



The **cat** (*Felis catus*), also referred to as the **domestic cat**, is a small **domesticated** carnivorous mammal. It is the only domesticated **species** of the family **Felidae**. Advances in [archaeology](#) and [genetics](#) have shown that the [domestication](#) of the cat occurred in the [Near East](#) around 7500 BC. It is commonly kept as a [pet](#) and [farm cat](#), but also ranges freely as a [feral cat](#) avoiding human contact. It is valued by humans for companionship and its ability to kill [vermin](#). Its retractable [claws](#) are adapted to killing small prey species such as [mice](#) and [rats](#). It has a strong, flexible body, quick [reflexes](#), and sharp teeth, and its [night vision](#) and [sense of smell](#) are well developed. It is a [social species](#), but a solitary hunter and a [crepuscular predator](#). [Cat communication](#) includes vocalizations—including [meowing](#), [purring](#), [trilling](#), [hissing](#), [growling](#), and [grunting](#)—as well as [body language](#). It can hear sounds too faint or too high in [frequency](#) for human ears, such as those made by [small mammals](#). It secretes and perceives [pheromones](#).

