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The Moscow Zoo's Manul Is a Social Media Star. He Still Can't Find a Mate.

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The Moscow Zoo / Moskva News Agency

At least seven countries have declined to provide a mate for Timofei, the Moscow Zoo's Pallas's cat and social media star, Russian media reported.

The Moscow Zoo has been seeking a genetically suitable female for Timofei to ensure healthy offspring and preserve genetic diversity, zoo director Svetlana Akulova said.

Japan's Higashiyama Zoo said last week that its Pallas's cats cannot be transferred to Russia.

"Both Pallas's cats at our Higashiyama Zoo are on loan, so we cannot transfer them," a zoo representative told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency, adding that "we are currently looking to acquire new Pallas's cats ourselves."

The Warsaw Zoo also declined last month to provide its female Pallas's cat, Jessie, as she is a part of the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP).

"[Jessie] is our star and was named our zoo's 'Animal of the Year' in 2024," a zoo

representative said. “We are not searching for a partner for our female [cat] in Russia.”

The French Spaycific’Zoo had earlier failed to offer a female Pallas’s cat to Timofei after its females were found to be carrying feline herpes virus.

The Finnish Zoo said its only female Pallas’s cat had already formed a stable breeding pair.

The Rotterdam Zoo in the Netherlands and Sweden’s Nordens Ark Zoo said decisions about forming breeding pairs are made by the EEP coordinator based on genetic recommendations.

The EEP for Pallas’s cats in Europe is managed by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, the Rotterdam Zoo representative said, advising that any requests be directed to the program’s coordinator.

Berlin Zoo also declined to provide a potential mate for the same reasons.

Timofei was born in 2020 in Novosibirsk and was later transferred to the Moscow Zoo, where he became one of the zoo’s symbols. He has gained a large fanbase on social media thanks to his seasonal weight gain ahead of winter, called “zazhirovka” in Russian.

An August 2025 study by the Yandex Dzen blogging platform found that Timofei was the most-discussed cat in the Russian media, surpassing Choupette, the pet of late fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld.

Due to its widespread range and assumed large population, the Pallas’s cat has been listed as a species of Least Concern on the IUCN Red List since 2020.

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