

21. Teddy Bear Genetics

A mule is the product of the sexual union of a male donkey and a female horse. Since donkeys are smaller than horses, mules tend to be bigger than donkeys but smaller than horses. Like Ted, they are stubborn, but not as stubborn as donkeys. A horse has 64 chromosomes and a donkey has 62, so it is not surprising that mules have 63 chromosomes. Mules can be male or female, but in either case they are (with extremely rare exceptions) sterile. A mule is similar to but different from a hinny, which is the product of the sexual union of a male horse and a female donkey. Hinnies are rare because male horses are not very interested in female donkeys, despite the possible literal applicability of the term “a nice piece of ass.”

The case with teddy bears is similar but more complex. Teddy bears are the product of the sexual union of a male human and a female bear. Interestingly, they are smaller than either a human or a bear. A human has 46 chromosomes and a bear has 74, but teddy bear can have 52, 54 or 56 chromosomes. The fact that they do not all have the same number of chromosomes is a characteristic that is almost unique to teddy bears. (A somewhat similar phenomenon is that female echidnas have 64 chromosomes, while male echidnas have 63, which is certainly odd.) Ted is currently working on a project, lavishly funded by the National Science Foundation, to count the number of chromosomes in other hybrid species, including zebroids, beefalo and nectarines, to see if he can find any other examples. His project is titled “The Possibility of Intra-Species Chromosomal Numerical Diversity in F-1 Hybrids.”

There are no known instances of the offspring of a female human and a male bear. This may be because male bears are somewhat rough lovers and the chances of a human female surviving such a sexual encounter would be small. However, Ted believes that the real explanation lies in the fact that male bears do not find female humans sexually attractive.

Human females do not go into estrus and male bears have little sexual interest in any female, of any species, that is not in estrus. A related point is that very few human females know how to back up properly. (A possible exception might be while they are dancing, but even then they generally expect their dance partner to be in front of them, which makes sexual congress in the Bear Position more or less impossible.)

Teddy bears can be male or female but most are male. More precisely, one fourth of all teddy bears are female, while half are sterile males and one fourth are non-sterile males. The females have 52 chromosomes, and are always sterile. They are for the most part a sad lot, destined to spend long hours in gift shops or tourist souvenir shops waiting to be purchased. They are often forced to wear plaid dresses, and sometimes bows in their head-fur. They are typically bought as presents for young girls who soon abandon them in favor of flashier companions like Barbie Dolls. The sterile males, who tend to look more human and less bear-like than Ted, make up the bulk of the retail teddy bear market. They are also often forced to wear strange clothing (think of Paddington Bear, for example), and they are good if uninteresting companions. They have 54 chromosomes. Finally, the non-sterile males (like Ted) have 56 chromosomes. They are more bear-like than human, and have a reputation as fierce predators and bon vivant adventurers. Only a mentally strong person like Kristin can keep them in line (and, indeed, even Kristin sometimes thinks that Ted is out of control, especially if you get him near a motorcycle or a bar).

The non-sterile male teddy bears (or NSMTB's) are very attracted to human females, especially ones with large breasts. They certainly understand the concept of boobs, and if they have a fault as lovers it is that they pay too much attention to the woman's boobs and not enough to other parts of her anatomy. However, while they can easily have sex with human females,

they cannot father a child by them. They can only successfully create offspring with other creatures with 56 chromosomes, notably elephants. The cross between a male teddy bear and a female elephant, called a teddephant, is a strange creature with fur and sharp teeth but also large ears and a trunk. They tend to be malnourished because they can't decide what to eat, and like diners in many trendy American restaurants they end up eating ridiculous combinations of food, like salmon wrapped in banyan leaves. There are very few teddephants because of the obvious difficulties caused by the large size difference between the two potential sexual partners. Some teddy bears have tried to mate with elephants in estrus using ladders, but if the female elephant backs up too far there can be serious problems, or even fatalities. This problem can be partially solved by lowering the bear to the appropriate level of the elephant using a crane. However, female elephants in estrus tend to attract bull elephants who generally react violently to other creatures attempting sexual relations with their intended partner, and who could do a lot of damage to a crane, or to a suspended small bear. Again, fatalities would be not uncommon. As a result, virtually all teddephants are born in captivity, where marauding bull elephants are not a threat. However, most NSMTB's avoid elephants altogether and focus on human females. If they want offspring, they can always adopt something or other.

Ted also avoided elephants because he was happy with Kristin. In fact, if it were possible he would have liked to marry her. The reason was not to gain access to her magnificent boobs, which he already had, but so that he could get legal residency status, a green card, and ultimately US citizenship. Of course, even if Kristin were willing to marry him, this plan would require Piotr's demise and also a change in the law of the State of Michigan, which currently prohibits cross-species marriages. Ted was reasonably loyal to Piotr but he wanted to hedge his bets, so he started a political action group he called Americans for Cross-Species Justice (ACSJ) to push

for the legalization of cross-species marriage. He made a bold but perhaps mistaken decision to recommend that marriage only be allowed when both partners were from dignified species. This cost him a lot of support, since polls indicated that, if it were possible, 9.8% of middle-aged American women would divorce their husbands and marry their dogs. Another controversial position was that marriages should not be allowed when one of the two species regards the other as food. This effectively ruled out marriages between salt-water crocodiles and virtually everyone else, and made some people (and other species) question Ted's commitment to species justice. Since not all species are good at traditional forms of communication, Ted was forced to think hard (something he is not very good at) about methods of indicating informed consent. If the judge asked, "Ted, do you take this eagle to be your lawfully wedded wife?," Ted could say "yes." But eagles can't speak English at all, and so they would have to find an alternative method of indicating yes, like swooping down three times without attacking and then landing gently on the head of their intended spouse.

Conservative Republicans generally opposed Ted's initiative, and introduced a substitute proposal that would allow marriage only when each of the two partners had at least one human parent. That would have allowed marriage between humans and teddy bears, or for that matter between two teddy bears, but Ted decided to stand firm for his principles and fight for justice for more species. In the end a compromise was reached that would legalize marriage between humans and members of any dignified species. So a person could marry an eagle or a bear, but a bear could not marry an eagle, and in fact a teddy bear could not marry a teddy bear. This cost Ted the support of most of the other-species community, but he was smart enough to know who made the laws of the state of Michigan, and it would open the door for Ted to marry Kristin in the unlikely event that something happened to Piotr.

Unfortunately even Ted's compromise proposal could not win approval. Partly this was due to the Pope's personal intervention, which cost the support of many Catholic voters. But the last straw was the vehement opposition of the canine lobby, which has long been influential in Michigan politics because many a powerful politician is a son of a bitch. Ted is considering moving his initiative to one of the states of the Mountain West, perhaps Wyoming, where attitudes toward intimate relationships between human males and females of other species have long been somewhat more relaxed than elsewhere.