



## Our Wild Pets



### Mini Fact:

Pet cats show many of the same instincts as their wild ancestors.

Did you know that Americans have more cats as pets than any other animal? According to the Humane Society of the United States, Americans have more than 94 million pet cats. They have about 90 million pet dogs.

### Why are cats so popular?

- Cat lovers think cats are graceful and fun to watch. Some cats are comical and playful, and some are serious and independent.
- Although some people think cats are too independent and aloof, cats can be very affectionate. A purring cat can make humans feel happy and calm.

There are also practical reasons that people love cats. They are often the best pet to fit in with our busy lifestyles. People don't need to rush home to take cats out on walks.

However, all cats need care. They need to be petted and played with. Their litter box needs to be cleaned. They need fresh food and water.

### All about cats

- **Cat eyes.** Most members of the cat family can see in the dark about six times better than people. Cats can open their pupils three times wider than humans can. This lets in more light to help cats see in the dark.
- **Cat ears.** Cats can move each of their ears separately, and they can move them fast. One ear can be pointed in one direction



while the other ear is pointed in another. This enables them to pick up sounds from all around them.

Members of the cat family can also hear sounds humans cannot hear. They can pick up soft sounds from prey animals.

- **Cat whiskers.** Sensitive whiskers on cats' faces and legs help them detect obstacles around them. This extra knowledge helps them to pop in and out of small places quickly.

### Wild cats

Most experts believe the **domestic**, or house, cat came from a type of African wild cat that is now extinct.

People started taming wild cats thousands of years ago. Because cats kept rats and mice away from stored food, people probably wanted the cats to stay nearby.

There are 38 different species, or kinds, of cats in the world. Scientists divide the cat family into two groups, "big cats" and "small cats."



One of the differences between big and small cats is the sounds they make. Small cats can't roar, and big cats can't purr.

A big cat's "happy" sounds are not steady like a small cat's purr. The big cat's happy noise, called a **chuff**, is made when the big cat breathes out of its nose and mouth at the same time.

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## Cats and people

Pets are good for people in many ways, according to experts:

- Pets are wonderful companions. They give unconditional love and can teach people how to love in return.
- Pets can teach people how to care for another creature. By learning how to care for animals, people can learn how to care for other people, too.
- Having a pet can teach people how to be responsible.
- Pets help us to relax. Petting a purring cat can chase away bad feelings. Studies have shown that having a pet can help people's health.



Pet owners must make sure their animals have good medical care.

### Adopting a pet

Have you ever wanted a pet? If you have, you may have begged your parents for a cat or dog.

Experts say it is very important that your parents want the pet, too. You will need to help care for the pet, but they will be the ones most responsible for it.

## Resources



### On the Web:

- [bit.ly/MPanimals](http://bit.ly/MPanimals)
- [bit.ly/MPcatinfo](http://bit.ly/MPcatinfo)

### At the library:

- "The Cat Encyclopedia" by DK Publishing
- "Dewey the Library Cat: A True Story" by Vicki Myron with Bret Witter

## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of cats are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



ADOPT, AFFECTIONATE,  
ANCESTORS, CARE, CAT,  
CHUFFLE, COMICAL,  
COMPANION, DOG,  
DOMESTIC, EARS,  
EYES, GRACEFUL,  
INDEPENDENT, PET,  
PLAYFUL, PURR, SPECIES,  
WHISKERS, WILD.

G P R C W D H S E I C E P S E  
O U A K Q L A C I M O C V W N  
D R L U F E C A R G C J R K O  
E R D D D L I W T T A E P K I  
I N D E P E N D E N T L L A N  
L E T A N O I T C E F F A D A  
Y E Y E S E A R S B A F Y O P  
P F A N C E S T O R S U F P M  
D O M E S T I C R G A H U T O  
K S R E K S I H W A Z C L T C

## Cook's Corner

### Olive Cheese Balls

#### You'll need:

- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 24 green olives



\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

#### What to do:

1. Mix together the butter or margarine and cheese.
2. Add the flour, salt and pepper.
3. With clean hands, mix together and squeeze until a dough forms.
4. Pinch off small amounts of dough and form around each olive.
5. Wrap the balls in plastic wrap and freeze for a few hours.
6. Remove from freezer, unwrap and lay the balls on a cookie sheet.
7. Bake in a preheated 400-degree oven for 10 to 15 minutes. Serves 6.

1. Long, stiff hair that grows near the mouth (8 letter pl. noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

2. Covered with a fine, hairy and soft coat (5 letter adj)

□ □ □ □ □

3. To trap something moving or hiding (5 letter verb)

□ □ □ □ □

4. To hurt by scraping with something sharp (7 letter verb)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □

1. When Antonio felt the cat's \_\_\_\_\_, she licked his hand.
2. Max likes to touch the \_\_\_\_\_ head of his white cat.
3. A lot of cats will try to \_\_\_\_\_ yarn, string and mice.
4. Amy is careful of claws that can \_\_\_\_\_ her arms.

### ROOTONYM®

by Jan & Carey Orr Cook



Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: Whiskers, Furry, Catch, Scratch.

## Mini Jokes



- Catherine:** What do you get when you cross a cat with a parrot?
- Cal:** A carrot!

## Eco Note



Both the Arctic (North Pole) and the Antarctic (South Pole) are cold because they don't get any direct sunlight. The sun is always low on the horizon, even in summer. But the South Pole is a lot colder than the North Pole. Why? The ocean under the Arctic ice is cold, but still warmer than the ice! So the ocean warms the air a bit. Antarctica is dry — and high. Under the ice and snow is land, not ocean. And the average elevation of Antarctica is about 7,500 feet. The higher you go, the colder it gets.

adapted from [climatekids.nasa.gov](http://climatekids.nasa.gov)

## For later:

Look in your newspaper for notices about cats up for adoption.

**Teachers:** For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: [bit.ly/MPstandards](http://bit.ly/MPstandards). And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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