



Bristol Cats Study Newsletter - Spring 2012

Recruitment: To date, over 900 cats have been registered with the Bristol Cats Study. Recruitment will continue until 31st December 2012. We hope to recruit a total of at least 2000 cats, so 2012 will be an important year for us. We have carried out some early analysis of the characteristics of cats recruited through different methods. Recruitment through vets and via 'word-of-mouth' continue to be important means of contacting new kitten owners. Please continue to encourage owners of kittens to take part.

Retention: Whilst we are very pleased to register new cats, our main interest is in collecting longer-term data about these cats. Inevitably there will be some owners that we lose contact with (e.g. change of contact details) or who no longer have their cats (e.g. road traffic accident), but we hope that these will be few in number and that most owners will continue their involvement in the study. Early results suggest that continued participation rates in the study are good, although owners of young cats (4-6 months) may be less likely to tell us if they no longer have their cat. ***Please keep us updated!***

What a wonderful response to our 'extra questionnaire'!

The response to our request for owners to complete an 'extra' 2-3 minute questionnaire was overwhelming. Within 10 hours of sending out our email request, 401 questionnaires had been completed online! We knew that Bristol Cats owners were motivated and enthusiastic to help – this was clear proof – thank you for your help. If you owned more than one cat when your Bristol Cat was 4 months old but have not completed this questionnaire yet, then it can still be accessed at www.survey.bris.ac.uk/extraq This information will be used in our first analysis of the data, so if you want your cat to be included – please complete this questionnaire!

Cheek cell swabs: These have been sent out over the last few months to owners who gave their permission (in questionnaire 1) for samples to be stored for the use of the Study. To date, over 420 swabs have been returned and are now stored in a freezer, ready for subsequent DNA analysis when sufficient swabs have been collected. **Thank you very much. We understand that this was not always an easy task to undertake with some replacement swabs needing to be sent out! It is not too late to return your swabs. If you did not receive a swab and would like to be included in this part of the study, then please get in touch.** (Owners of recently registered cats will be sent a swab later in the year).

Contact Details

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The people behind the study

Tim Gruffydd-Jones: Professor of Feline Medicine at the University of Bristol. Tim had the original idea for the study and provides veterinary expertise in all areas.

Jane Murray: Feline Epidemiologist at the University of Bristol – funded by Cats Protection. Jane oversees the day-to-day running of the study, designs questionnaires with input from others and analyses data.

Rachel Casey: Rachel is a Senior Lecturer in Companion Animal Behaviour and Welfare at the University of Bristol. Rachel is involved in many areas of the Bristol Cats study and is the key person behind the feline behaviours that we are studying.

Philippa Welsh: Philippa is a small animal vet with a specific interest in feline medicine who is based with us for a 12 month research post. Philippa has recently started analysing some of the Bristol Cats data. A poster presentation at a scientific conference and publications (in the scientific and lay press) are the aims of Philippa's work during the next few months. Further details will be available in our Autumn newsletter.

Part-time research administrators: During the last few months **Emma Gale** and **Amber Whitmarsh** have been employed on temporary contracts helping with administrative tasks involved in the study. A 12 month post has recently been advertised, to employ someone to help Jane with the administrative side of the study and to boost recruitment rates during 2012, working for 3 days/week.

Lizzie Rowe: Lizzie started a 4 year PhD in October 2011. Lizzie is working closely with Cats Protection on a 'sister study' to Bristol Cats. Lizzie will be recruiting 2-6 month old cats that are adopted from re-homing organisations and following their progress in their new homes for a 2 year period. This study is called 'C.L.A.W.S.' (Cat longitudinal analysis of animal welfare study).

Results from the study:

❖ A poster has been prepared for presentation at the annual conference of the Society for Preventive Medicine and Veterinary Epidemiology, (Glasgow, 27-30 March, 2012). *A copy of the poster will be available on the website (www.vetschool.bris.ac.uk/cats) from early April and a paper copy can be obtained on request by contacting the study team.*

❖ We hope to present early results from the study at the International Symposium for Veterinary Epidemiology and Economics (Maastricht, August, 2012).

❖ During 2012 we plan to submit 2 papers for publication in scientific journals and to summarise these results in publications aimed at cat owners.

Further details on these results will be available in our Autumn newsletter.

Finally, please remember.....

The success of the Bristol Cats Study depends on you!

If, for whatever reason, you no longer want to take part in our study, then please tell us, so we can update our records. In particular, if you need to withdraw from our study because your cat is no longer with you, please could you let us know the specific reason (e.g. cat went missing, new landlord does not allow pets, cat died due to a traffic accident). This is important information for us and will help us report accurate statistics.