
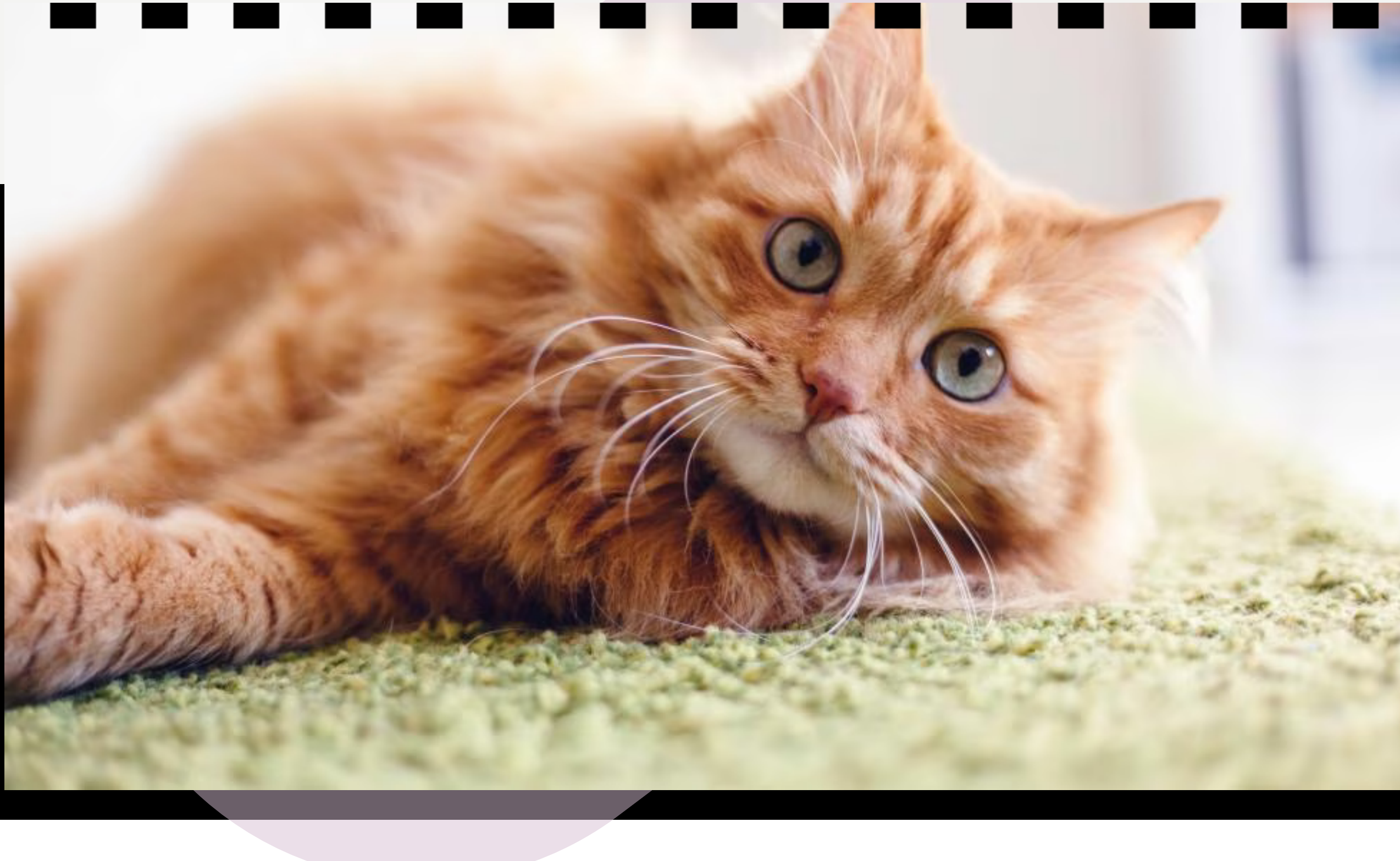


10 Fun Facts About Cats



By [Sandra C. Mitchell, DVM, DABVP](#) on May 9, 2023



Cats are unique animals, adored for both cuteness and behavior quirks, like their obsession with [knocking things off tables](#) and their [headbutting love language](#). But there’s so much more to know (and love!) about cats. Here are some well-hidden secrets and fun facts about cats.

1. Only 20% of Orange Cats Are Female

Female cats have two X chromosomes (XX), while a male cat has one X chromosome and one Y chromosome (XY). Color in cats is mostly related to their sex because the gene causing color is on the X chromosome.

Because a male cat has only one X gene, if that X chromosome has the orange gene, he will be orange. This means that if an orange female cat has a litter of kittens, all the males will be orange—regardless of their dad’s color. But a female cat will only be orange if both of those X chromosomes carry the orange color, meaning both parents must be orange to create an orange female kitten.

We don’t actually know what percentage of cats are orange, but there are estimates that it’s somewhere between 2–5% of all cats. So if your kitty is an orange female, she belongs to an elite club!

2. Cats Have Fewer Taste Buds Than Dogs or People

Cats have about 473 taste buds, which is far fewer than people (we have 9,000) or dogs (who have 1,700). Cats can taste savory, salty, bitter, and sour flavors, but they don’t taste sweets.

But don’t be too sad that your kitty can’t taste ice cream—as obligate carnivores, they’re happy to stick to eating meat.

3. Cats Don’t Get Cavities

This doesn’t mean that cats don’t get dental disease—in fact, up to 90% of cats more than 4 years old have [dental problems](#). However, they don’t get the types of cavities that people do, in part because of the pointed shape of cat teeth (compared to the flat teeth in humans).

Instead, cats get feline resorptive lesions, in which the dentin wears away, leaving them with a painful mouth. Cats also get [gingivitis](#), [stomatitis](#), and [periodontal disease](#).

Dental disease is not just painful; it can shorten the life of your cat. Keep up with regular [tooth brushing at home](#) with a [cat-friendly toothpaste](#) and schedule dental cleanings as recommended by your vet.

4. Many Cats Get the Zoomies After Using the Litter Box

Think of it as sort of a victory lap. Lots of cats will run like crazy after using the litter pan for a bowel movement. But sometimes they’ll run away from the box if the experience was uncomfortable—such as if [they were constipated](#) or have swelling in the gastrointestinal or urinary tract.

If your cat shows any unusual bathroom habits, discuss these zoomies with your veterinarian. But for most cats, post-pooing zoomies are just a way to celebrate a job well done.

5. Cat Whiskers Are as Sensitive as Human Fingertips

Cat whiskers are thicker and coarser than regular fur and have roots that are three times deeper. They are strategically located on the cat’s face to provide sensory equipment to help guide a cat through the day, aiding vision and helping the cat to navigate, much like antennae on insects.

Although the number of whiskers will vary by breed, most cats have 12 whiskers arranged in four rows on each cheek. These whiskers are very sensitive, and this part of the face also contains small glands that smell like your cat. This is one reason many cats love to have their faces rubbed!

6. Cats are Nearsighted, but See Great in the Dark

This is all thanks to those sensitive whiskers! Compared to humans, cats are nearsighted because their eyes are so large and placed so forward on their face. In fact, they can’t focus on anything less than 1 foot in front of them. This is where the whiskers come into play, as they can swing the whiskers forward to feel in front of them.

However, they make up for this nearsightedness with an excellent ability to see in the dark. Cats have extra dark-specializing cells called rods and a “reflective mirror” called a tapetum in the back of the eye. These work together, so cats can see light at eight times dimmer illumination than you can.

7. Cats Have the Same Number of Brain Cells in Their Cerebral Cortex as Brown Bears

Even though a bear’s brain is 10 times bigger than a cat brain, cats have about the same number of information processing cells. The cerebral cortex of a bear has 251 million cells, while the tabby has about 250 million cells.

This still pales in comparison to humans, however—we have up to 26 billion cells in our cerebral cortexes.

8. Cats Use Dewclaws To Help Them Grip

The dewclaw is the tiny little claw found up on the inner wrist of your cat—the one that is hard to clip and that overgrows very quickly. Technically, the dewclaw is very similar to the human thumb, although it isn’t opposable. But cats can use it very effectively to grip onto a tree when climbing or to hold onto prey when hunting.

Dewclaws on cats rarely cause problems, but they will sometimes overgrow if they’re not trimmed regularly. In most cases, it isn’t necessary to surgically remove a cat’s dewclaws. And, [like all other cat claws](#), it serves a function that your cat would miss if it wasn’t there.

9. That Adorable Paunch on a Cat’s Belly Is Also Found in Lions and Tigers

That swinging, dangling pouch on your cat’s belly is actually a normal structure found in all cats—wild and domestic. However, it’s important to tell the difference between a normal pouch and a big fat pad [associated with obesity](#). But don’t worry—your veterinarian will tell you [if your cat is overweight](#).


There are several thoughts as to why cats get these pouches. Some think this is a padded layer meant to protect the internal organs during a fight. The pouch may also simply provide some extra skin that lets them widely spread their legs when running. Or, because wild cats tend to eat a lot when they catch prey, it might just be room to expand after a large meal. Whatever the reason, it certainly is a cute part of your cat.

10. Cats That Scratch Furniture Are Often Marking Their Territory

Cats have tiny scent glands on their feet, and when they scratch furniture they leave just a little bit of their smell on it. This tells other cats, “This sofa is in my territory, and these are my people—keep away!” Additionally, shredded corners of a couch or chair are a visual sign of your cat’s space. So although you don’t want your cat destroying your furniture, the scratching is a signal that they love you and their space.

One step to [teaching your cat not to ruin your furniture](#) is to provide them a [large, sturdy cat tree](#) or [scratching post](#) they’re allowed to mark. If possible, place it near their favorite forbidden piece of furniture. This way they have something they are allowed to claim as their own.

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