



Bristol Cats Study Newsletter - Autumn 2012

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. It is taking place to improve knowledge of the causes of common behaviour patterns and diseases of cats, for example (but not exclusively), urinary spraying, 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.

Prize Draw:

It's really important for us to track how each 'Bristol Cat' develops over time so please keep up the good work in continuing to complete each questionnaire we send to you. As an added incentive, we will now be running an **annual prize draw** for owners who complete all of questionnaires 1- 4 (for 2 - 4 month, 6 month, 12 month and 18 month old cats). At the end of each year, all owners who have completed all 4 questionnaires when requested, will be entered into a prize draw for a gift voucher of your choice from www.voucherexpress.co.uk. **1st prize = £100** gift voucher, **2nd prize = £50** gift voucher, **3rd prize = £30** gift voucher. Don't worry if you completed the questionnaires a while ago, as there will also be a **retrospective draw** on 30th November for everyone who completed all 4 questionnaires in 2011 and before. Thank you and good luck!

Your Bristol Cat could be "Cat of the month"!

Starting this Autumn, we will be selecting at random a different cat on the study each month to be named "Cat of the month". We will contact owners of winning cats to ask for a photo and a sentence about their cat's personality.

As well as being admired as a new celebrity, each "Cat of the month" will also win a cat toy to play with. Check the website for the latest "Cat of the month"...

We're on Facebook and Twitter!

Emma Gale took up a 3 day per week admin post with the 'Bristol Cats' admin team in April 2012 and has done a great job in updating our Facebook and Twitter pages. Bristol Cats study participants have been enjoying sharing photos and stories on these sites. It's a brilliant opportunity for you to see how other 'Bristol Cats' are getting on, so please add us on facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/bristolcats.study>

Or follow us and "tweet" on Twitter at:
<http://twitter.com/BristolCats>



Have you got more than one 'Bristol Cat'?

We have now made it even easier for owners of more than one 'Bristol Cat' to complete surveys for us, by introducing questionnaires designed for 2 cats. When it is time for you to complete the next questionnaire for your kittens or cats, we will send you a link which takes you straight to the right questionnaire for you - easy! Less time filling in questionnaires means more time for you to play with your kittens, so everyone wins!

Results and Findings:

Marije's Study

Over the summer, Marije Bartholomeus (an MSc student at Wageningen University), visited the University of Bristol to collect data for her MSc thesis. Under the supervision of Dr Rachel Casey, and with the kind help of 19 'Bristol Cats' owners and their cats, she developed a technique used in other species to evaluate emotional states for use in cats. This "judgement bias" test first involved training the cats to discriminate between food bowls placed in two different locations - one with food and one without. Once they had learnt this difference, the cats were offered bowls in an 'ambiguous' or in between location - basically asking the cats 'do you think there is food in the bowl or not?', a little like asking someone whether their glass is half full or half empty! All the cats in the study were from multicat households, but the results suggested that cats in houses where the cats didn't always get on well were more likely to judge the bowl as empty (or were more 'pessimistic') than those where the cats all got on well. We hope to publish this work and will keep you updated.

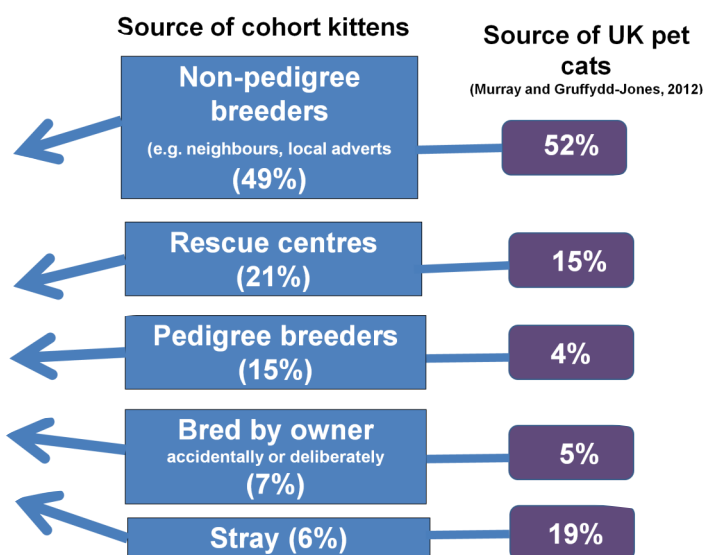
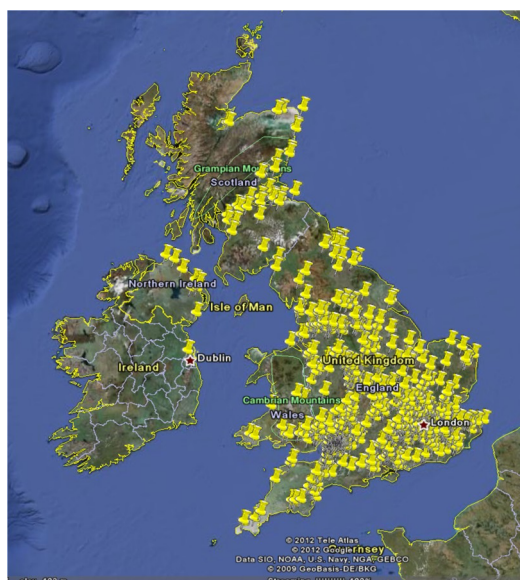
Philippa Welsh (*Pfizer feline fellow*)

is about to submit a paper to The Veterinary Journal on 'Factors that affect the decision of kitten owners to neuter by 4 and 6 months of age'. Owners reported that 14% of kittens were neutered by 4 months, and 74% by 6 months of age. A full copy of the paper will be posted on the "results" page of our website when available.

Louise-Trott Grant

received a vacation scholarship from the Wellcome Trust to complete an eight week project, "Risk factors for unwanted behaviours in a UK pet cat cohort". Louise has been looking at three outcomes: "feet attacking", urinating, and defecating in inappropriate locations. She has some interesting findings which are currently being written up for publication and which we will share with you when available.

Where the "Bristol Cats" have come from...



We are still recruiting!

We are still looking for kittens to join the study until **31st December 2012** and aim to recruit as many kittens as we can, from a variety of backgrounds. If you know anyone who has recently bred or taken in any kittens, then please encourage them to get involved in the study!

Favourite Names

You might be interested to know that the most popular names you have chosen for your 'Bristol Cats' are Oscar and Lola. This 'word cloud' shows the most common names on the study, with the largest being the most commonly used. Can you see your cat's name in there?



Christmas Cats!

It has been great to see so many photos of Bristol Cats that have been posted on our Facebook page. We would like to use a selection of these gorgeous pictures of your furry friends for our 2012 Christmas cards. If you **do not** want your photo to be included, please let the team know using our contact details below. If you would like your cat to be included, but prefer not to use facebook, please email a photograph to: cat-study@bristol.ac.uk

Photos will be selected between 5th – 9th November.



Beyond 18 Months...

We are currently trying to secure funding to extend the Bristol Cats study beyond the originally intended 18 months. We have been delighted to hear from Questionnaire 4 that so many of you would be willing to complete a survey once a year to let us know how your "Bristol Cat" is doing. Thank you so much for your support, we will keep you updated with how the study progresses.

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