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# a note on breeding Snow leopards

*Panthera uncia*

## at St Louis Zoo

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A trio of Snow leopards *Panthera uncia*, born at Copenhagen Zoo in 1959, arrived at St Louis Zoo on 14 October 1959. One of the two males was sold to Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Colorado Springs, leaving us with a pair which has since bred prolifically.

Ever since they arrived at St Louis in 1959 the Snow leopards have been fed horse meat and plucked chicken, supplemented with an occasional freshly-killed chicken, pigeon, or rabbit. The freshly-killed food has been fed most frequently when the female was pregnant or lactating.

Although the amount of space provided for our cats is fairly large, the cages are inadequate for rearing purposes. This is the main reason why we have hand-reared our Snow leopard cubs. Other reasons for bottle-feeding the cubs have included, in one instance, the possible strain to the female while having her first litter over a three day period and, in another, an unusual disturbance caused by a visitor three days after the young were born.

There has always been a certain amount of animosity between our pair of Snow leopards, mostly instigated by the female. Neither animal approaches the other very closely, particularly at feeding time. However, four or five days before mating occurs, the female starts behaving in a friendlier way to the male, lying near him and allowing him to sniff and touch her food. Few acts of copulation have been seen: one keeper has seen the Snow leopards mate on three occasions, and another keeper saw them on one occasion. Apparently oestrus

lasts for only two or three days. Copulation during this period is not nearly so frequent as with the spotted leopard *Panthera pardus*. Some unusual forms of mating behaviour have been noticed in our pair of Snow leopards. Normally they copulate in a ventral/dorsal mating position, but on one occasion the keeper saw them in a ventral/ventral mating position, with the male on top of the female. The male has also been seen and heard emitting a loud piercing scream when copulation is completed.

All the offspring from the three litters born to the Snow leopards have been hand-reared, closely following the recommendations made by Hoff (1961). They were all weaned at eight to ten weeks of age on to a diet of ground chicken and horse meat.

Although the first litter did not receive a regular series of feline distemper serum and vaccine immunisations, the surviving male in the second litter received both series. The third litter was given a series of immunisations at 10-day intervals until two months of

DATE OF MATING	DATE OF BIRTH	SEX OF YOUNG	WEIGHT OF YOUNG AT BIRTH	DATE WHEN EYES OPENED	DATE WHEN FIRST TOOTH ERUPTED	DATE OF DEATH	CAUSE OF DEATH
29.I.1965 to 2.2.1965	9.5.1965	♂	510 g	16.5.1965	31.5.1965	22.9.1965	Respiratory and cardiac arrest while under anaesthesia *
	10.5.1965	♂	368 g	—	—	13.5.1965	Heart defect
	12.5.1965	♂	481 g	—	—	12.5.1965	Unknown
	12.5.1965	♂	453 g	21.5.1965	—	27.5.1965	Enteritis
27.I.1966 to 30.I.1966	9.5.1966	♀	538 g	—	—	13.5.1966	Enteritis
	9.5.1966	♀	566 g	—	—	15.5.1966	Pneumonia
	9.5.1966	♂	595 g	16.5.1966	1.6.1966	Sold †	—
25.I.1966 to 28.I.1967	6.5.1967 ‡	?	—	—	—	9.5.1967	Eaten by female
	6.5.1967	♀	538 g	14.5.1967	—	15.5.1967	Empyema
	6.5.1967	♀	708 g	14.5.1967	23.5.1967	—	—
	6.5.1967	♂	652 g	14.5.1967	23.5.1967	—	—

\* Anaesthesia was administered for an operation on the left eye, in an attempt to correct a corneal laceration with complications, which apparently occurred before the eyes opened. Last known weight was 4.5 kg on 27.8.1965.

† Sold on 17.II.1966. Last known weight was 5.6 kg on 14.8.1966.

‡ Weights of the 1967 litter were recorded on 15.5.1967.

Table 1. Data on three litters of Snow leopard cubs *Panthera uncia* born at St Louis Zoo.

age, at which time the vaccine series was given until the animals became too difficult to handle. Possible sensitivity to injections made us cautious in their administration to the first two litters. We now feel that frequent inoculation is necessary to ensure healthy cubs.

The only constant problem experienced with the Snow leopard cubs is in keeping them from becoming too hot. From our experience, I cannot emphasise too strongly the necessity of keeping their environmental temperature below 29.4°C, especially when they are more than two or three weeks old. If the cubs are being hand-reared, the rearing box should be well ventilated and provided with plenty of absorbent material to absorb the copious amount of urine excreted by Snow leopard cubs.

Table 1 gives details of mating and birth dates, number and sexes of young, birth weight of young, dates when the eyes opened for the first time, dates when the first tooth was cut, last recorded weight, date and cause of death.

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# second successful breeding of cheetahs

*Acinonyx jubatus*

## in a private zoo

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On 14 December 1966 three male cheetah cubs *Acinonyx jubatus* were born to the female cheetah, 'Beauty', in the private collection of animals belonging to Dr Luciano Spinelli. This was the cheetah's second litter. The first litter, which consisted of one male cub, 'Nick', was born on 13 January 1966 and the birth and rearing have already been described