

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Darwin's Cats Invites Cat Lovers to Help Decode Feline DNA with a New Breakthrough in Genetics Research

Join the Movement to Solve the Mysteries of Cat Genetics with the First Fur-Based DNA Sequencing Method for Pets

EDMONDS, WASHINGTON - March 19, 2025 - Cats may be cherished companions in nearly 50 million U.S. households, but their genetics remain a mystery. [Darwin's Cats](#), a pioneering research initiative from the nonprofit [Darwin's Ark](#), is working to change that and calling on cat lovers everywhere to take part in the largest community-powered feline genetics study to date. With its innovative fur-based DNA sequencing method—a first in pet science—Darwin's Cats is making it easier than ever to contribute to genetics research to improve the health and well-being of cats everywhere.

Unlike traditional DNA collection methods, which require saliva swabs or blood draws, fur-based sequencing offers a stress-free way for thousands of cat owners to take science into their own hands—literally. With just a simple brush of their cat's coat, an easy process that most cats already enjoy, participants can help build the most comprehensive feline genetic database ever assembled to catalyze important scientific discoveries.

"Cats are one of the least-studied companion animals in genomics, and as a result we are missing out on all that genetics can tell us about their ancestry, behavior, and health," said Dr. Elinor Karlsson, Chief Scientist at Darwin's Ark, Associate Professor at UMass Chan Medical School, and Director of the Vertebrate Genomics Group at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard. "I'm excited about Darwin's Cats' fur-based DNA collection because it is easy on the cat and easy to scale, making it possible for us to level up cat genetics research."

Breaking Barriers in Feline Genetics with a Simple, Cat-Friendly Approach

Launched last year, Darwin's Cats is a community science initiative that brings together cat owners, leading researchers, and innovative genomic technologies to solve the mysteries of cat genetics. To advance this research, scientists at Darwin's Ark developed a novel method for sequencing DNA using fur. This game-changing approach to DNA collection is cat-friendly, cost-effective, and scalable, setting the stage for Darwin's Cats to advance large-scale genetics research.

By combining genetic data with owner-provided information on appearance, behavior, and health, Darwin's Cats researchers will be able to investigate:

- **Genetic Diversity** – Mapping feline ancestry and genetic variation across breeds and populations.
- **Trait & Behavior Analysis** – Understanding how genetics influence behavior, personality traits, and physical characteristics.

- **Health & Well-being** – Identifying genetic risk factors for health conditions like kidney disease, allergies, and cancer.

“This is an exciting opportunity for cat lovers to play a pivotal role in scientific discovery,” said Jill Simmons, Darwin’s Ark CEO. “By harnessing the passion and unmatched expertise of thousands of cat owners, we can transform what we know about cats and help them live healthier, happier lives.”

Inviting Every Cat Lover to Take Part in Scientific Discovery

With 5,000 cats enrolled, Darwin’s Cats is the world’s largest feline community science initiative. And now, thanks to its innovative fur-based approach to DNA sequencing, it is ready for cat lovers everywhere to take part in this groundbreaking study, aiming to enroll 100,000 cats and sequence 5,000 DNA samples in the next year.

Interested cat owners can become community scientists by [registering for free](#) and sharing insights about their cat through research surveys. Those wanting to help expand science’s understanding of feline genetics will receive a DNA kit with a \$150 tax-deductible donation that supports the cost of sequencing and analysis. Participants will get regular research updates, and once 1,000 cats are sequenced, they will also receive ancestry and other insights about their cat’s genetics.

Enrollment is now open at darwinsark.org.

About Darwin’s Ark

Darwin’s Ark is a community science nonprofit that empowers pet owners to drive large-scale research on dog and cat genetics. By uniting pet lovers with leading scientists, Darwin’s Ark explores the genetic foundations of health and behavior—advancing scientific discoveries that improve health and well-being for both pets and their people. One of its flagship research initiatives, Darwin’s Cats, is a research collaboration between Darwin’s Ark, the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, and UMass Chan Medical School. As the world’s largest feline community science initiative, Darwin’s Cats is also the first to sequence pet DNA from fur. It’s an easy method that is cat-friendly and will accelerate research to help cats live longer, healthier lives. Learn more and join the journey of discovery at: <https://darwinsark.org>.

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