



# Importing wild or hybrid cat species



## The cat problem

Some crosses between wildcats and domestic cats are popular pet breeds. However, as these cats pose a biosecurity risk there are rules and restrictions surrounding their importation to Australia. There are millions of feral cats in Australia that contribute to the extinction and decline of native species. If wildcat or hybrid cat genes enter the feral cat population, the problem will continue to get worse.

## Hybrid species

A hybrid is the result of interbreeding between two species or subspecies of animals. This includes interbreeding between a domestic breed and a wild species (or sub-species), or interbreeding between two wild species. There are some hybrid cat species that are popular in the pet industry internationally, including Bengal cats and Savannah cats. However, to protect the environment most hybrid breeds are not permitted into Australia. This includes hybrid pet breeds.

For more information regarding the Department's hybrid policy see: [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/live/import-list/hybrid-animals-guidance](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/live/import-list/hybrid-animals-guidance)

## What are the laws?

The import of live animals into Australia is controlled by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), administered by the Department of the Environment and Energy (the Department).

Live animals considered to be suitable for live import into Australia are listed on the live import list (see: [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/live/import-list](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/live/import-list))

- Part 1 of the list contains species and can be brought into Australia without a permit
- Part 2 of the list contains species that require a permit
- Species not listed on the live import list are banned.

## Savannah cats

The Savannah cat is a cross between a domestic cat and an African Serval (*Leptailurus serval*). Savannah cats cannot be imported to Australia under any circumstances, due to the risk they pose to the environment.

## Bengal cats

The Bengal cat is a hybrid animal that has resulted from crossing an Asian leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) and a domestic cat (*Felis catus*).

Bengal cats may be imported into Australia if the animal is five generations or more removed from the Asian Leopard cat. This is known as an F5 hybrid.

F5 hybrids result when the offspring of a cross between an Asian Leopard cat and a domestic cat are bred with a domestic cat, and the offspring of that pairing are bred with a domestic cat—down to at least five generations. Proof is needed in the form of official pedigree papers for the animal, going back at least 4 generations. Without this documentation, the animal will not be allowed into Australia.



## Process for importing a Bengal cat into Australia:

- Check the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources website for all permit requirements for cat imports.
- If you believe you will be able to meet these requirements contact Department of the Environment and Energy with identification (Owner's name, animal's name and microchip number) and pedigree of the Bengal cat (to prove cat is an F5 hybrid or greater).
- The Department of the Environment and Energy will consider information provided and advise you and Department of Agriculture and Water Resources whether the animal is considered to be a domestic cat.
- If the animal is considered to be a domestic cat, apply for an import permit from Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

## Domestic pets

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) is the department that issues permits for the import of non-hybrid domestic pets. If you wish to import a domestic cat or dog (non-hybrid breeds), please seek further information from DAWR and the Department of the Environment and Energy.

## Don't release your bengal cat!

Do not release your bengal cat into the wild—this can cause serious harm to the Australian environment and wildlife and could result in penalties. If you have a hybrid cat breed you can no longer care for, please contact the Department or your state government for advice. You can remain anonymous.

## For more information please contact:

Environmental Biosecurity Section  
Department of the Environment and Energy  
GPO Box 787  
Canberra ACT 2601

**Telephone:** (02) 6274 1900

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