

Ready for Their Closeups

Bengals have such star power they glitter — literally.

By Elisa Jordan

With their movie-star good looks and charismatic personalities, Bengals have taken the cat fancy by storm. Currently ranked the No. 1 most-registered breed in The International Cat Association (TICA), the breed's popularity shows no sign of waning. Like movie stars, though, the Bengal is pestered by nasty rumors. Those who know the breed best can set the record straight.

"They are not wild and aggressive," says Margie Heil of Oregon, who has been breeding Bengals under the cattery name SnoPride for about 10 years. "Some people have heard that they attack you or they bite, and that's not true at all."

In fact, Bengals make great companion animals. "I think the huge misconception is that because they're a hybrid cat, some people think that they're not good pets and good companions," says Sharon Kalani, who breeds Bengals under the name KalaniKats with her daughters Natasha, 17, and Tatyana, 12.

That misconception stems from the Bengal's origins as a cross between Asian Leopard Cats and domestic cats. Although the Asian Leopard Cat is a wildcat, modern Bengals possess domestic temperaments with their wild looks.

"We've taken special pains to ensure that they'll be sweet natured," says California-based breeder Jean Mill, who founded the breed in the 1960s. The cat was suspect from the very beginning because of the wild blood, Mill explains. "We had to lean over backwards to have our cats be sweeter-natured than any others," she says. "That's resulted in a cat that's very intelligent, learns tricks and wants to please people."

****For the full article, pick up the February 2007 issue of CAT FANCY.****

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