

Features of Nouns in VetMed English

**** part 1 ****

- ❖ **noun or name?** (see the Supplementary Worksheet A¹, unit 2a, a.y. 2025/2026)
- ❖ **countable and/or uncountable**
↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ see "Focus on Countable and Uncountable Nouns in English for Veterinary Medicine", unit 2a, a.y. 2025/2026
- ❖ **standard plural formation with the ending -(e)s plus:**
 - a set of nouns of classical (Greek or Latin) origin (see the Supplementary Worksheet B, unit 2a, a.y. 2025/2026) such as *sequela*² ⇒ *sequelae* or *stimulus* ⇒ *stimuli* – among them pay attention to some items of the nomenclature of taxonomy (i.e. *phylum* ⇒ *phyla*³; *genus* ⇒ *genera*⁴; *taxon* ⇒ *taxa*⁵; see table 1 below), whereas all the others⁶ follow more or less the standard plural formation;

¹ *Supplementary Worksheet* = scheda di approfondimento

² "An aftereffect of a disease, condition, or injury"; check the pronunciation of both the singular and the plural forms on <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/> at the item "sequela". **Equivalents in Italian:** "conseguenza", "postumi".

³ Also *phylums* (rare). **Equivalents in Italian:** "tipo" in zoology, "divisione" in botany.

⁴ Also *genuses* (rare). **Equivalent in Italian:** "genere". It is a synonym of *gender* and *genre* but it is used in the specific field of taxonomy only.

⁵ **Equivalent in Italian:** "unità tassonomica", "categoria tassonomica".

⁶ *life* ⇒ *lives* (even if "life" is considered a U-noun in the specific context of taxonomy); *domain* ⇒ *domains*; *kingdom* ⇒ *kingdoms*; *class* ⇒ *classes*; *order* ⇒ *orders*; *family* ⇒ *families*; *tribe* ⇒ *tribes* (**equivalent in Italian:** "tribù"); *breed* ⇒ *breeds* (**equivalent in Italian:** "razza"); *clade* ⇒ *clades* (**equivalent in Italian:** "clade"); *rank* ⇒ *ranks* (**equivalent in Italian:** "unità").

A **clade** (from Ancient Greek κλάδος, i.e. "branch"), also known as a monophyletic group or natural group, is a group of organisms that are monophyletic – that is, composed of a common ancestor and all its lineal descendants; the ancestor can be known or unknown; any and all members of a clade can be extant or extinct – on a phylogenetic tree. The term "clade" was coined in 1957 by the biologist Julian Huxley.

Many commonly named groups – rodents and insects, for example – are clades because, in each case, the group consists of a common ancestor with all its descendant branches. Rodents,

- a small group of nouns maintaining a Germanic plural formation (e.g. *child* ⇨ *children*; *foot* ⇨ *feet*; *goose* ⇨ *geese* /*gixs*/; *louse* ⇨ *lice*; *man* ⇨ *men*; *mouse* ⇨ *mice*; *ox* ⇨ *oxen*; *tooth* ⇨ *teeth*; *woman* ⇨ *women*);

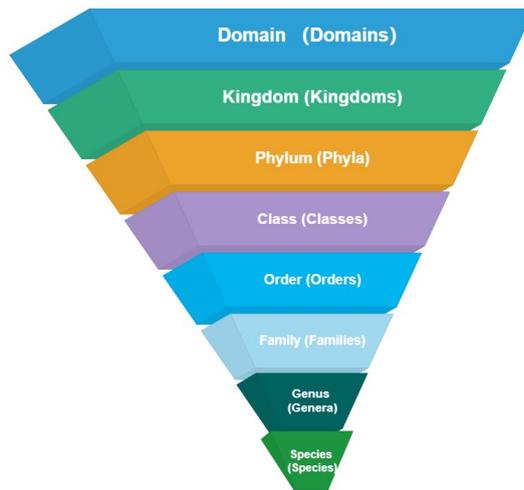
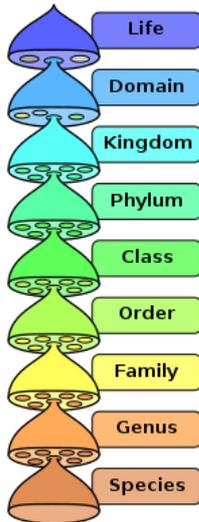


Table 1: the table on the left shows (top to bottom) the hierarchy of biological classification's eight major taxonomic ranks (taxa): a "kingdom" contains one or more "phyla", a "phylum" one or more "classes" and so on. Intermediate minor rankings are not shown. The table on the right show the most common plural form of these taxa.

for example, are a branch of mammals that split off after the end of the period when the clade Dinosauria stopped being the dominant terrestrial vertebrates 66 million years ago. The original population and all its descendants are a clade. The rodent clade corresponds to the order Rodentia, and insects to the class Insecta. These clades include smaller clades, such as chipmunk (**equivalent in Italian**: "scoiattolo striato", "tamia") or ant, each of which consists of even smaller clades. The clade "rodent" is in turn included in the mammal, vertebrate and animal clades.

WORD OF THE DAY

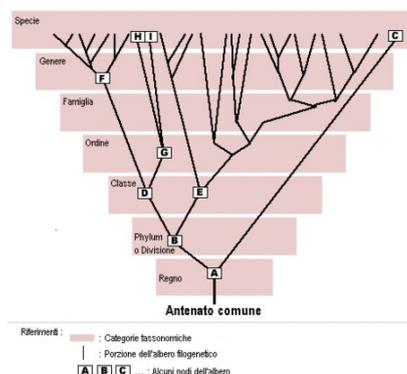
clade

Pronunciation: klerd

NOUN

a group of organisms with a common ancestor...

OxfordDictionaries.com



A **tribe** stands above Genus but below Family and subfamily, and sometimes is subdivided into subtribes.



Table 2: this table shows (bottom to top) the equivalents in Italian of the eight major taxonomic ranks (taxa) as given in Table 1

| Classificazione tassonomica | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| • | Dominio |
| • | Regno |
| • | Sottoregno |
| • | Infraregno o Ramo |
| • | Superphylum |
| • | Phylum (o Tipo o Divisione) |
| • | Subphylum (o Sottotipo o Sottodivisione) |
| • | Infraphylum |
| • | Microphylum |
| • | Nanophylum |
| • | Superclasse |
| • | Classe |
| • | Sottoclasse |
| • | Infraclasse |
| • | Parvclasse (o Subterclasse) |
| • | Magnordine |
| • | Superordine |
| • | Ordine |
| • | Sottordine |
| • | Infraordine |
| • | Parvordine |
| • | Superfamiglia |

| |
|--|
| • Famiglia |
| • Sottofamiglia |
| • Infrafamiglia |
| • Supertribù |
| • Tribù |
| • Sottotribù |
| • Infratribù |
| • Genere |
| • Sottogenere |
| • Specie |
| • Sottospecie |
| • Forma (zoologia) o Varietà (botanica) |
| • Stipite (virologia) |
| • Clade, Legione, Coorte, Sezione e Sottosezione: (hanno posizione variabile) |

Table 3: this table shows (top to bottom) the eight major taxonomic ranks (taxa) in Italian and the minor ranks for each of them. Conventionally, each rank has a specific ending (see Unit5b, a.y. 2025/2026) identifying it.

- a small group of nouns with a double spelling adaptation – both in the final “f” of the word changing into “v” and in the ending itself where a euphonic “e” goes before final “s” (e.g. *calf* /kɑ:f/ ⇒ *calves* /kɑ:vz/; *hoof* ⇒ *hooves* (also *hoofs*); *knife* ⇒ *knives*; *life* ⇒ *lives*; *wolf* ⇒ *wolves*, etc.). However, such adaptation is not a permanent feature: in fact, pay attention to *chief* ⇒ *chiefs*, *roof* ⇒ *roofs* and so on;
- a set of nouns of classical origin ending in -x such as *appendix*, *index*, *matrix* with a double chance of plural formation: respectively, *appendices* and *appendixes*; *indices* and *indexes*; *matrices* and *matrixes* (see the Supplementary Worksheet B, unit 2a, a.y. 2025/2026). Anyway, pay attention to *cervix* ⇒ *cervices*; *cortex* ⇒ *cortices*; *phalanx* ⇒ *phalanges*; *thorax* ⇒ *thoraces* as well as to *box* ⇒ *boxes*; *fax* ⇒ *faxes*; *fox* ⇒ *foxes*, etc.;

- a set of nouns ending in -sis such as *analysis, crisis, diagnosis, meiosis, prognosis* whose plural forms are respectively *analyses, crises, diagnoses; meioses* and *prognoses*, etc.;
- a set of countable nouns where singular and plural form are the same⁷: e.g. *deer* ⇨ *deer*⁸; *fry* ⇨ *fry*⁹; *offspring* ⇨ *offspring*¹⁰; *salmon* /'sæmən/ ⇨ *salmon*¹¹; *sheep* ⇨ *sheep*; *species* /'spi:ʃi:z/ ⇨ *species*; *status* /'steitəs/ ⇨ *status*, etc.;

Pay attention to the following table:

Many plural word forms are produced by adding an "s" to the singular term. This is true for medical terms as well. The plural of laceration is lacerations, the plural of bone is bones, etc. However, there are some rules to follow when using plural forms of medical terms. These rules are presented in the following table.

| Singular Ending | Change or Deletion from Singular Form | Add Plural Ending: | Examples (singular) | Plural Form |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| s, ch, or sh | | es | abscess stitch | abscesses stitches |
| y | delete y | ies | capillary | capillaries |
| is | delete is | es | diagnosis | diagnoses |
| um | delete um | a | bacterium | bacteria |
| us* | delete us | i | alveolus | alveoli |
| a | delete a | ae | vertebra | vertebrae |
| ix | delete ix | ices | cervix | cervices |
| ex | delete ex | ices | cortex | cortices |
| ax | delete ax | aces | thorax | thoraces |
| ma | | s | carcinoma | carcinomas |
| ma | delete ma | mata | stoma | stomata |
| nx | delete nx | nges | phalanx | phalanges |
| on† | delete on | a | spermatozoon | spermatozoa |

*except plural of virus is viruses, and plural of sinus is sinuses
 †except plural of chorion is chorions

table 1: excerpt from ROMICH Janet A., 2005: *An Illustrated Guide To Veterinary Medical Terminology*, Delmar

⁷ Anyway, be careful to any variations you may find in scientific texts, which not always are reported in dictionaries such as the www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com, www.macmillandictionary.com, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>, or <http://www.wordreference.com/>

⁸ Also *deers* (less common).

⁹ **Equivalent in Italian:** "avannotto".

¹⁰ Also *offsprings* (rare); **Equivalents in Italian:** "cucciolo", "piccolo", "prole", "progenie".

¹¹ Also *salmons* (less common).

❖ **no gender, but pay attention to some particular cases in Veterinary English in particular**

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ see the handouts 1 and 2, unit 2a, a.y. 2025/2026

❖ **compound nouns**

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ see unit 4, a.y. 2025/2026

❖ **word-clusters** (also called grammatical and lexical collocations)

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ see unit 1, a.y. 2025/2026

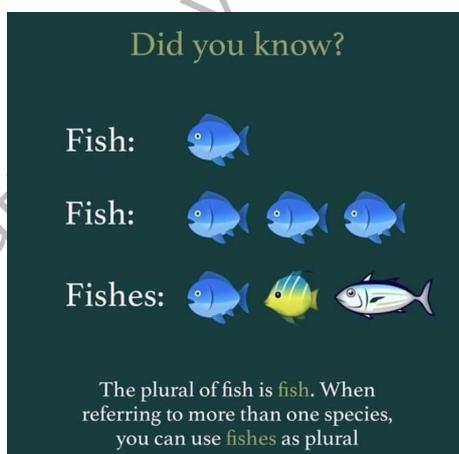
❖ **false friends**

❖ **lexical differences between BrE (£) and AmE (\$)**

6

Fish or Fishes?

Though often used interchangeably, these words have different meanings. **Fish** is used either as a singular noun or to describe a group of specimens from a single species; the plural form **fishes** describes different species or species groups: thus a pond would be said to contain 120 fish if all were from a single species or 120 fishes if these included a mix of several species. The distinction is similar to that between people and peoples.



A random assemblage of fish merely using some localised resource such as food or nesting sites is known simply as an **aggregation**.

When fish come together in an interactive, social grouping, then they may be forming either a **shoal** or a **school** depending on the degree of organisation. A **shoal** is a loosely organised group where each fish swims and forages independently but is attracted to other members of the group and adjusts its behaviour, such as swimming speed, so that it remains close to the other members of the group. **Schools** of fish are much more tightly organised, synchronising their swimming so that all fish move at the same speed and in the same direction.

However, while *school* and *shoal* have different meanings within biology, they are often treated as synonyms by non-specialists, with speakers of BrE using *shoal* to describe any grouping of fish, while speakers of AmE often use *school* just as loosely. Both *school* and *shoal* have "banco" as their equivalent in Italian.

Related terminology:

- shoaling /'ʃoʊlɪŋ/ [U]; schooling /'sku:lɪŋ/ [U]
- spawn /spɔ:ʊn/ [U]: a soft substance containing the eggs of fish, frogs, etc.
- to spawn /spɔ:ʊn/: [intr., tr. regular] to lay eggs (of fish, frogs, etc.)
- spawning /'spɔ:ʊnɪŋ/ [U]