

# Basic Characteristics of Mammals

## Warm-blooded

Mammals are endothermic or warm-blooded. They have the ability to generate and conserve heat in order to maintain a stable, warm body temperature.

They are not dependent on

external factors such as temperature or warm surfaces to warm their bodies like a cold-blooded or ectothermic animal.

## warm-blooded ANIMALS



*Body temperature stays the same when its cold or hot outside.*

## Hair/Fur



All mammals have hair or fur on their bodies at some stage of life (even whales). The fur may not cover the entire body, but it is present in some quantity on every mammal. Fur is used for protection, insulation, and camouflage. Fur is shed periodically in a process called **molting**. When mammals molt the hair is either shed

continuously a few hairs at a time like in humans, or more commonly it is tied to seasonal changes where the coat is lost all at once and can result in changes in coloration (ex. least weasel).

## Feed Their Young Milk

Aside from a small group of mammals called monotremes, most mammals give birth to live young. However, all mammals produce milk to feed their young. The milk is nutrient dense and provides the young with all the food they need to survive. The time a baby needs to consume milk ranges from four days up to seven years depending on the species. Milk is



produced by mammary glands which gives this class of animals their name: Mammals.