

Four Pet Owners Win Online Bid to Clone Dogs

BioArts International launched global online auctions that have fetched \$600,000.

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BioArts founder Lou Hawthorne and the three clones of his dog Missy, a border collie mix. Four international bidders pledged more than \$100,000 each in an online dog clone auction to have their best friend exactly replicated. So far, the auction has fetched more than \$600,000.

The Best Friends Again program, sponsored by BioArts International, auctioned off five dog cloning service spots to the general public. The first auction started July 5 with an opening bid of \$100,000 and increased to \$180,000 for the final auction, July 9.

Two of the auctions were won with bids of \$140,000 each, while the other two raised \$155,000 and \$170,000 respectively, according to spokesman Ed Fogelman. "Everyone wants to remain anonymous," he said of the successful dog-owning bidders.

Winners are guaranteed that the cloned dogs will remain healthy for at least one year. BioArts said the fifth dog cloning spot is in the process of being closed.

Dogs are among the most difficult animals to clone, but BioArts said it succeeded in 2007 in creating three clones of a dog named Missy, who belongs to the company's founder, Lou Hawthorne. BioArts International has been granted the sole, worldwide license for the cloning of dogs, cats, and endangered species.

The opening and closing times for the auctions were staggered to offer a level playing field for bidders in different time zones. The Best Friends Again Program is a partnership between BioArts and Soom Biotech Research Foundation in South Korea, where scientists cloned a dog in 2005, but were discredited when they falsely claimed to have cloned human embryos and stem cells.