



STAY HOME, STAY UP TO Date



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, trill-

ing, 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.[10]

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]

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 owning 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]

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 ⲙⲓⲥⲁⲩ, 'tomcat', or its feminine form suffixed with -t.[22] The Late Latin word may be derived from another

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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

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, afa-

milythat had acommon ancestorabout 10–15million years ago.[42]ThegenusFelisdivergedfrom other Felidae around 6–7million years ago.[43]Results ofphylogeneticresearch confirm that the wildFelis-species evolved throughsympatricorparapatric speciation, whereas the domestic cat evolved throughartificial selection.[44]The domesticated cat and its closest wild ancestor areddiploidand both possess 38chromosomes [45]and roughly 20,000 genes.[46] Theleopard cat(Prionailurus bengalensis) wastamedindependently 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, amuralin an Egyptian tomb dating to the 15th century BC The earliest known indication for thetamingof anAfrican wildcat(F. lybica) wasexcavatedclose by a humanNeolithicgrave inShillourokambos, southernCyprus, dating to about 7500–7200 BC. Since there is no evidence of native mammalianfaunaon Cyprus, the inhabitants of this Neolithic village most likely brought the cat and other wild mammals to the island from theMiddle Easternmainland.[48]Scientists therefore assume that African wildcats were attracted to early human settlements in theFertile Crescentby rodents, in particular thehouse mouse(Mus musculus), and were tamed by Neolithic farmers. Thismutualrelationship between early farmers and tamed cats 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] The earliest known evidence for the occurrence of the domestic cat inGreecedates to around 1200 BC. Greek,Phoenician,CarthaginianandEtruscantraders introduced domestic cats to southern Europe.[50] During theRoman Empirethey were introduced to CorsicaandSardiniabefore the beginning of the 1st

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millennium.[51]By the 5th century BC, they were familiar animals around settlements inMagna GraeciaandEtruria.[52]By the end of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century, the Egyptian domestic cat lineage had arrived in aBaltic Seaport in northern-Germany.[49] During domestication, cats have undergone only minor changes in anatomy and behavior, and they are still capable of surviving in the wild. Several natural behaviors and characteristics of wildcats may have-pre-adaptedthem for domestication as pets. These traits include their small size, social nature, obvious body language, love of play, and high intelligence. CaptiveLeoparduscats may also display affection-ate behavior toward humans but were not domesticated.[53]House cats often mate with feral cats.[54] Hybridisation between domestic and other Felinae speciosis also possible, producing hybrids such as theKellas catinScotland.[55] [56] Development ofcat breedsstarted in the mid 19th century.[57]An analysis of the domestic catgenomerevealed that the ancestral wildcat genome was significantly altered in the process of domestication, as specificmutationswere selected to develop cat breeds. [58]Most breeds are founded on random-bred domestic cats.Genetic diversityof these breeds varies between regions, and is lowest in purebred populations, which show more than 20 deleteriousgenetic disorders.[59] tamed by Neolithic farmers. Thismutual-relationship between early farmers and tamed cats lasted thousands of years. Asagricultural practicesspread, so did tame producing hybrids such as theKellas catinScotland. [55] [56]

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