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Abstract: Breeding with the cheetah Juanita was very successful. The reasons behind these successes was the use of a separation technique. So further breeding should go on like this with a cheetah named Janica. She gave birth to a male cub. Process of mating, behaviour during pregnancy and dimensions of the straw-lines maternity pens are described

Birth of a cheetah

Acinonyx jubatus

to a captive-bred mother

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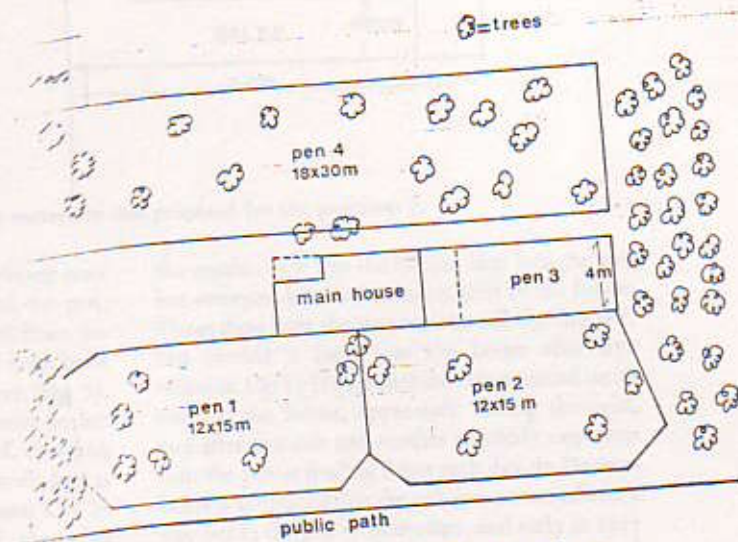
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Previous reports (1; 2) have summarised the birth of the first two litters of cubs to the ♀ cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus*, 'Juanita'. These have been followed by two further litters, making a total of 11 animals in all (three ♂♂ and eight ♀♀). Apart from the first litter, no trouble was experienced with rearing any of these youngsters and all were looked after by their mother until old enough to be separated. This normally took place at about eight months of age.

Details of births of cheetahs in captivity have

been summarised by Rawlins (3 and 4). As a result of the author's investigations into the reasons behind these successes it is suggested that we should continue trying to produce cubs using a 'separation' technique. We have now succeeded in producing a successful pregnancy and a successful birth from a ♀ born at Whipsnade Park.

The ♀, 'Janica', was one of the first born to me in 1968. The young were not separated from their mother until 9 April 1969.



Cheetah enclosure at Whipsnade Zoo showing lay-out of pens.

and the ♂ was sent to another pen with a female ♀, both in February 1970. An unrelated but tame ♂, 'Edashara', joined the two ♀♀ without any incident. In November the sister was sent to another pen.

In January 1971 Janica was introduced to a related ♂, 'Chooe', a tame pet animal. Mating took place and the animals were kept in February she was sent to the hospital at Regent's Park for treatment of a bite inflicted by the ♂. On her return she was put out with the first unrelated ♂ on 13 March. The latter was removed on 30 March and introduced to the ♀ in a larger pen (Pen 4) in July. This pen is at the back of the enclosure, usually contains all but the original pair and measures 30.5 x 17.7 m. Although the area is lightly wooded, cheetahs are observed to move under the lower branches of the trees for some distance on either side of the rear run and originally they could see cheetahs and lynx *Felis lynx* in front of the rear of the middle of July the rear of all front pens was boarded in, effectively blocking all contact, although contact by smell and sight was still present.

In March 1972 Janica was moved to one of the rear pens (1 and 2) of the enclosure, with her sister from the litter born in 1967. Two months

later Edashara was moved to the next paddock and Janica was put with him.

On 16 July Janica was behaving abnormally and was not interested in food. The next day she was moved into the Cheetah House but close observation showed that she was in oestrus and was not pregnant. Consequently, she was moved to the rear enclosure (Pen 4) with her father 'Jack' and the ♀ from the 1970 litter. After a few minutes with no activity the ♂ started to chase her and at one point appeared to regard the second ♀ as the one in oestrus. During the next three days he was occasionally seen to chase Janica but no mating was observed. On 22 July she ate only half of her ration and the following day she ate nothing. Her appetite returned to normal on 24 July and nothing abnormal was observed during the next eight weeks. On 28 September she was routinely injected with a booster dose of a formalin-inactivated feline infectious enteritis vaccine and on 4 October was dosed with piperazine adipate for suspected ascarid infection. It was noted at the time that her abdomen was swollen.

She was released into the rear pen (Pen 4) and, from 5 October, she was always seen waiting for her food at the same place; when the meat was thrown she would pick it up and quickly run to the other side of the pen. (Her mother, Juanita, behaved in the same way before the birth of her cubs.) At the same time it was noted that

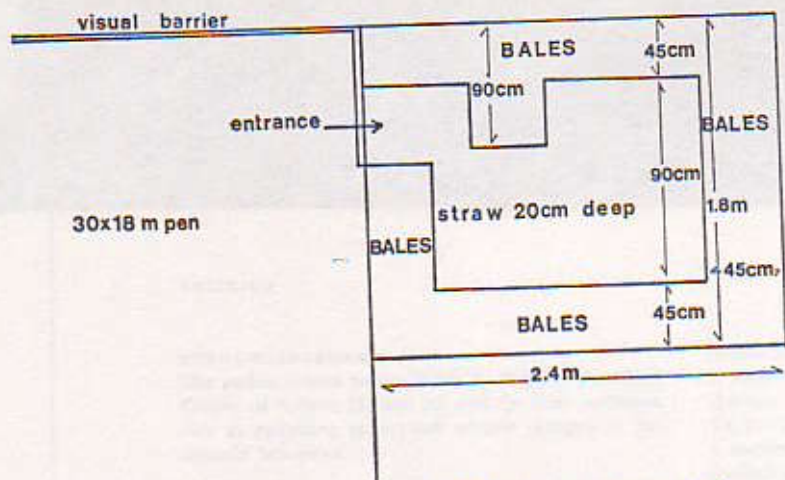


Fig. 2. Dimensions of the straw-lines maternity den prepared for the pregnant ♀.

Janica was lying down or sitting wherever possible and had stopped prowling round the pen. On 13 October Edashara was removed from the paddock and the wooden house lined with bales of straw, leaving a small area in between (Fig. 2). On 16 October Janica became aggressive to her keepers and to other members of staff, charging at the fence. Care was taken to disturb her as little as possible even at feeding times. On 20 October an abdominal ripple, of the kind previously observed during the advanced stages of pregnancy, was seen when Janica was lying down. On 25 October one cub was born.

For several days after parturition Janica did not wait for her food in the paddock, and only came out of the house after the meat had been thrown over the fence; as soon as she had finished eating, she returned to the house. On 27 October she started to charge the fence once again and a slight haemorrhagic discharge was noticed on her tail. She continued, however, to return quickly to the house as soon as she had eaten her food. The aggression appeared to decrease from 31 October onwards and she was never seen outside the house except at feeding time. On 21 November it was felt safe to entice her out of the paddock into a small yard and a quick look was taken into the house. One cub, a ♂, was present, standing up on four feet and with his eyes just beginning to open.

The cub was first seen sitting at the entrance of the house on 13 November, on Day 19, and when

the mother saw this she carried him into the pen but returned him five minutes later to the house. Three days later she was seen to call the cub out, but carried it back into the house after five minutes. On 17 November the cub returned on its own to the house, apparently feeling the cold, and after this cub and mother regularly came out into the pen at feeding times each day. In December it was noticed that the cub spent most of every day out in the pen with mother, and early in 1973 started to protect his mother from zoo staff and others walking round the pen. The cub was seen to eat meat for the first time on 2 December 1972.

Janica's diet for the previous year consisted of approximately 2 kg beef or horsemeat daily, dusted with an Omni-Carnivore supplement. She also received one whole chicken each month. The birth took place 94 days after the ♀ had appeared to be in oestrus and had not eaten for a day.

The cub was injected with 3 ml of inactivated feline infectious enteritis vaccine on 21 December and the dose was repeated on 18 January 1973. The animal weighed 3.4 kg on 21 December (Day 57); the average weight of five previous young, weighed at 64 days of age, was 3.74 kg. It has not been weighed since but appears to be in excellent health and has grown rapidly. At the time of writing (April 1973) cub and mother are still together in the rear pen, spending most of the daylight hours outside the house.

A litter was born to captive-bred parents on 30 October 1973.
EDITOR.