

## About Your Cats Tongue

A feeling of rough sandpaper as you are licked by your cat is a reminder that its long, muscular tongue serves many functions, including grooming.

**A Grooming Tool and More:** A cats ability to groom itself is the result of numerous knobs called papillae on the surface of a cats tongue. Located at the tongues center, the papillae form backward-facing hooks containing large amounts of keratin, the same material found in human fingernails. These hooks provide the abrasiveness a cat needs for self-grooming. The strength of these hooks also helps a cat hold food or struggle with prey.

**Your Help is Needed:** Although the abrasiveness of a cats tongue helps it to clean itself and untangle its hair, your help is needed through regular grooming. As you groom your cat, you are removing loose and dead hair. Otherwise a cat may ingest this hair and hair balls can form, which can cause vomiting and may cause impaction in the gastrointestinal tract. Longhaired cats need daily grooming; shorthaired cats should be groomed at least once a week.

**A Matter of Taste:** Studies show that the cats sense of taste is keener than that of the dog. This acute sense of taste is the result of two sets of taste buds. Mushroom-shaped papillae at the tip and sides of the tongue hold some of the largest taste buds. A set of cup-shaped papillae are located at the back of the tongue. Palatability studies at the Purina Pet Care Center and other studies show that in addition to flavor, a cats tongue reacts to the texture or mouthfeel of a particular food. This is one of the reasons dry cat foods come in a variety of shapes. The cats tongue also reacts to temperature and shows a preference for foods at room temperature.

**When Cats Lap it Up:** A cats tongue becomes spoon-shaped to enable it to lap liquids. Notice how its tongue laps under water in much the same manner as an elephant uses its trunk. It flicks its tongue quickly in and out of the water, swallowing after every third or fourth lap. A cats water intake will vary depending on the season of the year, activity and type of diet being fed. Cats consuming canned cat food diets will not drink as much water as those fed dry food. If, for some reason, a cat does not appear to be drinking enough water, more water can be added to the food. Always keep fresh drinking water in a clean bowl available to your cat. Water is an essential ingredient and is involved in virtually every function of a cats body.

**Contributing To A Cats Sense of Taste:** Cats also have a highly developed sense of smell and they notice changes in their food. Some researchers suggest that this sense may stimulate their appetite or cause them to refuse to eat. A cats appetite may be affected by many factors including noise, strange people, changes in routine and even feeding dishes washed with a strong detergent and not carefully rinsed. However, if a cat refuses to eat for a period of two to three days, a trip to the veterinarian is in order. This continued food refusal may be a sign of illness.

## About the Author

Tristan Andrews writes useful articles about cats and kittens. Discover and explore the feline world. Find out how to better care for, train and live with your cat at <http://www.i-love-cats.com>

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