



Domestic Cat



Latin: *Felis catus*

Irish: *Cat*

Domestic cats are all members of one species, no matter what their breed.

Their relationship with humans dates back thousands of years and they were widely associated with the gods in ancient civilisations. They have also been the subject of numerous superstitions over the centuries, sometimes bringing good fortune and health, other times being an omen of bad weather or even death.

Wild relatives

The cat family can be divided into three genera. The *Panthera* genus includes the lion, tiger, leopard and jaguar (the great cats). The *Acinonyx* genus' only member is the cheetah. The third genus is the *Felis* and includes the puma, ocelot, bobcat, serval, lynx, and the house cat.

Food and hunting

Domestic cats mainly eat meat. Although their diet varies according to what humans give them, they will supplement it by hunting mice, birds and other small mammals. Like their wild relatives, domestic cats are natural hunters. They stalk prey and pounce to trap it with their sharp claws and teeth. They are particularly effective night hunters as their light-reflecting eyes allow them to see much better than their prey. Their rough tongue helps them to clean off every last scrap from the bones.

Do cats have nine lives?

Nimble, agile creatures, cats have exceptional balance thanks to their long tail. The tail contains 10% of its bones and is essential to its 'righting reflex'. This is an instinctive ability that allows the cat to rotate its tail while falling and enable it to land on its feet. It is not surprising that cats are said to have nine lives, a tribute to their innate ability to survive seemingly fatal falls.