

Bristol Cats Study Newsletter - Autumn 2019

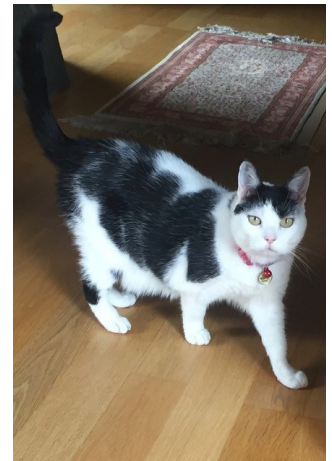
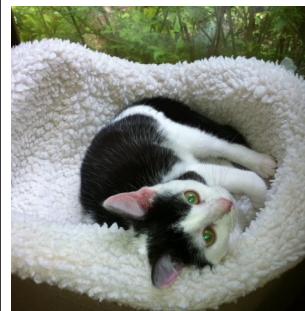
The 'Bristol Cats' study is a pioneering study of cat health, welfare and behaviour run by vets, behaviourists and epidemiologists at the University of Bristol. The aim is to improve knowledge of common diseases and behaviour problems of cats, for example (but not exclusively), unwanted elimination, obesity and hyperthyroidism. Findings from the study may be used by veterinary practitioners, cat breeders, owners and the cat community to improve the health and welfare of cats in the future.

UK Research Infrastructure Framework

We are very excited to announce that the Bristol Cats study ('Bristol Cats: A Birth cohort of kittens owned by UK households') has been approved for inclusion in UKRI Framework, a research and innovation infrastructure roadmap for the UK. The roadmap records facilities, resources and services, used by the research and innovation communities to conduct research and foster innovation in their fields. You can search for the Bristol Cats study at <https://www.infraportal.co.uk>.

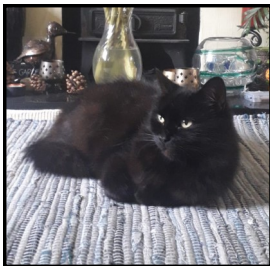
UK Research
and Innovation

Here are some more of our gorgeous **"Meow and then"** submissions!



Study updates:

For the last few months, **Anna Garvey** has been working on collecting data for her project. This has meant that Anna has had the enviable job of driving around the country visiting 'Bristol' cats in their homes and sometimes having a cuddle – all in the name of science of course. Anna has visited 40 cats now and has been assessing their reaction to unusual objects, such as a discoball, and novel sounds. Anna has also been asking our Bristol Cat owners some in depth questions about their cats to try to understand their personality better. There has been a wide range of reactions from the cats and they have certainly enjoyed the treats on offer throughout the tests! Anna's currently analysing the video footage recorded and the data gathered from the tests to see whether we can find out a bit more about how the cats behave in these situations. Anna would like to say a huge thank you to all the cat owners who took part in the study for letting her come and meet your wonderful feline friends – they are a truly lovely group of cats!

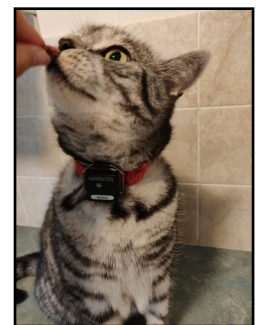


Feline Activity Study

Recruitment criteria for the Feline Activity Study included cats being over 6 years of age and not on any pain medication. The cats were also kept indoors, or had outdoors access within a closed run and/or a lead only to prevent the possibility of the activity monitor being lost. Owners of cats that were eligible completed two study questionnaires, one relating to their cat's mobility and the other to their cat's quality of life. For cats not already wearing a collar, a breakaway (safety) collar and instructions were provided, allowing the cats to be habituated to wearing a collar in a stress-free manner. Evelyn Maniaki then visited eligible cats in their own home and performed a thorough orthopaedic examination. Following this, an activity monitor (accelerometer) was placed on the cat's collar for a period of 2 weeks tracking their

activity levels at all times. The activity data was downloaded from each individual device, ready for analysis.

Recruitment for the Feline Activity Study has now finished, with a total of 56 cats recruited. The next step will be analysing the data obtained from the visits and the accelerometers; so, watch this space!



**Stay up to date with us on Twitter (@UniofBristolCats),
Facebook (www.facebook.com/bristolcats.study) or on our website,
(www.bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/cats).**

Study results:

Exploring early life events including diet in cats presenting for gastrointestinal signs in later life

This study has now been published in the Veterinary Record, and a summary is provided below. If owners would like a PDF copy of the full paper then please request it by emailing us at: cat-study@bristol.ac.uk. Thank you to all owners for their part in helping with this research!

Summary:

This study aimed to determine if certain early life events were more prevalent in cats visiting veterinary practices specifically for gastrointestinal (GI) signs, on at least two occasions between six months and 30 months of age. Data from questionnaires 1-5 were used for 1212 cats from the Bristol Cats study. Cases were defined as those cats that were reported by their owners to have visited a veterinary practice specifically for GI signs (vomiting, diarrhoea or both) at one or all of the four time points (Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5). Controls were those cats that were reported by their owners to have never visited a veterinary practice specifically for GI signs at all of the same four time points.

Univariable and multivariable ordinal regression models were constructed to assess associations between the following four early life events, identified before 16 weeks of age:

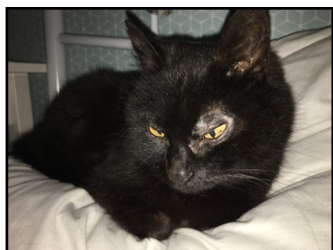
1. Whether cats exclusively consumed commercial diet(s) that complied with the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) Global Nutrition Committee (GNC) guidelines
2. Proportion of diet fed that was raw fresh food, cooked fresh food and cow's milk or cream
3. Owner-reported vomiting, diarrhoea or both
4. Presence of owner-reported worms in the faeces

and the frequency of owner-reported visits to veterinary practice specifically for GI signs between six months and 30 months of age.

Results:

Of the 1212 cats included, 30 visited a veterinary practice for gastrointestinal signs on two or more occasions. Of the early life events recorded, cats reported with vomiting, diarrhoea or both, and/or those not exclusively fed commercial diets that meet the WSAVA GNC guidelines before 16 weeks of age were more likely to visit veterinary practices specifically for GI signs on at least two occasions between six months and 30 months of age.

MSc student Nicola Swales has recently completed her project investigating **stress as a flare factor for cats with allergic skin disease**. Nicola looked at questionnaire data



completed by owners of allergic (either with food allergies or allergies to house dust mites and pollens) or unaffected cats to identify any flare factors, including stress, that caused or worsened the skin disease. Nicola used information from the Bristol Cats questionnaires to help her identify potential participants for her study. The results will be coming soon so watch this space!

Christmas is coming!!

Have you moved house? To ensure that your Christmas card reaches you, please let us know your new address by visiting:

<https://smvsfa.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/info>

You can also let us know about any other changes using this link.

Alternatively you can get in touch using our contact details below:

Tel/text: 07827 981412

Email: cat-study@bristol.ac.uk

Freepost: RSHR-AGRJ-UABZ Bristol Cats, Dr Emily Blackwell

University of Bristol Langford House BRISTOL BS40 5DU

Call for photos for our Christmas Card!

If you would like a photo of your cat(s) to feature on our 2019 'Bristol Cats' Christmas Card then please email us **ONE** photo by **Friday 1st November** to cat-study@bristol.ac.uk. We try to feature as many cats as possible, but space is limited! Please send in clear photos of a high resolution to increase the chance of your cat featuring on the card.

Thank you, and we look forward to seeing all of your photos!



Thank you for your help — the Bristol Cat owners and cats are helping to make a difference to our knowledge of factors affecting feline welfare.

We would also like to thank **WALTHAM®** centre for Pet Nutrition and Cats

Protection for funding the study.

