

Bristol Cats Study Newsletter - Spring 2021

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

Following Government advice regarding the ongoing situation with COVID-19 the Bristol Cats Study team has continued to work remotely from home. We are working hard to keep things running as smoothly as possible, but with Bristol Cats Study HQ temporarily closed we regret that there may be some delay in postal correspondence being received. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause and would like to thank all of our participants for their patience and understanding.



Congratulations Anna!

Congratulations to Anna Garvey who has officially passed her MSc by research. Anna was funded by veterinary charity Petsavers to investigate environmental risk factors for chronic gastrointestinal signs in cats and some of our 'Bristol Cats' took part in her study!

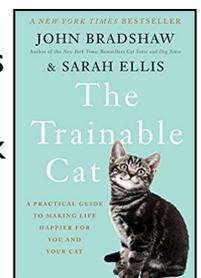
Welcome Helena

The Bristol Cats team has recently welcomed a new Research Assistant, Helena Hale (pictured with Brian, the most hug-loving of her four cats). Helena will be looking at the development of potentially problematic behaviour in the 'Bristol Cats'. Having completed her PhD on the efficacy of calming nutraceuticals and behaviour therapy for dogs, Helena looks forward to delving into your descriptions of your cat's fascinating behaviour!



Winner of a signed copy of 'The Trainable Cat'

Owners who gave consent to allow us to obtain their cat's veterinary records were entered in to a prize draw to win a signed copy of the book, **'The Trainable Cat'**, kindly donated by Dr John Bradshaw. The draw took place on 1st November 2020 and the lucky winner was Sue with her cats Sophie and Timmy!



Clinical notes for your cat

Data Administrator, Mel Wilson, gathers clinical information about the 'Bristol Cats' from veterinary practices of owners who kindly provided consent for us to access their veterinary records. We use this valuable information to investigate medical aspects of feline health, identifying risk factors for common feline diseases and increasing our understanding of how these conditions develop over time. If you have not yet given consent for the study to access your cat's veterinary records, but would be willing to do so, then please complete our consent form by clicking here: [Consent Form](#).

Study demographics:

Breeds in the Bristol Cat Study cohort: can you spot yours?

We are often asked about the different breeds represented in the study, so we thought we'd share with you the numbers of different breeds of cat who are participating in the project.

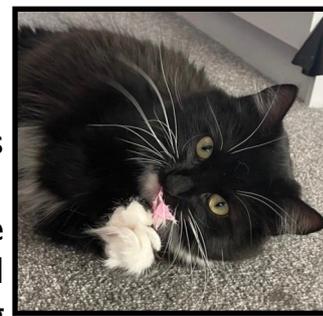
Breed / Type	Number of cats
Domestic short hair	1291
Domestic long hair	248
Pedigree crossbreed	89
Abyssinian	1
Persian	12
Siamese	41
British Shorthair	120
Maine Coon	71
Bengal	34
Burmese	26
Ragdoll	43
British Longhair	1
Burmilla	3
Cornish Rex	2
Devon Rex	8
Egyptian Mau	2
Exotic	5
Havana	3
Korat	6
Manx	3
Norwegian Forest Cat	15
Oriental	10
Pixiebob	1
Ragamuffin	4
Russian Blue	5
Savannah	1
Scottish Fold	3
Selkirk Rex	7
Serengeti	3
Siberian	8
Singapura	2
Snowshoe	3
Somali	2
Sphynx	4
Thai Blue Point	2
Tonkinese	8
Toyger	1
Turkish Van	2



Does your cat have odd tastes?

The latest research published from the study looks at “pica”, which is the chewing or ingestion of items with no nutritional value.

The impacts on the health and welfare of cats that exhibit pica are largely unknown, however the behaviour can lead to gastrointestinal obstruction as well as the destruction of household belongings, posing a potential threat to the cat-human bond. Little is know about the prevalence or age of onset of pica and this research aimed to provide a better understanding of pica and factors associated with the behaviour.



Bellatrix chewing on a feather

The study investigated the types of materials targeted by cats eating non-nutritive materials at 6, 12 and 18 months of age, as reported by their owners. In the Bristol Cats cohort pica was most common at around 6 months of age, as compared to the older age categories. Owners reported pica in 43% of cats at 6 months of age, 32%, at 12 months and 31% of cats at 18 months.

Most cats targeted a single type of material, with plastics and other materials being chewed or eaten more commonly than wool or other fabrics.

The factors associated with the occurrence of “chronic pica” (pica exhibited at all three timepoints) in cats were also investigated. Moving to a new house when the cat was aged between 6-12 months, renting rather than owning a home, and living in a household without a dog(s) were factors found to increase the odds of a cat displaying chronic pica.

You can read the paper in full via the study results page on our [website](#).

Plant Safety!

During lockdown many of us have become more green-fingered, however some plants are harmful to cats and it is important that we keep our pets safe. We have included a short list of cat-friendly plants below to make things a little easier, along with some to watch out for!

Cat-friendly outdoor plants	Cat-friendly indoor plants	Toxic to cats outdoor plants	Toxic to cats indoor plants
Roses	Orchids	Daffodils	Dracaena species, e.g. dragon tree or lucky bamboo
Catmint	Chinese money plant	Peonies	Aloe vera
Pansies	African violet	Any species of lily (including peace lilies)	Yucca
Buddleia	Parlor palm	Tomato plants	Monstera deliciosa



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).

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:

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

and following the instructions. 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

Winners:

Congratulations to the lucky winners in our annual prize draw. Here is a selection of the Bristol Cats who won prizes in the 2021 draw:



Tilly



Mitsu



Mia



Rover



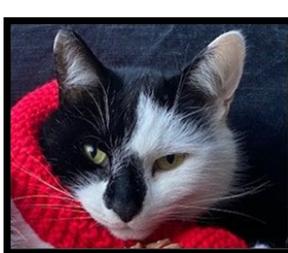
Sapphire



Riley



Alfie



Sidney



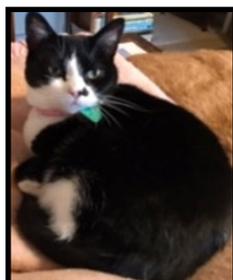
Boz



Bellatrix



Tommy



Gracie-Minou



Tuna



George & Benson

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.

