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Scientists find why most ginger cats are male – 19th May 2025

Level 4

Scientists have solved a mystery about cats. A research team found out why eight out of ten ginger cats are male. The team said a mutation in the X chromosome is responsible for a previously unknown "orange gene". A professor said male animals have an X and Y chromosome. If the male cat's X chromosome has the gene, it will be ginger. A female cat has two X chromosomes. The gene needs to be present in both for the cat to be orange.

The research has been published in a journal. The researchers analysed the DNA of 18 cats, of which 10 had ginger fur. Only the ginger cats had the mutant gene. Many cat lovers link fur colour with personality traits. The professor said cat owners believe that different fur colours and patterns are linked with different personalities. He said there was no evidence for this, but it was an interesting idea.

Level 5

Scientists have solved an age-old mystery about cats. Geneticists in Japan have discovered why eight out of ten ginger cats are male. A professor found that a mutation in the X chromosome is responsible for a previously unknown "orange gene". The professor said: "Identifying the gene has been a longtime dream." Male animals have an X and Y chromosome. If the male cat's X chromosome has the gene, it will be a ginger. A female cat has two X chromosomes. The gene needs to be present in both for the cat to be orange. This is less likely to happen.

The research has been published in the journal "Current Biology". In the study, researchers analysed the DNA of 18 cats, of which 10 had ginger fur. Only the ginger cats had the mutant gene. The professor said cat lovers associated fur colour with personality traits. He wrote: "Many cat owners swear by the idea that different coat colours and patterns are linked with different personalities. There's no scientific evidence for this yet, but it's an intriguing idea, and one I'd love to explore further." He suggested that ginger cats may behave similarly because most of them are male.

Level 6

Scientists have unravelled a long-standing mystery about the feline world. Geneticists from Kyushu University in Japan have discovered why eight out of ten ginger cats are male. Dr Hiroyuki Sasaki discovered that a mutation on the X chromosome is responsible for a previously unknown "orange gene". Dr Sasaki said: "Identifying the gene has been a longtime dream, so it's a joy to have finally cracked it." The gene is responsible for pigmentation in the skin of animals. Male mammals have an X and Y chromosome. If the male cat's X chromosome has the gene, it will be a ginger. Because a female cat has two X chromosomes, the gene needs to be present in both for the cat to be orange. This is less likely to happen.

Dr Sasaki and his colleagues' research has been published in the journal "Current Biology". In the study, researchers analysed the DNA of 18 cats. Ten of the cats had ginger fur. The researchers found that all of the ginger cats had a gene mutation called ARHGAP36. The non-ginger cats did not have this. Dr Sasaki said cat lovers associated fur colour with personality traits. He wrote: "Many cat owners swear by the idea that different coat colours and patterns are linked with different personalities. There's no scientific evidence for this yet, but it's an intriguing idea, and one I'd love to explore further." He said ginger cats may share particular behavioural characteristics because most of them are male.