





Sleeping,  
Observing,  
Wandering...  
All Day Long.



## Cat

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 commonly referred to as the domestic cat or house cat to distinguish it from the wild members of the family. [4] Cats are commonly kept as house pets but can also be farm cats or feral cats; the feral cat 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 like mice and rats. 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. Although the cat is a social species, it is a solitary hunter. As a predator, it is crepuscular, i.e. most active at dawn and dusk. 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] It also secretes and perceives 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 pedigree cats, a hobby known as cat fancy. Population control of cats may be achieved 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.

It was long thought that cat domestication began in ancient Egypt, where cats were venerated from around 3100 BC, [11] [12] but recent advances in archaeology and genetics have shown that their domestication occurred in Western Asia around 7500 BC. [13]

## 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 *cattus* is derived from an Egyptian precursor of Coptic *šau*, 'tom-cat', 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 *kaddiska* 'wildcat' and Nobiin *kadi* are possible sources or cognates. [24] The Nubian word may be a loan from Arabic *qa* ~ *qi*.

However, 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 *\*kād̥wä*, ‘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 *katt* *pus*, or Norwegian *pus*, *pusekatt*. Similar forms exist in Lithuanian *puižė* and Irish *púisín* or *púiscín*. The etymology of this word is unknown, but it may have arisen from a sound used to attract a cat. [27] [28] A male cat is called a *tom* or *tomcat* [29] (or *agib*, [30] if neutered). A female is called a *queen* [31] (or *molli*, [32] [user-generated source?] 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 *aglar*. [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 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

Skulls of a wildcat (top left), a housecat (top right), and a hybrid between the two. (bottom center) 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 a med 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: Domestication of the 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



aming 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. [13] [6] Wildcats of Egypt contributed to the maternal-gene pool of the domestic cat at a later time. [49] The earliest known evidence for the occurrence of the domestic cat in Greece dates to around 1200 BC. Greek, Phoenician, Carthaginian and Etruscan traders

introduced domestic cats to southern Europe. [50] During the Roman Empire they were introduced to Corsica and Sardinia. 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ciesof smallcarnivorous mammal.[1] [2]It is the only domesticated species in the familyFelidaeand is commonly referred to as thedomestic catorhouse catto distinguish it from the wild members of the family.[4]Cats are commonly kept as house pets but can also befarm catsorferal cats; the feral cat ranges freely and avoids human contact.[5]Domestic cats are valued by humans for companionship and their ability to killrodents. About 60cat breedsare recognized by variouscat registries.[6] The cat is similar in anatomyto the other felid species: it has a strong flexible body, quickreflexes, sharp teeth, andretractable clawsadapted to killing small prey like mice and rats. Itsnight visionand sense of smell are well developed.Cat communicationincludesvocalizationslikemeowing,purring, trilling, hissing,growling, and grunting as

well ascatspecific body language. Although the cat is asocial species, it is a solitary hunter. As apredator, it iscrepuscular, i.e. most active at dawn and dusk. It can hear sounds too faint or too high infrequencyfor human ears, such as those made bymiceand other small mammals.[7]It also secretes and perceivespheromones.[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 registeredpedigreed cats, a hobby known ascats fancy.Population controlof cats may be achieved byspayingandneutering, 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] It was long thought that cat domesti-

cation began inancient Egypt, wherecats were veneratedfrom around 3100 BC,[11] [12]but recent advances in archaeology and genetics have shown that their domestication occurred in Western Asiaaround 7500 BC.[13] As of 2021,there were an estimated 220 million owned and 480million stray cats in the world.[14] [15]As of 2017,the domestic cat was the second most popular pet in theUnited States, with 95.6million cats owned[16] [17] [18]and around 42 million households owning at least one cat.[19]In theUnited Kingdom, 26% of adults have a cat, with an estimated population of 10.9million pet cats as of 2020. [20]

## Etymology

## and naming

The origin of the English wordcat,Old Englishcatt, is thought to be theLate Latinwordcattus, which was first used at the beginning of the 6th century. [21]It was suggested thatcattusis derived from anEgyptianprecursor of Coptic šau, ‘tomcat’, or its feminine form suffixed with-t.[22]The Late Latin word may be derived from anotherAfro-Asiatic [23]orNilo-Saharanlanguage. TheNubianword-kaddîska‘wildcat’ andNobiinkadisare

possible sources or cognates.[24]The Nubian word may be a loan fromArabic qa ~ qi .

However, 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 fromUralic, cf.Northern Samigádfi, ‘femalestoat’, andHungarianhölgy, ‘lady, female stoat’; fromProto-Uralic\*kād’wä, ‘female (of a furred animal)’.[26]

The Englishpuss, extended aspusseyandpusseycat, is attested from the 16th century and may have been introduced fromDutchpoesor fromLow Germanpuuskatte, related toSwedishkattetus, orNorwegianpus,pusekatt. Similar forms exist in LithuanianpuizėandIrishpuisínorpuiscín. The etymology of this word is unknown, but it may havearisen from a soundused to attract a cat. [27] [28]

A male cat is called atomortomcat[29](or agib,[30]ifneutered). A female is called aqueen[31](or amolly,[32][user-generated source?]ifspayed), especially in a cat-breeding context. A juvenile cat is referred to as akitten. InEarly Modern English, the wordkittenwas interchangeable with the now-obsolete wordcatling. [33]A group of cats can be referred to as aclowderor aglaring.[34]



## Taxonomy

Thescientific nameFelis catuswas proposed byCarl Linnaeusin 1758 for a domestic cat.[1] [2]Felis catus domesticuswas proposed byJohann Christian Polycarp Erxlebenin 1777.[3] Felis daemonproposed byKonstantin Satuninin 1904 was a black cat from theTranscaucasus, later identified as a domestic cat.[35] [36]

In 2003, theInternational Commission on Zoological Nomenclatureruled that the domestic cat is a distinct species, namelyFelis catus.[37] [38]In 2007, it was considered asubspecies,F. silvestris catus, of theEuropean wildcat(F. silvestris) following results ofphylogeneticresearch.[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

lasted thousands of years. Asagricultural practicesspread, so did tame and domesticated cats.[13] [6]Wildcats of Egypt contributed to the maternalgene poolof the domestic cat at a later time. [49] regions, and is lowest in purebred populations, which show more than 20 deleteriousgenetic disorders.[59]