

Handout 2, Unit 2a, a.y. 2025/2026

5

Common Species Names

OBJECTIVES

In this chapter,
you should learn to

- Identify and recognize common terms used for animals
- Define common terms used to denote sex and age of animals
- Define common terms used to denote birthing and grouping of animals

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

Lay people and professionals use terms to describe in one word the status of an animal. The term may relate to the sexual status of an animal (intact or sexually functional, or altered or sexually nonfunctional) or the age status of an animal. Terms have also been derived to denote the process of giving birth and the grouping of animals. The following lists provide the terms used to describe animals.

canine (kā-nīn) = dogs

- dog/stud** = intact (not sexually altered) male dog
- bitch** = intact female dog
- whelp** (wehlp) or pup = young dog
- whelping** (wehl-pihng) = giving birth to whelps
- pack** = group of dogs
- litter** = multiple offspring born during same labor

Gender versus sex: In veterinary medicine we talk only about the sex of an animal. Gender is used to denote whether words pertaining to a noun are masculine, feminine, or neutral. Gender can also be used to denote social constructs, such as the gender or social roles of men and women.

feline (fē-līn) = cats

- tom** = intact male cat
- queen** = intact female cat
- kitten** = young cat
- queening** = giving birth to kittens

lagomorph (lāg-ō-mōrf) = rabbits

- buck** = intact male rabbit
- doe** = intact female rabbit
- lapin** (lahp-ihh) = neutered male rabbit
- kit** = young (blind, deaf) rabbit
- kindling** (kihnd-lihng) = giving birth to rabbits
- herd** = group of rabbits

ferrets (fehr-rehtz)

- hob** = intact male ferret
- jill** = intact female ferret
- gib** (gihb) = neutered male ferret
- sprite** (sprit) = spayed female ferret
- kit** = young ferret
- kindling** = giving birth to ferrets

psittacine (siht-ah-sēn) = parrots (and other birds with bills for cracking seeds)

cock = intact male parrot
hen = intact female parrot
chick = young parrot

murine (moo-rēn) = mice and rats

sire (sī-ər) = intact male mouse or rat
dam (dahm) = intact female mouse or rat
pup = young mouse or rat



Dam and sire are terms used to denote female parent or male parent for many species. When animals are bred, these terms may be used instead of the ones in the lists here. Used correctly, these mean that the male and female have mated and produced an embryo or fetus. **Dam** is a female parent; **sire** is a male parent.

turkey = one kind of poultry

tom = intact male turkey
hen = intact female turkey
poult (pōlt) = young turkey
flock = group of turkeys
clutch (kluhtch) = group of eggs

chickens = one kind of poultry

rooster = sexually mature male chicken; also called cock
hen = intact female chicken
capon (kā-pohn) = young, castrated male chicken or domestic fowl
cockerel (kohck-ər-ehl) = immature male chicken
pullet (puhl-ehht) = immature female chicken
poult = young chicken
chick = very young chicken
flock = group of chickens

anserine (ahn-sehr-ihn) = geese

gander = intact male goose
goose = intact female goose
gosling = young goose
gaggle = group of geese

anserine = ducks

drake = intact male duck
duck = intact female duck

duckling = young duck
flock = group of ducks

porcine (poor-sīn) = pigs = swine

boar (bōr) = intact male pig
sow = intact female pig
barrow (bār-ō) = male pig castrated when young
stag = male pig castrated after maturity
gilt (gihlt) = young female pig that has not farrowed
pig or piglet = young pig; old term is shoat
farrowing (fār-ō-ihng) = giving birth to pigs
herd = group of pigs

equine (ē-kwīn) includes horses, ponies, donkeys, and mules

stallion (stahl-yuhn) = intact male equine >4 years old
colt (kōlt) = intact male equine <4 years old
mare (mār) = intact female equine >4 years old
filly (fihl-ē) = intact female equine <4 years old
gelding (gehld-ihng) = castrated male equine
ridgeling (rihdj-lihng) or **rig** = cryptorchid equine (one or both testicles have not descended from the abdomen)
foal = young equine of either sex
weanling = young equine <1 year old
yearling = young equine between 1 and 2 years old
foaling = giving birth to equine
herd = group of equine
band = group of horses consisting of one mature stallion, his breeding mares, and the immature male and female offspring of his mares
brood mare (bruhd mār) = breeding female equine
maiden mare (mā-dehn mār) = female equine never bred
barren mare (bār-ehn mār) = intact female horse that was not bred or did not conceive the previous season = open mare
wet mare = intact female horse that has foaled during the current breeding season
agalactic mare (ā-gahl-ahck-tihck mār) = intact female horse not producing milk
pony = equine between 8.2 and 14.2 hands when mature (not a young horse)



What is a mule?

Mule is a general term that applies to the hybrid crossing of equines. Mule is also used to denote the offspring of a jack (male donkey) and a mare (female horse). **Hinny** (hihn-ē) is used to denote the offspring of a stallion (male horse) and a jenny (female donkey). Think mule:mare to remember the lineage of this hybrid. Both mules and hinnies are sterile.

donkey = ass = burro

jack or **jack ass** = intact male donkey

jenny = intact female donkey

ovine (ō-vīn) = sheep

ram = intact male sheep

ewe (yoo) = intact female sheep

wether (wheh-thər) = castrated male sheep

lamb = young sheep

lambing = giving birth to sheep

flock = group of sheep

What is a bellwether? From the list, wether is a neutered sheep or goat. Bell is a ringing device. Originally this word was used to describe the practice of putting a bell on the lead wether of a flock or herd.

caprine (kahp-rīn) = goats

buck = intact male goat

doe = intact female goat

wether = castrated male goat

kid = young goat

kidding = giving birth to goats

freshening = giving birth to dairy animals

herd = group of goats

camelid = llamas, alpacas, guanacos

bull = intact male llama (also called a stallion)

cow = intact female llama

gelding = castrated male llama

cria (krē-ah) = young llama

cavy (kā-vē) = guinea pigs

boar = intact male guinea pig

sow = intact female guinea pig



The term **stud** is commonly used in reference to a male animal used for breeding. However, the term **stud** actually refers to the facility or farm where breeding animals are kept.

bovine = cattle

bull = intact male bovine

juniper bull = intact male bovine that has just reached maturity and is used for breeding

cow = intact female bovine that has given birth

steer = male bovine castrated when young

stag = male bovine castrated after maturity

heifer (hehf-ər) = young female bovine that has not given birth

calf = young bovine

calving = giving birth to cattle

freshening = giving birth to dairy animals

herd = group of cattle

springing heifer = young female pregnant with her first calf = first calf heifer

freemartin (frē-mahr-tihn) = sexually imperfect, usually sterile female calf born as a twin with a male calf

gomer bull = bull used to detect female bovines in heat; bull may have penis surgically deviated to the side, may be treated with androgens, or may be vasectomized so as not to impregnate female; also called **teaser bull**

The symbols denoting male ♂ and female ♀ originally stood for Mars (the god of war) and Venus (the goddess of love), respectively. Mars and male both begin with "m."

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(excerpt from ROMICH Janet A., 2005:
An Illustrated Guide To Veterinary Medical Terminology, Delmar)