

Tonks Can Fetch Too:

New Study Highlights the Playful Side of Feline Fetching Behavior



Bella



Nova

While fetch is often associated with dogs, a recent study reveals that 4 in 10 pet cats also enjoy retrieving toys for their owners. The study, conducted by Mikel Delgado from Purdue University and colleagues, was published in the open-access journal PLOS ONE on September 4, 2024.

Analysing data from over 8,000 cat owners surveyed between 2015 and 2023, researchers found that **41% of cats** sometimes, frequently, or always retrieve objects thrown by their owners—significantly higher than previous estimates. Active and playful cats, particularly those living indoors, were more likely to exhibit this behavior.

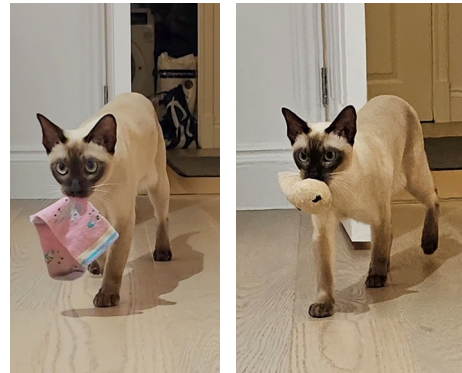
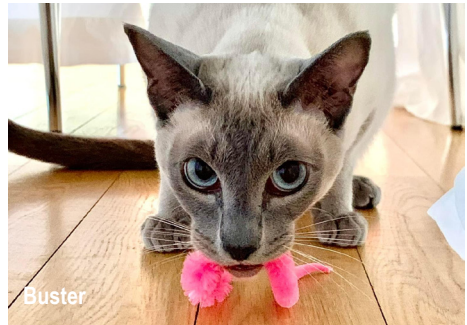
Interestingly, fetching was most commonly observed in Burmese, Siamese, and Tonkinese breeds, which have genetic ties to early domesticated cats from the Far East.

The study highlights that fetching behaviour in cats may stem from their natural hunting instincts but is more closely linked to play rather than predation. The domestication process appears to have preserved this juvenile behaviour into adulthood, providing a playful outlet for modern pet cats.



For comparison, data from nearly 74,000 dog owners showed that 78% of dogs engage in fetching, with breeds like Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, and Border Collies leading the way. In both cats and dogs, fetching behaviour was less common in females, older pets, and those with health conditions.

This groundbreaking research sheds light on the underestimated playful nature of cats, emphasizing that fetching is not just a dog's game.



While fetching behaviour shares similarities with natural hunting instincts, the study suggests it is more closely tied to play than predation. Domestication has favoured the retention of juvenile behaviours into adulthood, including playful fetching. These behaviours may have originally helped wild animals hone their hunting skills, but in modern pets, they serve as an enjoyable form of interaction and activity.

Although cats and dogs differ greatly in behaviour and domestication, it's fascinating that so many share this intriguing trait - fetching!

Source: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2024/09/240904141458.htm>
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