



"Are All Calicoes Female?"

**By Kit Belcher, Executive Director
The Beltrami Humane Society**

Most recently I was reading over a study conducted by the College of Veterinary Medicine in Missouri as they were looking at statistics of genes governing the colors in different species of cats. In studying calico cats and tortoiseshell or “torties”, it was noted that most calicos are female, but not all of them. One in 3,000 cats studied were found to be males.

It was noted that the gene that governs how the red/orange color in a cat displays would be found on the X, or female, chromosome. Statistically speaking, any cat whether male or female could be orange, but in males, that color was usually expressed in one way: the tabby pattern. This cat color could also be noted as a “ginger tom” or marmalade tabby. In the female species however, their color could be referred to as red tabbies, torties or calicoes. The difference between the calico and tortie would be that the calico genetically speaking had patches of color and white spotting, while the colors of the tortie appeared to be swirled together. This is where the term “swirl tabby” seemed to originate.

Though males were found to make up the majority of red tabbies, females made up the majority of calicoes, torties and tabbies. Females however, were also found among the red tabbies. If a calico or tortoiseshell pattern existed in males, the reason appeared to be that the cat actually had an extra chromosome (two X and one Y). In some instances (but not all) this had caused sterility, which is a genetic rarity in these cats also called “Klinefelter males”. This same scenario of genetic rarity has also been known to occur in people, causing obviously different scientific results.

So next time you see a red or marmalade tabby, a calico or tortie, you may want to look twice. Is it a male or female?

Beltrami Humane Society currently houses a number of calicoes, torties and tabby cats. Some are diluted colors; some are primary or distinctive colors. Two of our featured cats this week are “Clyde” and “Missy Kat”. “Clyde” is a very large tabby and white male cat that has great markings, is declawed and neutered. He is approximately 2-3 yrs old. He came to the shelter from our animal control officer who apparently had picked him up out in the Grant Valley Township area. He is very loveable, huggable and a “big teddy bear”. Is this cat yours? “Missy Kat” is a very pretty female-spayed calico who came to the shelter as a stray. She is approximately 2 years old & friendly. She likes to play and loves attention. She too... has wonderful colors! Both cats have had their basic kennel vaccinations, have been de-wormed and de-fleaed. They are waiting to go to their forever homes.

You can see our cats and dogs available for adoption on our website photo gallery at www.beltramihumane.com or also on www.petfinder.com. Visit our shelter at 1612 Carr Lake Rd SE, Bemidji, or call us for further information at (218) 751-7910. Our hours of operation are Tuesday through Saturday 12-5:30 p.m. Catch our featured pets of the week on KKBj Mix 103 (early show) or see pictures displayed at both Pamida and Walmart.

Join us in our Easter Basket Fundraiser and help us give the homeless animals at the shelter some special attention: a treat and toy of their very own. Your \$10 donation for each animal sponsored will help purchase an Easter treat for that animal and an acknowledgement of your contribution will be displayed at the shelter. You will also receive a photo “thank you” from each sponsored animal. You can make your donation online (specify the donation for the Easter Baskets), or mail your check to: Beltrami Humane Society, P.O. Box 1903, Bemidji, MN 56619-1903. Thank you for your help!

Shelter Wishes: Conference Room Table/10-12 folding chairs, dog leashes, clay cat litter, cat koozie beds, laundry supplies, disposable gloves

