

## Study: Cheetahs not monogamous

May 31 2007

---

A British study found that female cheetahs in Tanzania are prone to infidelity -- having cubs with several different fathers.

Although the practice is rare among other big cats, the researchers said DNA analysis of the speedy cats found that nearly half of the litters analyzed contained cubs from multiple different fathers, the BBC reported Wednesday.

The researchers said the infidelity could expose the animals to disease but it could also help the endangered species ensure genetic diversity.

"If the cubs are genetically more variable it may allow them to adapt and evolve to different circumstances," said one of the scientists involved in the study, Dada Gottelli of the Zoological Society of London.

"If there is a big change in the environment some may be able to cope better."

The scientists studied 176 cheetahs for about nine years and found that of the 47 litters of cubs born in that time, 43 percent contained cubs from different fathers.

"If anything, this is an underestimate," Gotelli said. "Cheetah cubs suffer high mortality in the first few weeks so it was difficult to get samples from all of them."

*Copyright 2007 by United Press International*

Citation: Study: Cheetahs not monogamous (2007, May 31) retrieved 11 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-05-cheetahs-monogamous.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.