

Bristol Cats Study Newsletter

Spring 2024



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.

Don't forget!

New microchipping law: From 10th June 2024 it will become compulsory in England for all pet cats to be microchipped



Did you know...

House cats share 95.6% of their genetic makeup with tigers

enjoyment and fascination to me so it is not surprising I have many things I want to find out about them. Cats, like most mammals, rely on a daily rhythm of hormones (cortisol and others) to be released into their body to maintain health. These hormones are highest immediately before periods of activity and lowest at times of rest. This daily cortisol pattern may determine how cats respond to certain experiences, including things that might be stressful such as visiting the vets, having their claws clipped, being groomed etc.

Initially I hope to work with the owners of some cats that aren't enrolled in the Bristol Cats study, to find out if it is possible to sample cortisol from cats in an owner-led, non-stressful manner by taking saliva swabs whilst playing with your cat. This will allow me to understand more about the patterns occurring in individual cats and how these may be affected by routine events that some cats find stressful.

This work has the potential to lead to guidance on optimising the timing of these events to minimise any associated stress for your cat. If you have any comments, questions or have a non study cat and would like to know more about the project, please do contact me (Karen Mifsud) via email at: cat-study@bristol.ac.uk

Study news

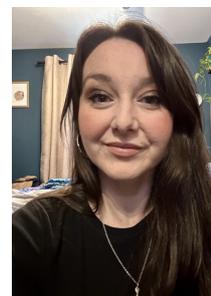
As the days get longer and the Spring flowers appear, we have been busy preparing our 16th questionnaire, for cats aged 14 years. Can you believe how quickly the time has flown by?!

We also ran our annual prize draw in January and this newsletter contains photos of some of the lucky winners.



Welcome Sam to the Bristol Cat Study team

Hi, I'm Sam. I'm very excited to have joined the wonderful Bristol Cats Research Group. I've just moved from Glasgow to Bristol and I'm looking forward to exploring everything the city has to offer. Recently I completed my PhD at Queen's University Belfast, which investigated the effect of cuteness on cat welfare. I absolutely love cats and have one of my own, who is the sweetest (and cheekiest) boy. His name is Buddy, and his favourite thing other than Dreamies is cuddling, as you can see!



Feline hormones project

Hello I'm Karen and I just started working at Bristol Veterinary School. I have owned cats for over 17 years and my first cat, Holly (pictured) is still my constant companion and enjoying a healthy later life. Cats are a constant source of



Hot off the press

For those of you who like to delve into the science behind our research, we have a number of upcoming publications to look out for on our website...

Our paper looking at risk factors for gum disease in the Bristol Cats cohort has been accepted for publication and will be out shortly.

A paper detailing our work on the feline gut microbiome (the collection of all microbes, such as bacteria, fungi, viruses, and their genes, that naturally live in the cat's gastrointestinal tract) is due to be submitted for publication within the next two months.

An article describing the development of a simple quality of life tool for use with cats is about to be submitted for publication this month.

Sam is preparing an article on the study for Companion magazine, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association's monthly membership magazine. We will share this with you when it is published later this year.

For more details of these and previous publications please go to our website:
<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/vet-school/research/projects/cats/>



Activity monitoring project update

We would like to say a big congratulations to Dr Axel Montout, who passed his PhD in December, and a big thank you to all the participants and cats who were involved in the feline activity study. As part of his PhD, Dr Montout looked into using new technologies to predict early signs of degenerative joint disease in indoor cats.



This involved having 51 cats wearing small sensors that were mounted onto collars that collected accelerometry (movement) data over 12 days. The lovely cat owners who were involved in the study helped by assessing and scoring how well their cats moved, which was checked through a clinical orthopaedic examination. The data the sensors collected was analysed through a machine learning algorithm, which focused on bursts of activity in the cats. The project has offered insight into how cats with early joint disease differ in movements during high-intensity actions and how new technologies can assist in predicting the development of degenerative joint disease.



Non study cats wanted for accelerometry validation study

Over the next couple of months we are hoping to test a new activity monitor device with the aim of using this to track the activity of some of our Bristol Cats.

Before we can do that, we need to test whether the device recordings are reliable.

We are looking for ten cat owners who live in the Bristol/Somerset area who have cats that aren't in the Bristol Cats Study and would be willing to help us with this.

If you are interested in finding out more, please drop us an email in the cat study inbox (cat-study@bristol.ac.uk) and we'll get in touch with more information about the project. Sending an email for more details will not oblige you to take part in the study should you decide you'd prefer not to.



2024 Prize Draw Winners!

In January we notified the winners of £100, £50 and £30 shopping vouchers in our annual prize draw. Prizes were awarded to randomly selected owners who had returned a completed questionnaire in the last 12 months. Here are some of our lucky winners;

Horatio



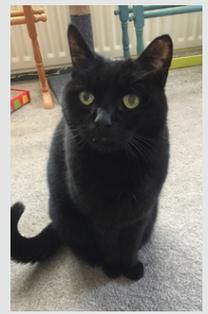
Blackberry



Meg



Kimi



Daisy



Maisie



Oscar



Hapi



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!



Study Administrator Mel's new kittens, Fergal (black) and Freya (black and white) enjoying the spring sunshine



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

