

**Animals** are [multicellular](#), [eukaryotic organisms](#) in the [biological kingdom Animalia](#). With few exceptions, animals [consume organic material](#), [breathe oxygen](#), have [myocytes](#) and are [able to move](#), can [reproduce sexually](#), and grow from a hollow sphere of cells, the [blastula](#), during [embryonic development](#). As of 2022, 2.16 million [living animal species](#) have been [described](#)—of which around 1.05 million are [insects](#), over 85,000 are [molluscs](#), and around 65,000 are [vertebrates](#). It has been estimated there are around 7.77 million animal species. Animals range in length from 8.5 micrometres (0.00033 in) to 33.6 metres (110 ft). They have [complex interactions](#) with each other and their environments, forming intricate [food webs](#). The scientific study of animals is known as [zoology](#).

Most living animal species are in [Bilateria](#), a [clade](#) whose members have a [bilaterally symmetric body plan](#). The Bilateria include the [protostomes](#), containing animals such as [nematodes](#), [arthropods](#), [flatworms](#), [annelids](#) and molluscs, and the [deuterostomes](#), containing the [echinoderms](#) and the [chordates](#), the latter including the vertebrates. Life forms interpreted as early animals were present in the [Ediacaran biota](#) of the late [Precambrian](#). Many modern animal [phyla](#) became clearly established in the [fossil record](#) as [marine species](#) during the [Cambrian explosion](#), which began around 539 million years ago. 6,331 groups of [genes](#) common to all living animals have been identified; these may have arisen from a single [common ancestor](#) that lived [650 million years ago](#).

Historically, [Aristotle divided animals](#) into those with blood and those without. [Carl Linnaeus](#) created the first hierarchical [biological classification](#) for animals in 1758 with his [Systema Naturae](#), which [Jean-Baptiste Lamarck](#) expanded into 14 phyla by 1809. In 1874, [Ernst Haeckel](#) divided the animal kingdom into the multicellular **Metazoa** (now [synonymous](#) with Animalia) and the [Protozoa](#), single-celled organisms no longer considered animals. In modern times, the biological classification of animals relies on advanced techniques, such as [molecular phylogenetics](#), which are effective at demonstrating the [evolutionary](#) relationships between [taxa](#).

[Humans](#) make [use of many animal species](#), such as for food (including [meat](#)), for materials (such as [leather](#) and [wool](#)), as [pets](#), and as [working animals](#) including for transport. [Dogs](#) have been [used in hunting](#), as have [birds of prey](#), while many terrestrial and [aquatic animals](#) were hunted for sports. Nonhuman animals have appeared in art since the earliest times and are featured in mythology and religion.

## Etymology

The word "animal" comes from the Latin [animalis](#), meaning 'having breath', 'having soul' or 'living being'.<sup>[4]</sup> The biological definition includes all members of the kingdom Animalia.<sup>[5]</sup> In colloquial usage, the term *animal* is often used to refer only to nonhuman animals.<sup>[6][7][8][9]</sup> The term "metazoa" is derived from the Ancient Greek μέτα (*meta*, meaning "later") and ζῷα (*zōia*, plural of ζῷον *zōion*, meaning animal).<sup>[10][11]</sup>

## Characteristics