

## Housecats Used in Lynx Fertility Tests

**Spanish researchers are inseminating domestic cat eggs with lynx sperm.**

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Researchers in Spain say they've discovered a way for housecats to provide an unexpected lifeline for the world's most endangered feline, the Iberian lynx.

The Spanish daily El Pais has reported that researchers have discovered that they can inseminate the eggs of domestic cats with the sperm of male lynxes. The breakthrough means scientists can test the fertility of the male lynxes and widen the gene pool.

Researchers say they will now be able to explore better ways of inseminating future female lynxes.

Experts believe that only between 100 and 150 Iberian lynx are alive, because of dwindling habitats and a decline in their natural prey, which are wild rabbits.

Researchers say they fear that the lynxes are in real danger of dying out for a couple of reasons. One is because of limited breeding pairs. Also, the number of lynxes killed by cars traveling on roads through their breeding grounds is increasing.

Now, however, the Spanish scientists are extracting sperm from male lynxes killed on the roads and freezing it for later use. Veterinary practices near Madrid aided the researchers by contributing the ovaries of dead domestic cats.

Using domestic cat eggs saves researchers from using the eggs from an already endangered species. It also means they don't have to move animals from one location to another, and it avoids potential problems with transportation and adaptation, researchers said.