

Predetermined Cat Sexes Developed

New process could help stave off extinction of some endangered cat species.

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A New Orleans nature institute and a Colorado biotechnology company say they have developed a process that allows the sex of cats to be chosen before they're born.

The Audubon Nature Institute and XY Inc., say that for the first time ever, domestic kittens have been born with their sex predetermined using sex-selection technologies, which is a cutting-edge, sperm-sorting technology.

The technology, developed by Fort Collins, Colorado-based XY Inc., resulted in a litter of healthy kittens. The kittens were produced from embryos fertilized with sexed sperm that were born at the Audubon Center for Research of Endangered Species (ACRES) in New Orleans, Oct. 11, 2006, according to the nature institute.

"The knowledge gained through this research will help scientists and conservationists cope with threats to the most seriously endangered feline species by developing new reproductive technologies and reintroduction techniques necessary to ensure their long-term survival," Audubon Nature Institute Senior Vice President and ACRES Director of Research Betsy Dresser said.

ACRES' wildlife conservation-directed research focuses on reproductive technology usage, such as cryopreservation of sperm and embryos, artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer.

Sperm-sorting technology separates sperm that carry the X chromosome and produce females from sperm that carry the Y chromosome and produce males. XY Inc., developed and now holds patents to such technology.

"Sex selection is critically important in the race against extinction of endangered exotic feline populations. Our ability to determine the birth of female felines in captivity will help advance the work of animal preservationists trying to increase the numbers of endangered felines in the wild," C. Earle Pope, the ACRES research team leader for the project, said.