



Bristol Cats Study Newsletter - Autumn 2013

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.

Record Recruitment in July!

We had a record high of new recruits in the month of July with 64 new kittens registering with the study. We owe a big thank you to Cats Protection who played a huge part in this by promoting the study. We now have over 2000 cats registered with the study which is brilliant news! We will be continuing to recruit new kittens until 31st December 2013. If you know anyone who is thinking of getting a new kitten please tell them about the study. We also welcome new kittens from owners who already have cats in the study.



Your Christmas Bristol Cat:

We love to see photos of your cats on our Facebook and Twitter pages. If you would like your Bristol Cat to have a chance of being selected to appear on our Christmas cards this year then please email us your favourite photo of your Bristol Cat to cat-study@bristol.ac.uk. We will accept one photograph from each owner to be entered, and the deadline for receiving Christmas card photographs will be 18th October.

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

Since October 2012, each month we have been selecting at random a different cat enrolled on the study to be named "cat of the month". We contact owners of selected cats to ask for a photo and for a few sentences about their cat.

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

Contact Us:

Freepost RSHR-AGRJ-UABZ
Bristol Cats, Dr Jane Murray
University of Bristol
Langford House
Langford
BRISTOL
BS40 5DU

Tel/text: 07827 981412

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/cats/>

Email: cat-study@bristol.ac.uk

Updates:

Moving house / changed your email address?

It is really important that the contact details we have for you are up to date so we can send you questionnaires and other information. 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: <http://www.survey.bris.ac.uk/smvsfa/update> and following the instructions. Alternatively you can ring us on **07827 981412** or send an email to cat-study@bristol.ac.uk with your new contact details.

New Twitter Name and Facebook:

It has been great to see continued interest in our facebook and twitter pages with owners sharing photos and stories about their 'Bristol Cats'. We have recently changed our twitter name, so to "tweet" on Twitter visit:

<http://twitter.com/UniofBristolCat>

If you would like to see how other 'Bristol Cats' are getting on, please add us on Facebook:

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

Please note that we are not able to respond to questions on these sites. If you have a question about the study, please contact us via our email address or telephone number listed on page 1.

Prize Draws:

We realise that completing questionnaires takes time and effort from owners, and hope that owners recognise the valuable part they play in helping us to produce results that can be used to improve feline welfare in the future. As an added incentive, we are running an annual prize draw for owners of cats who completed all of our questionnaires 1- 4 (for 2-4 month, 6 month, 12 month, and 18 month old cats), with the 18 month questionnaire being due in the previous calendar year. The next prize draw will take place in January 2014, for all owners whose 4th questionnaire was due in 2013 and who have completed all 4 questionnaires when requested. Winners are awarded a gift voucher of their choice. **1st prize = £100 gift voucher, 2nd prize = £50 gift voucher, 3rd prize = £30 gift voucher.** Good luck!

Please add our email address (cat-study@bristol.ac.uk) to your email address book, to ensure that our emails are not automatically filtered to your spam box.

Questionnaire design

We always listen to the feedback that owners provide us with on our questionnaires. We are sure you will appreciate that there is a balance between asking enough questions to collect the information that we need to help us identify factors that increase or decrease the risk of particular diseases and problems, and keeping the questionnaires at an acceptable length. Some people prefer drop-down menus, others do not. Hence, please be reassured that even if we do not make a change that you have requested, we still value your feedback and will have considered all options carefully. There are also issues surrounding making changes to questions that 1000 owners have already completed—if we change the question wording part-way through the study then this will mean that we cannot use everyone's responses in our analysis. It is in our interest to get the balance between question detail and questionnaire length and design correct and to keep our Bristol Cats owners happy by making participation in the study as easy as possible.

Happy owners = more completed questionnaires = happy study team!

Questionnaires for older cats: Questionnaire 5 is currently issued to older cats when they reach 2.5 years of age. For those owners who are happy to remain in the study as their cat(s) get older, the next questionnaire (Questionnaire 6) will be issued when cats are approximately four years and one month old. Subsequent questionnaires will follow on an annual basis. **At the end of each calendar year, a prize draw will take place for questionnaire 5's and for questionnaire 6's that were completed during the year. A set of prizes will be drawn at random for each questionnaire version : 1st prize = £100 gift voucher, 2nd prize = £50 gift voucher, 3rd prize = £30 gift voucher.**

Please let a member of the study team know if you no longer have your cat and wish to leave the study. Thank you.

Ongoing Studies and Results:

Sezan Ozgunay:

Sezan has recently started a MSc at the University of Bristol, and will be working with data from the 'Bristol Cats' study. She is carrying out new research analysing the behaviour of cats that are the only cat in their household and comparing it with the behavior of those cats that live in a household with other cats. She will be looking at differences between existing stress scores, questionnaire responses from owners and conducting cognitive bias tests to measure the cats' level of 'optimism' or 'pessimism'. The research will involve cats between 10 and 18 months old in the Bristol area. Over the next few months Sezan will be getting in touch with some 'Bristol Cat' owners that live close to the University of Bristol with the hope of recruiting cats and owners to her study and finding out more information in her MSc. This project is being funded by Waltham.

Victoria Crossley

Victoria Crossley (Pfizer/Zoetis Feline Fellow) is currently helping us put together questionnaire six. The information that we will gather about Bristol Cats at 4 years of age will not only help us understand more about the conditions that may affect young adult cats (such as urinary tract disorders and hairballs), but will also be vital for use later in helping us understand more about the diseases that may occur in older age, such as diabetes, kidney problems, having an over-active thyroid gland and cancer.

Past publications and study results

Please visit the results page of our website and look through previous editions of our newsletter—also available on our website.

Welsh, C. P., Gruffydd-Jones, T.J. and Murray, J.K. (2013) The neuter status of cats at four and six months of age is strongly associated with the owners' intended age of neutering. *Vet. Rec.* doi: 10.1136/vr.101362

Bristol Cats 'open day' / conference

We hope to hold an open day / conference during Spring 2014. This is in its very early stages of development but is likely to include short talks from members of the Bristol Cats study team, covering areas such as feline behaviour, infectious diseases and study results. More information will be circulated in the New Year.



Reminder about body condition score and oral health cards

Over the Christmas period we will be sending body condition score cards and oral health cards for you to ask your vet to complete at the time of your cat's annual vaccination. Please remember to take them with you when it is time for your Bristol cat's annual vaccination. If your cat does not receive an annual vaccination, these can also be filled in by your vet at a check up. The completed cards you send back to us are very useful for helping us to identify how lifestyle factors in kittens affect their body condition and dental health as they mature, so thank you very much for returning these cards to us.

Thank you for your help—the Bristol Cats owners and cats are helping to make a difference to our knowledge of factors affecting feline welfare.