
# Part Two: Reproduction

These guidelines are designed to assist breeders in understanding and implementing positive animal husbandry practices in an in-home cattery. This document does not cover all aspects of cat breeding in depth. Parts of it may also not apply to early generation Bengal cats. Breeders should use the advice of their mentors, a mentoring list, their veterinarian, books, and refer to other print and online resources for more detailed information. A list of TIBCS-reviewed resources for breeders is available from the TIBCS Recording and Correspondence Secretary.

The guidelines are divided into three sections. This document is the second of the three and covers the basics of reproduction in the home cattery. The first part of these guidelines is devoted to how to set up and implement a home cattery, and the third part is devoted to lifecycle issues such as kittens, socialization, and selecting and retiring breeding cats. The other two sections are available on the TIBCS website or from the TIBCS Recording and Correspondence Secretary.

## Stud Housing and Management

Studs may be kept in an existing separate room within the household, integrated into the larger cat population in the home, in an outdoor facility (weather permitting), or in a separate indoor/outdoor climatized facility. These guidelines address only the requirements for studs kept in the home.

When a stud is kept in the home but separate from other cats:

- He should not live in a cage; he should have a habitat that allows him to climb, play, hide, etc.
- Materials should be durable, water-resistant, and easy to clean. Stud urine has a penetrating odor and can make its way through walls and cause structural damage.
- Although a sexually mature male is a very hormone-driven feline, he will most likely have been raised as a domestic cat and family member with respective needs that he will retain the remainder of his life. He requires entertainment, human affection, and attention above and beyond daily cleaning and feeding activities. From a breeder's perspective this means spending extra time with the stud and flexibility to suit his needs. Breeders must:
  - make sufficient time for the stud
  - provide feline companions for him (neuters, females)
  - keep him exercised and entertained (see section on "Crowding, Space and Exercise" in Part One of these Guidelines)

When a stud is integrated into the general cat population all or part of the time, the breeder must make deliberations concerning unplanned matings.

Multiple studs will probably need to be kept separated from each other.

Depending on the location of the home, noise reduction may also be an issue that has to be addressed.

## Mating Management

Ideally, each mating is based on improving:

- Health
- Temperament
- Appearance.

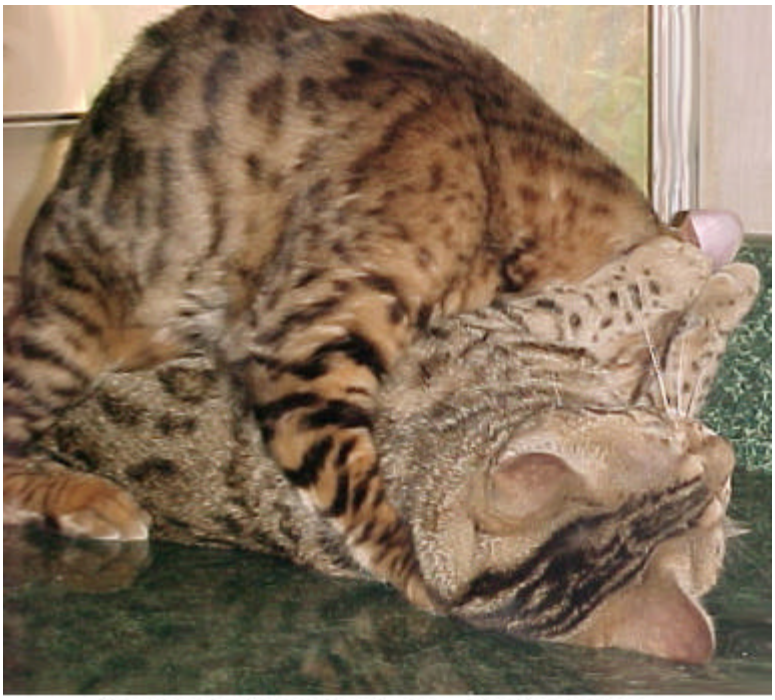
FACT: The fertilized eggs implant around day 14-15, after spacing themselves out along both uterine horns.

What to consider in selecting potential mates

1. Health of the cats (see section on “Disease, Parasite Management, and Health” in Part One of these Guidelines)
2. Breeding history of cats
    a. What is carried in the lines but not seen in the phenotype
    b. Any progeny already born
    c. Females: check mother’s history (this can be important in those lines where the females mature early sexually)
    d. Temperament of parents

Breeding

1. In general, it is better to bring the female to the male’s area.
2. It takes an average of four breedings to trigger the hormonal surge that causes ovulation
3. Allow the pair time to get to know each other (this can take minutes or days).
4. Take the litter box out of the male’s area and leave them together for about four hours for three days in a row.
    a. Removing the litter box limits exposure to disease.
    b. Putting them together for a limited time allows for observation.
    c. Putting them together for a limited number of days allows for accurate birthing date.



An inexperienced cat may need a more experienced mate, not one equally inexperienced

Problems that can occur

NOTE: The “solutions” in this ”problems” section are suggestions but not recommendations. You should check with your veterinarian for more information.

1. Male not interested in female
    a. Female is not in full heat.
    b. Young male needs a more experienced queen.

    c. Male is too young (male maturity varies with the individual male).
2. Female not interested in male
    a. She may not be in full heat.
    b. Young female needs experienced male.
3. You do not see them breed. There are males and females who want their privacy... if possible listen at a discreet distance, or let nature take its course without observation.
4. Fighting
    a. Bathe both cats and place them together while wet. They tend to groom each other and then relax.
    b. Place them for a longer time next to each other where they can adjust to smells, etc.

For females that cycle too young, too often

1. Birth control pills. (These are not available in the United States.) There are pros and cons to these.
2. Neutered male or "teaser tom" to bring the female out of heat. There is a potential problem with false pregnancies.
3. Use an implement to simulate mating. This can work but can cause false pregnancy and possibly lead to uterine infections.
4. Place the queen in a dark room for several days. Seems to work on a limited scale since cats follow the light schedule with their heat cycles.

To bring females into heat

1. Put with other females in heat.
2. Use artificial light to simulate longer days.
3. Put with or near a male.
4. Provide the female with cloth that is soaked in male urine.

## Queening

The gestation period for cats is approximately 9 weeks.

**To prepare for the birth:**

- Know (educate yourself about):
    - stages of labor,
    - signs of labor,
    - signs of troubled labor,
    - signs of kitten in trouble,
    - what to do in event of trouble,
    - how to decide when to intervene,
    - when to call the veterinarian.
- Prepare a nest that:
    - Has high sides
    - Is located in a safe, draft-free, warm place
    - Is located where you can observe and reach in it easily
    - Is large enough for the queen to move around in freely
    - Is easy for the queen to enter or exit from
    - Is easy to clean
- Gather birthing supplies:
    - Basics such as scissors, paper towels, bulb syringe, sterile cotton balls, and iodine for the cut cords

    - Postage scale and writing supplies
    - Heating pad
    - Clock
    - Phone and veterinarian's phone number.
- Separate the queen from other cats, in the room with her nesting box, a week or two before her expected delivery date.

**Some signs that delivery is near:**
- The queen's body temperature may drop
- Her nipples may become engorged with milk
- She may lose her uterine plug or have a slight uterine discharge
- She may become restless
- She may lose her appetite a few hours before delivery

**Delivery:**
Most queens will be fine without intervention, but in case of trouble it is best for the breeder to be present. Observe and be aware of the effect your presence is having on the queen and respond accordingly. Unwanted participation could result in the queen abandoning or harming her kittens. The queen may appreciate being offered food or water during the delivery.

During the delivery pay close attention to the queen, making notes on all you observe. The best way to help in the delivery is to be educated, prepared, calm, and supportive. (NOTE: Do not be overly concerned about breech births; about 50% of all kittens are born feet first. It is not the problem it is in humans.) Record the time of birth and birth weight of each kitten. Treat the end of the cut umbilical cords with iodine. If necessary, place the kittens temporarily in a warm area while the queen completes delivery.

**After delivery:**
Check the queen daily to be sure she is producing milk and to watch for signs of mastitis. Be attentive to how the queen responds to human handling of the kittens; too much handling may prompt her to move them. It may be necessary to cage her and the kittens to ensure that she does not relocate the litter to a place where it cannot be observed and accessed by humans.