



Pet Cloning: Animal Welfare

There are four significant animal welfare concerns connected to pet cloning: 1) health consequences and survival of the cloned animals; 2) absence of regulatory oversight; 3) current overpopulation of dogs and cats; and 4) dogs and cats as 'production units.'

Health Consequences

Scientists routinely refer to cloning as a new and 'inefficient' technology citing a low survival rate for cloned embryos at between 0.5-4.0%. Cloned animals also can suffer unpredictable, serious health consequences (e.g. early onset of cancer, developmental problems, sudden death). In fact, the CEO of one pet cloning company has admitted that up to 45% of the cloned kittens who survive birth will die within one month of age. Animal cloning technologies are still very new, and the long-term effects on cloned animals, particularly longer-lived animals such as cats, have yet to be adequately measured. Therefore, each time pet cloning companies attempt to clone an animal, it must be recognized as experimental. As of February 2005, only six cloned domestic cats are known to be alive, and no dog has ever survived cloning.

One pet cloning firm claims that a new chromatin transfer (CT) technique is an improvement to the traditional cloning technique, nuclear transfer (NT), and claims that it has exclusively licensed the technique for cat and dog cloning. Citing a published study on its website that evaluates CT and NT experiments and cattle cloning, the company states that CT will increase the survival of cloned pets. However, the study failed to demonstrate any difference between the two techniques in terms of low pregnancy rates and rates of animal survival at birth. It merely showed that after one month of age, a larger proportion of the animals born through CT were alive than those born through NT. However, the fate of the calves living beyond four weeks is unknown.

Another relevant scientific paper published in November 2004 described the results of an African wildcat cloning experiment involving 50 female domestic cats in a Louisiana laboratory. The cats were implanted with multiple cloned embryos—in some cases, over 30 embryos were implanted in individual cats. Twelve cats developed pregnancies. Of those kittens born, seven were stillborn, eight died before six weeks of age, and only two survived at that time.



DOUBLE JEOPARDY: Animal cloning experiments result in high animal death rates, and millions of homeless animals are euthanized each year.

Dog and Cat Overpopulation

While pet cloning firms currently are charging customers up to \$50,000 for a cloned cat and as much as \$2,995 to 'bank' a dog's or cat's DNA for future cloning, millions of homeless animals of the same species are available in U.S. animal shelters for around \$100, which is used to cover costs. However, most animals in shelters are euthanized for lack of adopting homes. In addition, cloned pets who are sold are not required to be spayed or neutered. Considering that pet cloning companies forecast sales of thousands of animals and people who pay tens of thousands of dollars for animals likely will want to breed the animals, pet cloning will exacerbate the already severe cat and dog overpopulation problem.

One company has claimed at times that the animals used in its experiments are adopted into private homes after use. In one instance, that total was 245 dogs and cats. Even if true, this is not a realistic plan if the pet cloning industry develops, because as the industry grows so does the number of former experimental animals in need of adoption.

In addition to the many animals used during the pet cloning process, cloned animals also may be born who are unhealthy or do not have the desired traits and therefore, are not 'sellable,' potentially adding to an already staggering problem and further burdening of shelters and municipal animal control agencies.

(continued...)

(cont.)

Absence of Regulatory Oversight

Research laboratories in which dogs and cats are used are legally required to abide by specific standards of animal care and use. All of these laboratories have a committee that reviews the merits of protocols for animal experimentation. These labs also are inspected annually by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which enforces the Animal Welfare Act, and must be federally licensed (some state laws require a state license as well). Each year, these laboratories must report the numbers of cats and dogs on their premises and include the category of pain and distress they are subjected to based on the experiments in which they were used. This allows some accountability, and official documents can be requested from the USDA regarding animals used or held at any registered research facility.

Pet cloning companies are neither licensed by any state or federal agency, nor accredited by any organization requiring specific standards of animal care and use. Therefore, there is no authenticated public record of how many animals are used in pet cloning laboratories; where they come from; what, precisely, they experience; nor their fate.



Disregard for an Animal's Value

The pet cloning industry treats companion animals as producers and products. One company even sells gift certificates and offers a "money-back guarantee" should an animal become 'defective' or not bear the desired resemblance. Cloning one cat or dog involves many animals used as 'production units' in the laboratory, from the female dogs used to surgically 'harvest' eggs (oocytes) to the colonies of canine and feline 'surrogate mothers' who are bought from animal dealers, surgically implanted with cloned embryos, and undergo Caesarian sections to remove the fetuses.

In its December company newsletter, one firm stated that it plans to 'rent' dogs from its so-called "National Breeders Network" to use as surrogate mothers in its laboratory. Dog breeders can ship dogs to the firm's lab and profit from a kind of 'womb for rent' scheme. A staff member of this corporation said, "Every breeder also ends up with some dogs who lack [desired] traits...so now breeders have a way to earn income from those dogs too and not just from their champions.... We have about 150 dogs in our Network."

To learn more or for references, please see the AAVS report
Pet Cloning: Separating Facts from Fluff.
Available at www.NoPetCloning.org.



801 Old York Rd., #204, Jenkintown, PA 19046
www.NoPetCloning.org 800-SAY-AAVS