

# Animals In Space

---

 [nationalgeographic.com.au/space/animals-in-space.aspx](http://nationalgeographic.com.au/space/animals-in-space.aspx)

November 3,  
2015



In the early days of humanity's space programs, no one knew the effect of weightlessness would be on living beings, so animals were used to test the safety and side-effects of space travel.

Since then, animals in space have continued to help us understand the impacts of space on many biological functions.

## The first animals in space: fruit flies

---

Fruit flies were launched into space aboard a U.S. V-2 rocket launched in 1947. The rocket reached 109 kilometres which technically makes the flies the first animals in space. They were all recovered alive.



## The first vertebrate in space: monkey

A Rhesus monkey named Albert II was aboard another U.S.-launched V-2 rocket in 1949. He wasn't as lucky as the fruit flies – Albert II died after a parachute failure.





*(Image: NASA)*

## The first animal in orbit: dog

---

While the Soviet Union put the first dogs into space back in 1951, it wasn't until 1957 that an animal was launched into orbit. Laika, a mixed-breed husky, was rescued off the streets of Moscow and launched into orbit aboard Sputnik 2. Unfortunately, Laika perished when the oxygen supply ran out.



*(Image: Soviet Museum)*

## The first animals in orbit to return safely: dogs

---

In 1960, two Soviet dogs named Belka and Strelka, along with 42 mice, two rats and a rabbit, were launched into orbit and returned safely to Earth.



*(Image: Soviet Museum)*

## The first Hominidae in space: chimpanzee

NASA launched Ham the chimp into outer space aboard a Mercury capsule on a Redstone rocket in 1961. Ham was trained to pull levers to receive bananas and avoid electric shocks.



*(Image: NASA)*

At last count, humans have launched 32 different monkeys into space. The French were the first to send a cat to space, back in 1963. In 1973, two female European garden spiders spun the first webs in space.

Other animals to visit space include frogs, guinea pigs, tortoises, jellyfish, scorpions, fish and cockroaches.

Once we landed humans on the moon in 1969, animal astronauts stopped making headlines, but spacecraft continue to carry biological payloads for further research purposes.