

# MYTH BUSTERS

## SO, YOU THINK YOU WANT A BIG CAT?

I've followed Savannah Cat forums and email lists since 2006. One of the most common comments I see from prospective Savannah owners is about the size of the cat. Everyone wants a large, beautiful, wild-looking cat. "The bigger, the better."

There's nothing wrong with wanting that and it's part of what also drew me to the breed. People happily share stories about their cats and are quick to warn newcomers about the energy and time requirements of an enormous, high energy, hybrid cat. I share those stories too. But one story's often not shared in these forums, and I think it covers a very sad, and often ignored part of pet ownership. I think any Savannah, regardless of size, will make you fall in love with them. They're amazing, personable, wonderful members of the family.

Our first F1, "Nimar", was unbelievably social and affectionate, insanely smart, and his antics kept us laughing. I couldn't imagine life without him. He had social traits people reference when they say, Savannahs are dog-like." He was adorably stubborn, and I've never, ever met a more intelligent animal. We would continually invent new games for him because he would so quickly get bored.

By: Jenn Culler, Savannah owner



## Nimar was big-but not as big as they can get-he was 23lbs and tall

He could run nearly 40mph IN the house, and he could jump from the floor to the top of the fridge with no effort. He, I think, was the poster child of what many people think they want in a Savannah. He was perfect in my eyes and turned many non-cat-people into cat lovers. In 2014, he developed a runny nose that progressed into a series of severe sinus infections that were uncontrollable. We had to have him knocked out several times for sinus flushes. We had several antibiotics to administer (liquids, pills, and shots).

In 2015, he developed diabetes in a matter of a few weeks and fell very, very sick. As it turns out, he had Acromegaly (a pituitary tumor that spits out a wicked mess of growth hormones that do insane things to the body).

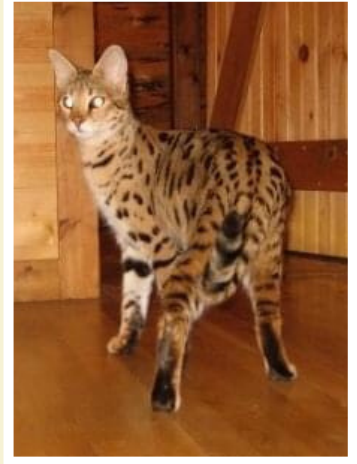
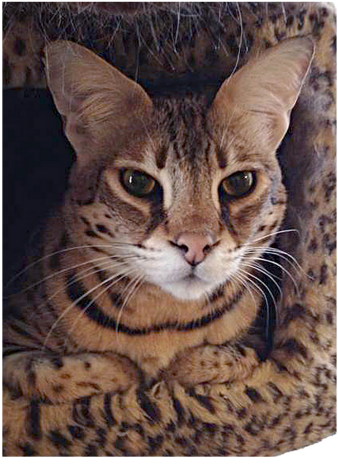
After a stint in the ER for diabetic ketoacidosis, we administered insulin injections and antibiotics twice daily. We checked his blood sugar regularly as we couldn't get him regulated well on any. Recall how I said he was "adorably stubborn"? That's not so adorable when trying to administer life-saving medication! Some days all went well, and other days we fought. By fight, I don't mean he attacked, he didn't want his ear pricked for the 9000th time, so he became a bucking bronco at the start of my approach.

## Nimar was insanely strong; too strong to manage on my own when he was in a mood.

He was insanely strong; too strong to manage on my own when in a mood. Sometimes, it took both humans in the house to wrangle him. Fortunately, he was distractible with food, making the insulin shots less dramatic; but pills were a fight too. Getting him in the crate for a vet visit was a total nightmare, even before he became ill. We tried it all, from treats, to leaving the crate out. We did that because the cats play and sleep in them.

On a travel day, he knew and would disappear. After finding him, I'd refrain from calling the National Guard to get him in the crate. Due to his condition, we often went to the vet weekly, and the battle never lessened. Crating him involved welding gloves, a blanket party, tears, and blood (from me).

A note about vets: Some are afraid of large cats. If you're in an area with plenty of vets, you can always pick another. I've had vets be overly cautious because they are concerned for their staff. We had an ER vet call, when Nimar ate a bunch of string, to come to take him home because he was being a snappy ass.



While waiting for Nimar's birth, we'd hoped for a 30# cat (believed to be the average Savannah size.

Throughout Nimar's three-year battle with Acromegaly, I thanked the powers-that-be he was ONLY in the low 20s. I don't know that I could've managed a larger cat!

If it were our domestics, one of whom is 20lbs, slower, and not nearly as strong, and nowhere as smart, it would've been less stressful to manage. We did what we could and hoped at best, most of the meds made it into the cat! There were days when his breakfast or dinner took an HOUR because we had to wait for him to settle to give him the insulin shot, rather than force him down to administer it (which rarely worked as he was Houdini when it came to restraint).

**Jenn Culler is a dedicated cat-mom, avid blogger, artist, public relations data cruncher, and total history/re-enactment geek living in the wild woodlands of WV. You can read Jenn's blog and more about Nimar [here](#).**

Nimar was an exceptionally social lover.

He loved to sit on the sofa with us and watch movies. He cuddled with me in bed. He was the happy purveyor of headbutts and leg rubs. I'm sure there are large Savannahs that would sit and purr through a shot or a blood test, but I'd bet there are many more who wouldn't. When you add in size and strength, it's harder to manage care and I'd kick myself when the insulin didn't all make it in because he was just too fast for me.

I always wanted a large, wild-looking cat.

Thanks to our incredible team of vets, we were able to keep him with us as long as his disease would allow. I would've done anything for him. Losing him left us floundering and in the market immediately for another Savannah (the hole he left was so big it took three more to start to fill it). I now understand the time and effort to care for a large cat that gets ill. This is something every potential Savannah owner should consider when they start searching for their perfect kitten.

**Do you have a Savannah Rescue Story to share for a future edition?  
Contact us!**