

## 271520 - Ruling on keeping and buying cats

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### the question

I want to know the ruling on buying a cat and keeping it as a pet, because I cannot get a cat as a gift or by adopting one, and there are no street cats where we live. The type of cat that I want cannot be obtained except by buying it, as I live in a western country.

### Detailed answer

Firstly:

There is nothing wrong with keeping cats in the house and taking care of them. The great Sahaabi Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) used to take care of several cats, to the extent that he was nicknamed for that.

It was narrated that 'Abdullah ibn Raafi' said: I said to Abu Hurayrah: Why do you have the kunyah of Abu Hurayrah?

He said: I used to tend my family's sheep, and I had a small kitten (*hurayrah*) that I used to put in a tree at night, then during the day I would take it with me and play with it. Hence they called me Abu Hurayrah ("father of the kitten"). Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (3840); classed as hasan by al-Haafiz in *al-Isaabah* (13/30).

Ibn al-Mundhir said: The scholars are unanimously agreed that keeping cats is permissible. End quote from *al-Awsat* (10/27), see also the answer to question no. [7004](#) .

Secondly:

The view of most of the scholars – including the four imams – is that it is permissible to buy and sell pet cats.

Imam an-Nawawi said: Selling pet cats is permissible, and there is no difference of opinion among us concerning that... This is the view of the majority of scholars... The concession to

sell cats was given by Ibn 'Abbaas, Ibn Sireen, al-Hakam, Hammad, Maalik, ath-Thawri, ash-Shaafa'i, Ahmad, Ishaq, Abu Haneefah and all the ashaab ar-ra'y." (*Al-Majmoo' Sharh al-Muhadhdhab* 9/229).

He also said: If the cat is of the type that is useful and he sells it, the sale is valid and its price is halaal.

This is our view and the view of all the scholars, except for what Ibn al-Mundhir narrated from Abu Hurayrah, Taawoos, Mujaahid and Jaabir ibn Zayd, that it is not permissible to sell cats." (*Sharh Saheeh Muslim* 10/233).

They quoted as evidence for it being permissible to sell cats the report narrated by Muslim (2619) from Abu Hurayrah, that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "A woman entered Hell because of a cat which she had and which she tied up and did not feed it or let it loose to eat of the vermin of the earth, until it died of starvation."

They said: The *laam* in the phrase *hirratin laha* (translated here as a cat which she had) is indicative of ownership, and whatever can be owned and is of benefit, it is permissible to sell it. See: *Kashshaaf al-Qinaa'* (3/153).

The Zaahiris (literalists) and some of the scholars are of the view that it is prohibited to buy and sell cats.

They quoted as evidence for that the report narrated by Imam Muslim in his *Saheeh* (1569) via Ma'qil from Abu'z-Zubayr, who said: I asked Jaabir about the price of a dog or cat.

He said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah upon him) prohibited that.

In *Zaad al-Ma'aad* (5/773), Ibn al-Qayyim stated definitively that it is prohibited to sell cats, as he said: Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) issued a fatwa to that effect, and it is the view of Taawoos, Mujaahid, Jaabir ibn Zayd and all the literalists, and it is one of two views narrated from Ahmad.

It is the correct view, because the hadith narrated concerning that is sound and there is nothing to contradict it, therefore it must be followed. End quote.

Ibn al-Mundhir said: If it is proven that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade selling cats, then the sale of cats is invalid, otherwise it is permissible." (*Al-Majmoo' 9/269*).

The majority of scholars responded to this hadith in three ways:

1.. By noting that what is proven is the prohibition on selling dogs; as for the word *as-sinnawr* (cat) that is mentioned in the hadith, it is a da'eef (weak) addition.

Ibn Rajab said: This report is only known from Ibn Luhay'ah from Abu'z-Zubayr, and Imam Ahmad did not accept the reports of Ma'qil from Abu'z-Zubayr. He said: They are similar to the hadiths of Ibn Luhay'ah. These reports were examined and were found to be as Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him) suggested. End quote from *Jaami' al-'Uloom wa'l-Hikam* (p. 418).

At-Tirmidhi said: There are some problems in the isnad of this hadith, and it is not valid with regard to the sale of cats." (*Sunan at-Tirmidhi 2/568*).

Abu 'Awaanah said: Regarding the reports which say that the sale of cats is not permissible, there is some doubt about their soundness and they are weak." (*Al-Mustakhraj 12/336*).

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr said: Regarding anything that it is permissible to keep and benefit from, and it is useful, in principle it is permissible to buy and sell it, unless there is something (that is, a report) to disallow that, which we must accept if there is no report to the contrary regarding that issue. There is no sound report regarding the sale of cats, so the matter remains permissible." (*At-Tamheed 8/403*).

2.. By noting that what is meant in the hadith is wild cats, not domesticated cats.

Al-Khattaabi said: Rather it is makrooh (disliked) because it is like something wild that cannot be controlled, and it is not possible to deliver it [if it is sold]. That is because the cat

frequents people's houses and goes around among them, then it keeps away from people for a while, and it is not like animals that can be tied up to a post, or like birds which are kept in cages. It may revert to being wild after having been tamed and may stay in the wilderness to the extent that it does not come near humans and no human can control it, so if the purchaser tries to keep it in his house or tie it with a rope or chain, he will not benefit from it." (*Ma'aalim as-Sunan* 3/130).

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen said: The scholars differed concerning that. Some of them regarded it as permissible and interpreted the hadith which forbids it as referring to a cat in which there is no benefit, because most cats are aggressive, but if we find a domesticated cat that is useful, then the view that it is permissible to sell it is clearly sound, because there is some benefit in it." (*Ash-Sharh al-Mumti'* (8/114).

3.. By noting that the prohibition is in the sense of it being makrooh (disliked), because the Lawgiver wanted people to be easy-going and exchange cats without selling them.

Ad-Dumayri said in *Hayaat al-Hayawaan* (1/577): It was said that the prohibition is not stringent, so that people will get used to giving cats away and lending them, as is usually the case. End quote.

Ibn Rajab (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Some of the scholars interpreted the prohibition as referring to cats in which there is no benefit, such as wild cats and the like. Others said that it is only prohibited to sell them because selling them is greedy and undignified, since they are readily available and there is a need for them. Cats are always available, and there is no harm to people in giving away surplus cats, so being stingy in that regard is one of the worst of blameworthy characteristics. Hence it is not allowed to sell a cat and keep its price." (*Jaami' al-'Uloom wa'l-Hikam* p. 418).

Conclusion:

There is some doubt about the soundness of the hadith which prohibits selling cats. Even if it is sound, it is to be interpreted in the ways mentioned by the majority of scholars. One of

these interpretations is that it is better not to do that. It is as if the Lawgiver wanted people to be easy-going and give cats without selling them.

However, we should point out here that there is something wrong with what many people do, as they show a great deal of interest in keeping cats and other animals. Their mistake is going to extremes in buying them at extremely high prices, then going to great expense in caring for them, feeding them and seeking medical treatment for them, in a way that takes the matter beyond the limit of moderation and reasonable spending, as they go to extremes in extravagance and spending money in ways that are of no great benefit, wasting money in ways that serve no purpose, showing off, boasting and messing about.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. [22373](#) .

And Allah knows best.