

Bristol Cats Study Newsletter

Autumn 2023



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, overgrooming, aggressive behaviour, obesity and diabetes mellitus. 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.

Study news

As the weather turns colder and the nights draw in, we are getting ready to begin designing the 2023 Bristol Cats Christmas card. Please see page 2 for details of how to send in your cat's photo for inclusion.

We are also busy working with Cats Protection to look at whether the age at which your cat is neutered impacts their health later in life and veterinary student Lana Henry is researching whether cats in the cohort show signs of respiratory disease such as coughing and if so, whether this is a recurrent problem requiring veterinary attention.



Bristol Cats Tinker (Left) and Oliver (right) making themselves comfy away from the Autumn showers



Research news

The manuscript describing the study looking at gum disease (gingivitis) in the Bristol cats has been submitted to the Journal of Small Animal Practice, so follow our social media channels for an announcement when it is released.

We are about to embark upon two new research projects in collaboration with the Waltham Petcare Science Institute. The first will continue our oral health work, by taking a look at the cats' now that they are older and the second will take a first look at skin disease in the cohort cats. Watch this space!

We are currently recruiting a new Research Technician to work on the study. The post holder will work alongside the Research Co-Ordinator to provide technical support. Specifically, they will be responsible for assisting students and academics who are using the BCS data for their research, They will also be requesting, cataloguing and storing any biological samples that you send to us!

Spam Alert!

Over the last couple of months we have received increasing reports of our emails to you ending up in the spam folder. To avoid this you can mark emails from us as 'not spam' or 'not junk' Transferring them back into your inbox should also ensure that they are no longer going straight to the spam folder.

If you haven't heard from us recently and were expecting a questionnaire, please check your Spam/Junk folder!

Stay up to date with us on Twitter: @UniofBristolCat, or
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bristolcats.study

Full details of the research described can be accessed
via the study website:
www.bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/cats)



If lights run on
electricity and cars run
on gas, what do cats
run on?

Their paws!





Respiratory signs in cats

Lana Henry has spent the first four weeks of her extra-mural studies placement looking at the prevalence of respiratory signs (specifically coughing) in the Bristol Cats study cats. She is also looking at the pattern of change over time, as well as whether or not veterinary advice was sought.

Here's what she has found out so far...

20-35 cats on each questionnaire were reported to show coughing or wheezing – 8 of these cats were taken to the vets. In terms of repeated episodes of coughing, 73 cats were reported as coughing in one questionnaire only, with the remaining 21 cats reported to be coughing in multiple questionnaires. Cat flu was reported in 15 cats that were taken to the vets, and 14 cats' owners reported cat flu but did not take them to the vets.



Lana will next look at cats exposed to smoking, their vaccination status, and outdoor access, and examine the relationship between these and coughing and wheezing.

Take your cats to the vet campaign

In our last newsletter we announced a Royal Canin campaign highlighting the importance of taking your cat to the vet, based upon information obtained through the Bristol Cats Study. We were delighted to hear that the press release generated international interest, with readers engaging with the content in, UK (300,000 hits), France (over 1 million hits) and an incredible 152 million hits in China!



Funding success: continuation of accelerometry project

We are very pleased to announce that following a successful application for follow-on funding, the Jean Golding Institute (<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/golding/>) has awarded us funding to continue with the work we did using accelerometry to detect early stage joint disease in cats.

As part of this work, over the next two years we hope to identify what the cats were doing during the 'peaks' in activity that were different in affected cats to healthy ones.

Black cats: Are they good luck or a bad omen?



Black cats are often thought of as unlucky, but why is that?

Join us on a quick history of the black cat to find out whether these creatures we are so fond of are unlucky or not.

Halloween is generally thought to trace back to the Celtic festival of Samhain which was a celebration that marked the end of Summer. Cait Sidhe was a magical creature taking the form of a large black cat with a white spot on its chest, known as the Faerie King of Cats. On the night of Samhain, leaving a saucer of milk out for Cait Sidhe would mean that your house would be blessed. However, if you didn't leave any milk out, then you would be cursed.

Did you know.

In Scotland if a strange black cat appears at your door it is believed to bring prosperity!

In Britain, Ireland, Japan & Germany encountering a black cat on your travels is seen to be lucky

Black cats are a symbol of good luck in Japan

Black cats were thought to bring luck and ensure a safe return for sailors who welcomed them aboard



Call for photos for our Christmas Card!



With only 8 weeks until Christmas we are asking for photos of your lovely Bristol cats to adorn our Christmas card. If you would like a photo of your Bristol cat(s) to feature on our 2023 'Bristol Cats' Christmas Card then please email us your photo by Monday 13th November to cat-study@bristol.ac.uk.

We try to feature as many cats as possible, but space is limited! Please try to send us clear photos of a high resolution as this will increase the chance of your cat featuring on the card.

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



Keeping cats safe during firework season



Cats Protection have some great tips for keeping your cats safe as we enter firework season.

They suggest keeping your cats inside after dark, playing music to mask the sound of fireworks and creating a safe space for them.

You can find out more information by visiting the link on the QR code.



Moving house / changed your email address / need to contact us?

If you have changed email address, moved house or have a new contact number it is easy to update these online by visiting the website and following the instructions: <https://smvsfa.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/update>

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

Telephone: 0117 394 0850

Email: cat-study@bristol.ac.uk

Freepost: RSHR-AGRJ-UABZ Bristol Cats, Dr Emily Blackwell, University of Bristol, Langford House, BRISTOL BS40 5DU

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® Petcare Science Institute and Cats Protection for funding the study.

