



Polydactyl Quiz

How Did You Do?

1. True or False: Most polydactyl cats are female.

False. Polydactyly is caused by a genetic mutation and is just as common in males as it is in females. It shows no relationship to coat color, pattern, or length of fur. On the other hand, some people insist that polydactyls share the personality traits of being friendly and laid-back.

2. What US President had a polydactyl cat named Slippers?

Theodore Roosevelt had a grey tabby cat with extra toes named Slippers. He was a greatly loved member of the family who reigned over the White House attending political meetings, formal dinners and making himself at home wherever he went.

3. Why did many sailors favor polydactyl cats as shipmates?

Sailors preferred polydactyl cats for a variety of reasons both practical and magical. Having extra toes may be advantageous in hunting, keeping a ship's mice and rat population in check. Wider feet caused by the mutation could also keep the cats more stable on a rocking boat. And the extra toes may make climbing easier. Equally important was the sailors' beliefs that cats with extra toes brought good luck keeping the ships and the sailors safe on their long journeys. One thing is clear, being favored by sailors helped the cats establish populations on the western shores of England and Wales and the eastern seaboard of the United States and Canada. Even today, these areas are home to the highest percentages of polydactyls.

4. What author is associated with polydactyl cats?

American author Ernest Hemingway was gifted a polydactyl cat from a ship's captain who happened to be one of his drinking buddies. The cat, whom his children named Snow White, became a favorite of the writer. More than 60 years after Hemmingway's death, descendants of Snow White still live at the Hemingway Museum in Key West which is home to approximately 60 well-loved and well cared for felines. Approximately 50% of the cats that have free roam of the museum and grounds have extra toes.



5. How many toes does the world record holding polydactyl cat, Jake, have?

Jake, a cat rescued from a hoarding situation, boasts 28 toes! That is seven on each foot. Jake falls into the highly unusual category of having extra toes on all four feet. More than 60% of polydactyl cats only have extra digits on their front feet. A smaller percentage only have extra toes on their hind feet. And less than 10% of cats with extra toes have them on all four feet like Jake, and our model pictured above, Ellie.