The International Cat Association (TICA) is the major cat registry that accepts the Savannah breed. The Savannah Breed Section is the group of Savannah owners (including breeders) that belong to TICA and work on developing the breed. [www.savannahbreedsection.org](http://www.savannahbreedsection.org)

is their website and contains some breed information.

A breed rescue group is going to be honest about their breed, it is not in their best interest to mislead you. [www.svrescue.com](http://www.svrescue.com) will take you to the Savannah Rescue website which contains lots of information also.

Breed clubs of a breed in

general are worthy sources of information. The Savannah Cat Club is the main breed club for Savannahs, [www.savannahcatclub.com](http://www.savannahcatclub.com) is the website.

[www.yahogroups.com](http://www.yahogroups.com) has a number of email groups that can answer many of your questions. Recommended is SavannahCatPets, SavannahChatter and SavannahKittens .

