

Is the Stray Cat's Tail the Result of Injury or Genetics?

See what our expert veterinarian says.

Q: I recently noticed a friendly stray kitten that let me handle him and I am considering taking him in. He seems to be about 3 months old. He has a short tail, about half as long as a typical cat's tail. If it was severed it has healed. If he was born with the tail as it is, how can I tell whether it is the result of a potentially dangerous gene that could lead to medical issues or if it's a bobtail-type gene which is harmless, to my understanding?

A: I'm not sure if there are any genetic tests to determine whether this cat comes from any particular breed lineage. Two things make me think that this cat's short tail is more likely a result of a kittenhood injury: First, this kitten is a stray, and it's not likely that a valuable, purebred Manx or American (or Japanese) Bobtail is roaming around the streets. Secondly, you describe the tail as being half as long as a typical cat's tail. The bobtails and the Manx have tails that are shorter than you describe.

He sounds like a nice cat. Take him home!

Regards,
Dr. Arnold Plotnick, DVM