

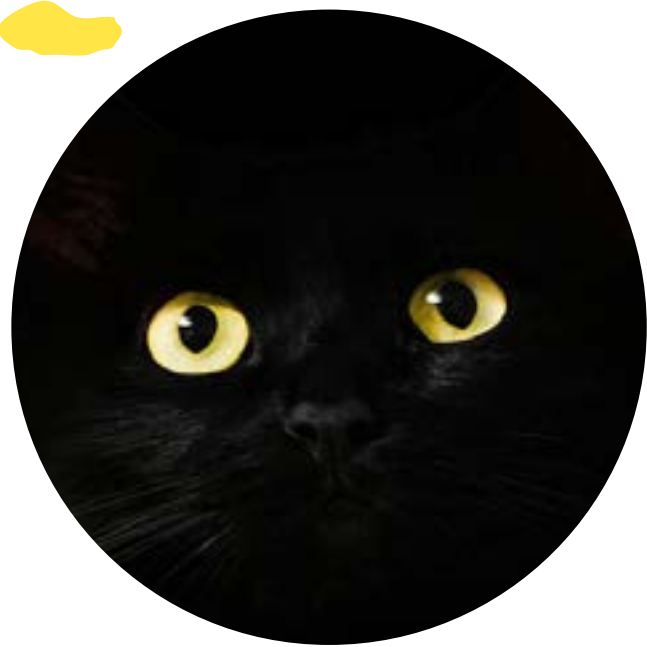




THE CAT

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. [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

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date



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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 *cattus* is derived from an Egyptian precursor of Coptic ⲙⲓⲛⲓⲁⲩ, '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 *kaddiska* 'wildcat' and *Nobiinkadi* are possible sources or cognates. [24] The Nubian word may be a loan from Arabic

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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]

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Evolution

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 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. [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 before the beginning of the 1st millennium. [51] By the 5th century BC, they were familiar animals around settlements in Magna Graecia and Etruria. [52] By the end of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century, the Egyptian domestic cat lineage had arrived in a Baltic 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-adapted them for domestication as pets. These traits include their small size, social nature, obvious body language, love of play, and high intelligence. Captive Leopardus cats may also display affectionate behavior toward humans but were not domesticated.[53] House cats often mate with feral cats.[54] Hybridisation between domestic and other Felinae species is also possible, producing hybrids such as the Kellas cat in Scotland.[55] [56] Development of cat breeds started in the mid 19th century.[57] An analysis of the domestic cat genome revealed that the ancestral wildcat genome was significantly altered in the process of domestication, as specific mutations were selected to develop cat breeds.[58] Most breeds are founded on random-bred domestic cats. Genetic diversity of these breeds varies between regions, and is lowest in purebred populations, which show more than 20 deleterious genetic disorders.[59]



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