







Cat

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This article is about the species that is commonly kept as a pet. For the cat family, see [Felidae](#). For other uses, see [Cat \(disambiguation\)](#).
"Cats" redirects here. For other uses, see [Cats \(disambiguation\)](#).

<div>Cat</div>	
<div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div></div> <div>Various types of cat</div>	
<div><div><div>Conservation status</div></div></div>	
<div>Domesticated</div>	
<div><div><div>Scientific classification</div><div></div></div></div>	
Kingdom:	<div>Animalia</div>
Phylum:	<div>Chordata</div>
Class:	<div>Mammalia</div>
Order:	<div>Carnivora</div>
Suborder:	<div>Feliformia</div>
Family:	<div>Felidae</div>
Subfamily:	<div>Felinae</div>

Genus:	<i>Felis</i>
Species:	<i>F. catus</i> ^[1]
Binomial name	
<i>Felis catus</i> ^[1]	
Linnaeus, 1758 ^[2]	
Synonyms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Catus domesticus</i> Erxleben, 1777^[3] • <i>F. angorensis</i> Gmelin, 1788 • <i>F. vulgaris</i> Fischer, 1829 	

The **cat** (*Felis catus*) is a [domestic species](#) of small [carnivorous mammal](#).^{[1][2]} It is the only domesticated species in the family [Felidae](#) and is often referred to as the **domestic cat** to distinguish it from the wild members of the family.^[4] A cat can either be a **house cat**, a [farm cat](#) or a [feral cat](#); the latter ranges freely and avoids human contact.^[5] Domestic cats are valued by humans for companionship and their ability to kill [rodents](#). About 60 [cat breeds](#) are recognized by various [cat registries](#).^[6]

The cat is similar in [anatomy](#) to the other felid species: it has a strong flexible body, quick [reflexes](#), sharp teeth and [retractable claws](#) adapted to killing small prey. Its [night vision](#) and sense of smell are well developed. [Cat communication](#) includes [vocalizations](#) like [meowing](#), [purring](#), trilling, hissing, [growling](#) and grunting as well as [cat-specific body language](#). A [predator](#) that is most active at dawn and dusk ([crepuscular](#)), the cat is a solitary hunter but a [social species](#). It can hear sounds too faint or too high in [frequency](#) for human ears, such as those made by [mice](#) and other small mammals.^[7] Cats also secrete and perceive [pheromones](#).^[8]

Female domestic cats can have kittens from spring to late autumn, with litter sizes often ranging from two to five kittens.^[9] Domestic cats are bred and shown at events as registered [pedigreed cats](#), a hobby known as [cat fancy](#). [Population control](#) of cats may be effected by [spaying](#) and [neutering](#), but their proliferation and the abandonment of pets has resulted in large numbers of feral cats worldwide, contributing to the extinction of entire bird, mammal, and reptile species.^[10]

Cats were first domesticated in the [Near East](#) around 7500 BC.^[11] It was long thought that cat domestication began in [ancient Egypt](#), where [cats were venerated](#) from around 3100 BC.^{[12][13]} As of 2021, there were an estimated 220 million owned and 480 million stray cats in the world.^{[14][15]} As of 2017, the domestic cat was the second-most popular pet in the United States, with 95.6 million cats owned^{[16][17][18]} and around 42 million households own at least one cat.^[19] In the United Kingdom, 26% of adults have a cat with an estimated population of 10.9 million pet cats as of 2020.^[20]



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Etymology and naming

The origin of the English word *cat*, [Old English](#) *catt*, is thought to be the [Late Latin](#) word *cattus*, which was first used at the beginning of the 6th century.^[21] It was suggested that the word 'cattus' is derived from an [Egyptian](#) precursor of [Coptic](#) [ⲙⲁⲩ](#) *šau*, "tomcat", or its feminine form suffixed with *-t*.^[22] The Late Latin word may be derived from another [Afro-Asiatic](#)^[23] or [Nilo-Saharan](#) language. The [Nubian](#) word *kaddīska* "wildcat" and [Nobiin](#) *kadīs* are possible sources or

cognates.^[24] The Nubian word may be a loan from [Arabic](#) قَطَّ *qatt* ~ قِطَّ *qitt*. It is "equally likely that the forms might derive from an ancient Germanic word, imported into Latin and thence to Greek and to Syriac and Arabic".^[25] The word may be derived from Germanic and Northern European languages, and ultimately be borrowed from [Uralic](#), cf. [Northern Sami](#) *gáđfi*, "female [stoat](#)", and [Hungarian](#) *hölgy*, "lady, female stoat"; from [Proto-Uralic](#) **kād'wä*, "female (of a furred animal)".^[26]

The English [puss](#), extended as *pussy* and *pussycat*, is attested from the 16th century and may have been introduced from [Dutch](#) *poes* or from [Low German](#) *puuskatte*, related to [Swedish](#) *kattepus*, or [Norwegian](#) *pus*, *pusekatt*. Similar forms exist in Lithuanian *puižė* and [Irish](#) *puisín* or *puiscín*. The etymology of this word is unknown, but it may have simply [arisen from a sound](#) used to attract a cat.^{[27][28]}

A male cat is called a *tom* or *tomcat*^[29] (or a *gib*,^[30] if neutered). An [unspayed](#) female is called a *queen*,^[31] (or a *molly*,^[32] if spayed), especially in a cat-breeding context. A juvenile cat is referred to as a *kitten*. In [Early Modern English](#), the word *kitten* was interchangeable with the now-obsolete word *catling*.^[33] A group of cats can be referred to as a *clowder* or a *glaring*.^[34]

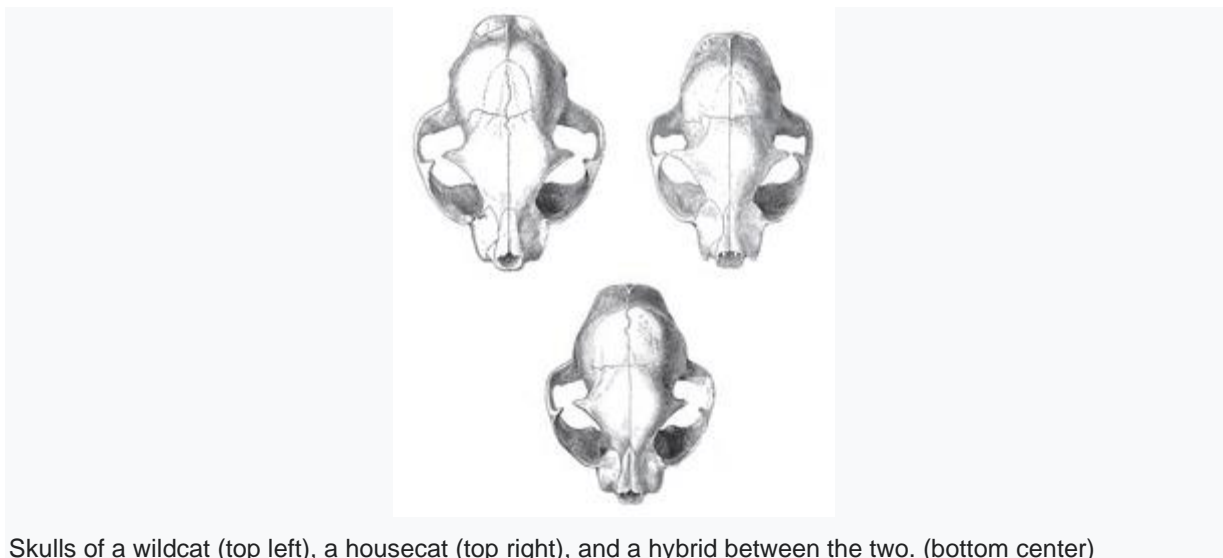
Taxonomy

The [scientific name](#) *Felis catus* was proposed by [Carl Linnaeus](#) in 1758 for a domestic cat.^{[1][2]} *Felis catus domesticus* was proposed by [Johann Christian Polycarp Erxleben](#) in 1777.^[3] *Felis daemon* proposed by [Konstantin Alekseevich Satunin](#) in 1904 was a black cat from the [Transcaucasus](#), later identified as a domestic cat.^{[35][36]}

In 2003, the [International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature](#) ruled that the domestic cat is a distinct species, namely *Felis catus*.^{[37][38]} In 2007, it was considered a [subspecies](#), *F. silvestris catus*, of the [European wildcat](#) (*F. silvestris*) following results of [phylogenetic](#) research.^{[39][40]} In 2017, the IUCN Cat Classification Taskforce followed the recommendation of the ICZN in regarding the domestic cat as a distinct species, *Felis catus*.^[41]

Evolution

Main article: [Cat evolution](#)



The domestic cat is a member of the Felidae, a [family](#) that had a [common ancestor](#) about 10–15 million years ago.^[42] The [genus](#) *Felis* [diverged](#) from other Felidae around 6–7 million years ago.^[43] Results of [phylogenetic](#) research confirm that the wild *Felis* species evolved through [sympatric](#) or [parapatric speciation](#), whereas the domestic cat evolved through [artificial selection](#).^[44] The domesticated cat and its closest wild ancestor are [diploid](#) and both possess 38 [chromosomes](#)^[45] and roughly 20,000 genes.^[46] The [leopard cat](#) (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) was [tamed](#) independently in China around 5500 BC. This line of partially domesticated cats leaves no trace in the domestic cat populations of today.^[47]

Domestication

See also: [Evolution of the domesticated cat](#)



A cat eating a fish under a chair, a [mural](#) in an Egyptian tomb dating to the 15th century BC

The earliest known indication for the [taming](#) of an [African wildcat](#) (*F. lybica*) was [excavated](#) close by a human [Neolithic](#) grave in [Shillourokambos](#), southern [Cyprus](#), dating to about 7500–7200 BC. Since there is no evidence of native mammalian [fauna](#) on Cyprus, the inhabitants of this Neolithic village most likely brought the cat and other wild mammals to the island from the [Middle Eastern](#) mainland.^[48] Scientists therefore assume that African wildcats were attracted to early human settlements in the [Fertile Crescent](#) by rodents, in particular the [house mouse](#) (*Mus musculus*), and were tamed by Neolithic farmers.

This [mutual](#) relationship between early farmers and tamed cats lasted thousands of years. As [agricultural practices](#) spread, so did tame and domesticated cats.^{[11][6]} Wildcats of Egypt contributed to the maternal [gene pool](#) of the domestic cat at a later time.^[49]