



# MANHATTAN CAT SPECIALISTS

230 West 76th Street  
New York, NY 10017  
(212) 721-CATS (2287)  
FAX (212) 721-5637

## Cloning – Should We or Shouldn't We?

The idea of cloning higher life forms has served as fodder for science fiction writers and filmmakers for decades. The theory became a reality, however, in 1997 when Scottish scientists at the Roslin Institute in Great Britain cloned Dolly from a cell of an adult sheep. Dolly opened the door to further experimentation, and researchers have since successfully cloned mice, goats, monkeys, pigs, and yes, cats and dogs. At least three companies, some with clever monikers like Genetics Savings and Clone, and perPETuate, have offered storage capabilities and facilities for preserving tissue samples from an adored pet, so that Fido or Felix can be next in line for resurrection from the dead.

The question of whether cats and dogs can be successfully cloned takes a backseat to a more pressing question, namely: Why do it at all? There is no doubt that the clone will have the same external appearance as the original pet. It will have the same hair color and the same eye color, as these traits are 100% genetically determined. Personality, however, is influenced by a combination of genetics and environment. Because the cloned pet will not be living under the exact same environmental conditions, it will not have the same personality. Always living in the shadow of the original, it will never get a chance to develop its own character. Any deviation from the original pet's personality is more likely to be viewed as an experimental failure, and be greeted with annoyance and disappointment instead of with the joy that one should feel when a puppy or kitten's natural and unique personality begins to bloom.

Another ethical concern centers around pet overpopulation. True animal lovers should realize the self-centered motives behind their wish to clone their pet, and instead should redirect their effort toward adopting a cat or dog in need of a good home. With almost 7 million homeless cats and dogs euthanized in animal shelters every year, pet cloning seems exceedingly selfish and unnecessary.

Undoubtedly, there are many potential good uses for cloning higher animals. Producing cattle free of the prion responsible for bovine spongiform encephalitis (mad cow disease) springs to mind, as well as preserving or rescuing endangered species. Given mankind's propensity to exploit animals for the almighty dollar, I fear that these cloned endangered species would probably be put in a zoo or a facility not unlike Jurassic Park, with the requisite hefty admission price. Rather than rely on cloning, we should devote ourselves to preserving the habitats that would allow endangered species to reproduce naturally.

We navigate a slippery slope when we go from cloning food animals and wild animals to companion animals. With no guarantee of an identical personality, and an

estimated cost of \$20,000 to \$200,000 per cloned pet, one should really reconsider freezing a chunk of Fluffy for future resurrection. When last I checked, humane organizations and shelters were offering healthy cats, dogs, kittens and puppies, fully vaccinated, de-wormed, spayed and neutered, with personalities all their own for \$100 - \$200.