

BBC World Service

The story

A new study has found that vampire bats have undergone many genetic changes to be able to live on a blood-only diet.

The three species of bats are the only mammals to feed exclusively on blood.

The study found that vampire bats' genes involved in immune response and metabolism are very different from the genes of other bats.

The study also found that the microbes in their guts are very distinct from those of the fruit and insect-eating bats - giving vampire bats protection against diseases.

Vocabulary

bloodthirsty

keen to enjoy violence

iron guts

the ability to eat or drink anything without vomiting

live off

depend on something or someone for money or food

Language challenge

Which of these blood idioms means that family relationships are closer than friendships?

- a) it's like getting blood from a stone
- b) to have blood on your hands
- c) blood is thicker than water

Answer

- c) blood is thicker than water