

Bristol Cats Study Newsletter - Autumn 2015

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.

DATE CHANGE.....The second Bristol Cats 'Open Day / Conference'

will be held on Sunday 8th May 2016 (10.30am-3pm) at the University of Bristol School of Veterinary Sciences at Langford (BS40 5DU). We are delighted to announce that **Dr John Bradshaw** will be opening the day with a talk. Dr Bradshaw's research interests include feline behaviour and human-animal interactions. He is also known to many as author of the best-selling book 'CAT SENSE' and for his role in the BBC programmes: 'The Secret Life of the Cat' and 'Cat Watch 2014'. The day will include short talks from members of the Bristol Cats study team, covering areas of research such as feline behaviour, infectious diseases and study results, and is a great opportunity to learn more about the study. Short tours of the feline hospital and site will also be available. Attendance, and lunch, are free, but in order that we can cater accordingly, please reserve a place by sending a cheque (with your name on the back, to the address at the end of this newsletter) for £10 made payable to the Langford Trust for Animal Health and Welfare by 15th April. *Your cheque will be returned to you when you register at the conference but forfeited by those who do not attend.*

Jess Wilson has recently started an MSc at the University of Bristol investigating risk factors for feline gingivitis (inflammation of the gums). The project is funded by BSAVA Petsavers. Jess will be looking to identify lifestyle factors that affect the oral health of cats and will be working with data from the 'Bristol Cats' study. The oral health cards that owners have been returning are crucial for this project – over 700 owners have already returned one or more of their cards to us, so thank you! Don't miss out on the chance for your cat to be a part of this important new research project; remember to take your cards along with you when you take your cat for his/her vaccination or annual check-up. Many vet practices also offer free dental checks with a nurse, if you will not be attending a vet visit. Over the next few months Jess will be getting in touch with some 'Bristol Cat' owners that live close to the University of Bristol to arrange to meet some of the 'Bristol Cats' (aged approximately 3-4 years) and examine their mouths. Examinations can take place in your home, or you can bring your cat into the University of Bristol's Department of Animal Behaviour and Welfare in Langford (BS40 5DU). A £10 gift voucher is offered as a 'thank you' for your time, with a further £10 gift voucher offered as a



contribution towards travel expenses for those coming into the University. If you would like to find out more about what is involved then please contact Jess on jwl2582@bristol.ac.uk or 07854 208237.



Completed studies:



Langford
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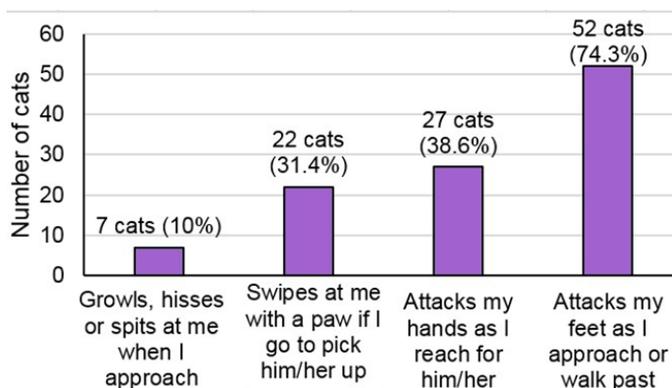
“Investigating the incidence of, and risk factors for, owner-reported signs of Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) in a cohort of young pet cats”. This study, supported by a grant from the Langford Trust for Animal Health and Welfare, has now been completed. The team (Louise Longstaff, Jane Murray, Tony Buffington, Tim Gruffydd-Jones and Rachel Casey) are putting the finishing touches to a manuscript that will be submitted to the Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery soon. Results of this study will be shared at our 2016 Open Day and a summary included in the Spring 2016 newsletter.

Elodie Tinland has completed her six-month internship with the Bristol Cats Study group as part of her Master's Degree in Natural Environment Engineering and Wildlife Management & Conservation at Reims University, France. Elodie investigated early life risk factors on signs of aggression (to people and cats) in cats at age 18 months. This work is now being written up for publication in a peer-reviewed journal and the main findings of the study will be shared at our 2016 Open day and a summary included in the Spring 2016 newsletter.

The following table summarises the descriptors that were used in Elodie's study as indicators of aggression.

Aggression towards household humans (HH)	Aggression towards household cats (HC)
How does your cat respond if you approach and handle him/her nowadays?	How does your cat interact with other cats in the household?
Growls, hisses or spits at me when I approach Swipes at me with a paw if I go to pick him/her up Attacks my hands as I reach for him/her Attacks my feet as I approach or walk past	Chases another cat Hisses or spits at another cat

The number of 'Bristol Cats' that were reported by their owners to show aggressive behaviour (using the above definitions) towards household humans (HH) and/or household cats (HC) at age 18 months is summarised below.



The main analysis was based on cats whose owners had completed questionnaires 1, 2, 3 and 4. Hence numbers of cats used for this analysis were lower (580 cats). The graph on the left, shows the distribution of the different types of behaviour shown towards human members of the household for 70 cats that displayed one or more of these behaviours. (510 cats were not reported to display any of these behaviours).

12% of cats displayed one or more of these aggressive behaviours towards humans living in their household.

Lizzie Rowe has submitted her PhD on 'early-life risk factors for feline obesity'. Well done Lizzie! Lizzie's four-year PhD was funded by BBSRC and supported by Cats Protection. The study was based on the 'CLAWS' cats (<http://www.bris.ac.uk/vetscience/research/projects/claws/>), of which 241 have joined the Bristol Cats Study. One element of Lizzie's work involved analysing data from the Bristol Cats Study to identify which factors increased / decreased the risk of cats being overweight or obese at 12 months of age. This paper ("Risk factors for owner-reported feline obesity at around one year of age: dry diet, feeding frequency of wet food and an indoor lifestyle") has now been published in the Preventive Veterinary Medicine journal. A summary of the research is available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26265631>. A pdf of the full paper can be obtained from the study team on request.



Which factors increase the risk of a cat being involved in a road traffic accident?

Is it living next to a busy road, or because a cat likes to hunt in a hedgerow at the side of a country road? Are black cats more at risk, or male cats? This was the focus of Jess Wilson's final year BSc dissertation. 'Bristol Cats Study' data on the first year of life were analysed to produce information that could be used by owners and rehoming centres to try to reduce the risk of cats being involved in a road traffic accident (RTA). Approximately 4% of 'Bristol Cats' had been involved in an RTA by 12 months of age, and we are currently writing up the paper for publication and hope to present the findings at the British Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress in April (as well as at our own Conference in May!)

Call for photos for our annual Christmas card.....

If you would like a photo of your cat(s) to be included in the 2015 'Bristol Cats' Christmas card then please email in **ONE** photo by 9am on Thursday 15th October to: cat-study@bristol.ac.uk

Please send in clear photos of a high resolution to increase the chance of your cat featuring on the card! Photos sent by post will also be considered. Thank you!



Don't forget you can stay up to date with us on twitter (@UniofBristolCats), Facebook (www.facebook.com/bristolcats.study) or by logging on to 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:

Tel/text: 07827 981412

Email: cat-study@bristol.ac.uk

Freepost RSHR-AGRJ-UABZ

Bristol Cats, Dr Jane Murray

University of Bristol

Langford House, BRISTOL, BS40 5DU

Cats lead the way! Cats first, dogs next..... “Puppies Of Our Time”



If you, or someone you know is considering getting a puppy during 2016 (or 2017 or 2018!!), then this might be of interest to you...Researchers at the University of Bristol will be launching a study for Dogs in the New Year.....“Puppies of our Time” is an exciting new research project, investigating both medical and behavioural problems that have considerable welfare implications for dogs. The project team will be recruiting over 3000 puppies (of any breed or crossbreed) aged 6 – 16 weeks of age. The progress of these puppies will be followed through questionnaires, providing huge insight into the development, health and welfare of our beloved canine friends. Keep a look out for details of this study, and/or contact Michelle Lord for further information (michelle.lord@bristol.ac.uk).

Enhancements to our Online Questionnaire System

We are pleased to announce the introduction of an enhanced on-line survey system, designed to reduce the time taken to complete questionnaires. The new system provides owners with a link to a personalized questionnaire and removes the need for owners to complete their personal details. Feedback on this new survey system is welcomed!

Collection of Clinical Records from Veterinary Practices

Our research administrator Emma Gale has started to gather clinical information about the ‘Bristol Cats’ from veterinary practices of owners who kindly provided consent for us access their veterinary records. We plan to use these data to compare with information provided in your questionnaires, for example, the age at which neutering took place and details of vaccinations received. This information will help to minimise the number of questions on our questionnaires. **If you have not yet given consent for the study to access your cat’s veterinary records (and confirm we hold the correct veterinary practice details for you), along with permission to share your anonymised data, then please complete our 2 minute survey relating to permission. The survey can be found at: <https://smvsfa.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/consent>. Alternatively, please get in touch using the telephone or email details above.**

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.

Photos by kind permission of Lisa Milella, Battersea Dogs & Cats Home

