

From the California Dept. of Fish & Game:

Q. What's wrong with this statement about domestic cats?

"In seven years, one female cat and her offspring can produce 420,000 cats."

A. That result is not biologically possible. This is only a mathematical exercise. Cats certainly have a well-deserved reputation for multiplying rapidly when their health, safety, and forage conditions are good, but nowhere can cat populations grow to the magnitude and at the rate this statement portrays. This theoretical population growth rate would be possible only if there were no limits to population growth. This is termed the "**biotic potential**" of a population. What keeps this potential from being realized--in everything from bacteria to whales--are the many factors that cause mortality and restrict breeding, such as disease, starvation, predation, and behavioral and physical abnormalities. These create an "**environmental resistance**" to uncontrolled population growth.