

# Bristol Cats Study Newsletter

## Spring 2025



University of  
BRISTOL



Bristol Cats

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.

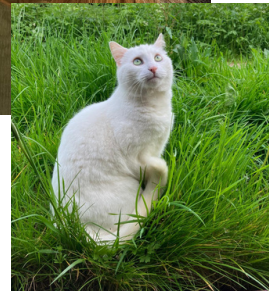
### Study news

As the days get longer and the Spring flowers appear, we have been busy preparing our 17th questionnaire, for cats aged 15 years. Can you believe how quickly the time has flown by?! We also ran our annual prize draw in January and this newsletter contains photos of some of the lucky winners.



### Welcome Bec and Jonathan to the Bristol Cat Study team

Hi, I'm Bec! I have an MRes in quantitative research and am interested in population health and epidemiology. My most recent role was based within Bristol Medical School investigating child developmental outcomes following covid-19. I am thrilled to be joining the Bristol Cats team as I absolutely love cats! I live on a narrowboat in Bath with my partner and my sweet 6 year old cat, Luna. In my free time I enjoy reading by the fire, trips to Toppings bookshop and the Little Theatre, and walks along the towpath.



Last August we launched the new online version of the Bristol Cats questionnaires on REDCap. We hope you have found the new survey system easier to navigate! Do get in touch if you have any suggestions for improvements.



### Did you know...

As kittens cats have 26 deciduous, or "baby", teeth. As adults they have 30 permanent teeth.

Don't forget to take care of those gnashers folks!



Hello, I'm Jonathan! After a decade in retail, a desire to build a career involving animals, research & welfare led me to complete a degree in Zoology at the University of Bristol. Since 2021, I have been working for the University in a variety of research-based roles in the School of Cellular & Molecular Medicine. I have been involved in research projects related to vaccines & human virus detection at a population level. My experience has enabled me to find a role within a field I'm passionate about with the Bristol Cats Study team & I'm excited to get started.

### Farewell to Sam

Sam hasn't really left us, as she is still at the vet school, but she is now working with Cats Protection to research the population of cats in shelters across the UK. As it stands, there is currently no up to date information regarding the volume of cats which go through these environments. We're really excited as this project has lots of potential benefits to cat welfare, from helping to inform legislation and population management strategies, to providing a broader understanding of shelter environments as a whole.



## Hot off the press

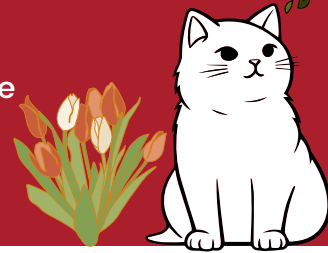
For those of you who like to delve into the science behind our research, we have a number of upcoming publications that we will be adding to our website as soon as they are published:

Our paper looking at risk factors for gum disease in the Bristol Cats cohort has been published.

Sam's article on the Bristol Cats Study was published by Companion magazine, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association's monthly membership magazine, in January.

Veterinary surgeon Aimee Taylor is about to publish a scientific paper on her research into mortality in the Bristol Cats study cohort with the Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery.

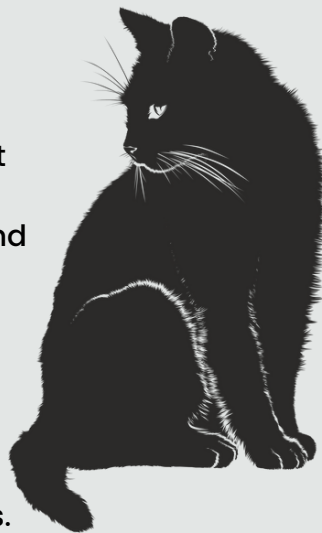
For more details of these and previous publications please go to our website:  
<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/vet-school/research/projects/cats/>



## Feline age of neutering study

Colleagues at Cats Protection and the University of Bristol are celebrating a collaborative success following publication of their latest research, which explores the impact of prepubertal neutering on body condition score (BCS) and bodyweight, in the journal Vet Record.

The paper, led by Cats Protection and utilising data from the Bristol Cats Study, compared veterinary measurements of BCS and bodyweight for kittens neutered at the recommended age of four months and under, five months and six months. No differences were found between the groups throughout adulthood into their senior years, suggesting that cats neutered prepubertally are at no greater risk of obesity in adult life than those neutered at six months.



For full findings and more information about the research visit our website!

## Student veterinary nurse projects

Final year vet students Emily Taylor and Natalia Montana have been working hard on their projects aiming to build our knowledge of cat behaviour and improve cat's lives!

Emily developed a questionnaire to detect age-related behaviour changes (similar to alzheimers in people) in older cats. She received 332 responses!

Natalia asked many of you to listen to audio clips of feline vocalisation to see how good we are at recognising emotion behind a cat's meow!

Thank you for helping our students and watch this space for news of their findings!



## Bristol Cats Study participant videography needed!



In May we will be taking over the Bristol Veterinary School Instagram account to shine a light on the work of the Bristol Cats Project and we're looking for participant stories to include with our takeover content!

### What do we need?

A short video clip of around 30 seconds which include your cat(s) and audio testimony talking about your experience with the study and why you got involved. Your written consent to share the imagery on our social media channels (we will share a link to give your consent via email with those who send in clips).

### How can you get involved?

Send your video clip in Mp4 format to [vets-marketing-admin@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:vets-marketing-admin@bristol.ac.uk) by 16/05/25.

## Feline hormones project

Karen has been busy preparing her study packs to be sent out to non-Bristol cat owners.

She is aiming to find out if it is possible to sample cortisol from cats in an owner-led, non-stressful manner by taking saliva swabs whilst playing with their cat.

This could allow her to look at how cats daily hormone patterns may be affected by routine events that some cats find stressful (vet visits, grooming, claws clipped etc.)





## 2025 Prize Draw Winners!

In January we notified the winners of £100, £50 and £30 shopping vouchers in our annual prize draw. Prizes were awarded to randomly selected owners who had returned a completed questionnaire in the last 12 months. Here are some of our lucky winners;

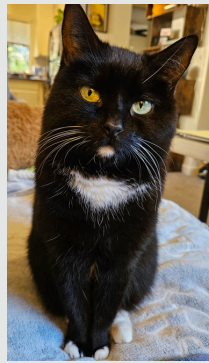
**Louie**



**Betty**



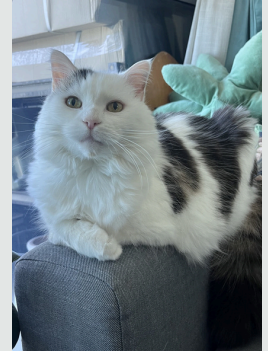
**Iza**



**Freyja**



**Gandalf**



**Tundra**



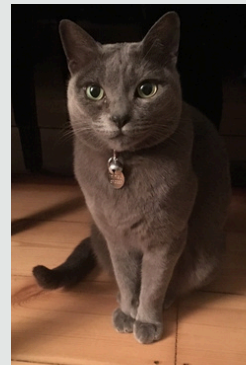
**Enzo**



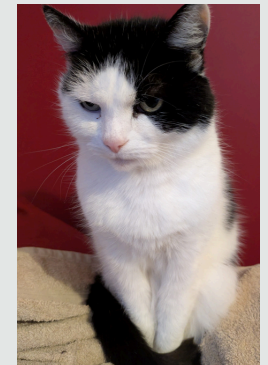
**Tabb**



**Millie**

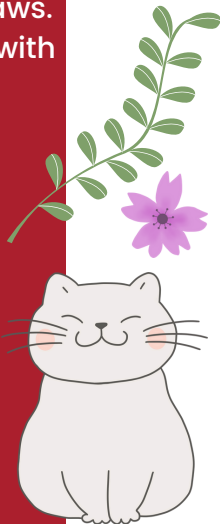


**Molly**



### Fun Cat Fact

Most cats have 18 toes, 5 on their front paws and 4 on their back paws. However, some cats can be born with "extra toes", a condition called polydactylism.



### Whack-a-Mouse Winners!

Congratulations to our winners Blake and Gibbs who are now enjoying their Whack-a-Mouse prize.



### 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. Please get in touch using our contact details below:

Telephone: 0117 394 0850

Email: [cat-study@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:cat-study@bristol.ac.uk)

Freepost: RSHR-AGRJ-UABZ Bristol Cats, Dr Emily Blackwell, University of Bristol, Langford House, BRISTOL BS40 5DU

