

## Wild and Domestic Animals Reading



Dogs, cats, cattle, and horses are some of the best-known examples of animals that can be pets. Tamed animals are generally grouped together and referred to as domestic animals. But what are domestic animals? Biologically, domestic animals refer to any type of animal that have been genetically modified through many generations of selective breeding, in order to specially adapt them to live with humans.

There are three major reasons why different species of wild animals were domesticated by humans.

1. **Companionship** – Dogs, for example, are actually a domesticated form of wild wolves that were domesticated as early as 10,000 years ago for the purpose of companionship.
2. **Food** – Other animals, such as cattle and chicken, were domesticated to provide food (both as meat and through products, such as eggs and dairy).
3. **Labor** – The third major category of domesticated animals was domesticated to perform laborious work, e.g., transporting goods and pulling carts. These are more common known as *beasts of burden*, and they include animals associated with hard work, such as horses, oxen, and camels.

All domestic animals, regardless of purpose, share certain common characteristics. For example, they must all be easy to tame, in order to make them safe to live with and to obey commands. This was achieved by selectively breeding only the easiest to tame members of the species to produce offspring of a similar nature. Domestic animals commonly share certain physical features as well, such as smaller teeth and jaws, floppier ears, and smaller brains than their wild counterparts.

Depending on the specific purpose a species were domesticated for, it may also feature additional prominent traits. For example, animals domesticated to produce meat must be able to breed easily and mature quickly, animals bred for work must have strong and muscular bodies, etc.

As previously discussed, a domestic animal refers to species of animals that have been selectively bred over a long period of time, in order to genetically adapt them to life with humans. All species of non-domestic animals are generally classified as wild animals. These include well-known animals, such as elephants, tigers, snakes, etc.

The biological definition of wild animals refers to any animal species that have not been domesticated through selective breeding and continue to live in their natural habitats. It is important to note that a domestic animal living in a wild habitat (such as a dog that has escaped its home) is still considered a domestic animal, and not a wild animal.

Many domestic animal species have a wild counterpart that shares a common ancestry with them and still exists in nature. However, due to the selective breeding of the domestic species, they are now genetically distinct from their wild counterparts and have very different characteristics. Some common characteristics of wild animals, that are generally absent in domestic species, include territorial natures, predatory instincts, and explorative tendencies. Such traits make them difficult to tame, and thus they are unsuited to live with humans.

One important distinction between wild and domestic animals is their tameness. The tameness definition is similar to that of domestication and refers to a change in animals from their natural, wild state to a more docile state that is suited for living with humans. However, unlike domestication, tameness does not involve a permanent genetic change through selective breeding.

While certain wild animals can become accustomed to humans by spending time with them, they still genetically retain their 'wild' nature which makes them unpredictable and potentially unsafe. Domestic animals, on the other hand, are bred to be inherently docile and thus are safe to live alongside humans. For example, dogs and wild wolves share a common ancestry. Through thousands of years of domestication, dogs are now docile and friendly animals that exist happily and peacefully in many households. A wolf could be tamed by a human, but this would only be through fear or incentives such as food. The wolf would still genetically retain its wild traits, such as aggression and fear of humans, and thus would never be completely safe to raise as a pet in a household.