

# Bristol Cats Study Newsletter

## Spring 2026



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

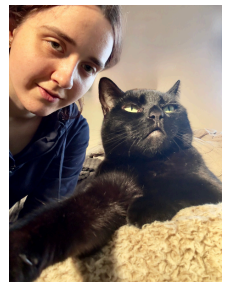
With the arrival of Spring we hope that you and your cats are enjoying the brighter days as much as we are! The new season brings with it exciting research news, winners of the annual Bristol Cats prize draw and the launch of a new competition to win a treat dispenser cat toy. From this year, we are including a new section dedicated to remembering some of the amazing Bristol study cats that are sadly no longer with us. If you would like us to include a tribute to your beloved cat, please feel free to send a photo and a short memorial note.

As always, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks for your ongoing support; our study simply wouldn't be possible without your commitment each year.



### Research news

This year we welcomed Charlotte Wainright, who is completing her final year research project as part of her Veterinary Nursing and Companion Animal Behaviour studies. Her project explores whether owners' beliefs or misunderstandings about cats' drinking habits may contribute to cats not drinking enough water. She is also looking at whether better education and support for owners could help improve feline hydration. Dehydration is a common issue in cats, so it is valuable to understand how owners view their cats' water needs. This includes everyday factors such as where water bowls are placed and what types of water sources are provided. We want to say a very big thank you to all who completed her survey - she received over 400 responses which is truly fantastic!



**Charlotte & Violet**

The research that you help us with has wide-ranging impacts, for example as well as generating a high level of interest in the veterinary press, the recent paper on "Long term effect of neutering age on body condition score and bodyweight in domestic cats", has been viewed over 2000 times!

### Improving our understanding of lameness in cats

Veterinary surgeon Nadia Hussain is developing a new way of scoring lameness in cats using video recordings. Can you and your cat help Nadia?

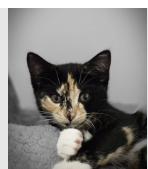
Nadia is looking for owners to send her footage of cats that suffer from lameness (limping) walking naturally at home. She needs footage of your cat walking in a straight line from three different angles. If you think that you might be able to help and would like to know more, please contact Nadia at this address: [nadia.hussain@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:nadia.hussain@bristol.ac.uk)

*If you haven't heard from us recently and were expecting a questionnaire, please check your Spam/Junk folder!*



Stay up to date with us on X: [@UniofBristolCat](https://twitter.com/UniofBristolCat), or Facebook: [www.facebook.com/bristolcats.study](https://www.facebook.com/bristolcats.study)

Full details of the research described can be accessed via the study website: [www.bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/cats](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/cats)



# Thank you for supporting vital feline health research

Each year, many of you kindly give consent for our team to contact your cat's veterinary practice to request clinical history information. We'd like to say a sincere thank you - this contribution is so valuable.

Veterinary records help our researchers build a clearer picture of complex health conditions, long-term outcomes, and causes of death within the study population. This information allows us to ask better questions, improve scientific understanding, and ultimately contribute to better prevention, diagnosis, and treatment for cats.

We're grateful that so many participants already provide this consent. If you are completing your annual questionnaire and feel comfortable doing so, we warmly encourage you to consider agreeing. Even small pieces of information can make a meaningful difference to feline health research.



## Does timing of neutering surgery affect cats recovery?

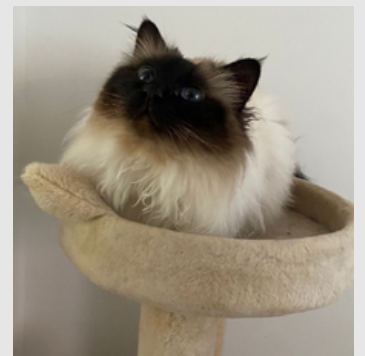
Hello! Here's a little update as to what I've been working on. In December, I launched a pilot (trial) study looking at stress response and surgical recovery after routine neutering in cats to look at how feasible and practical a larger scale study would be. We recruited 14 female cats who were coming into a veterinary practice to be spayed: some in the morning, some in the afternoon. We then recorded their heart rates, respiratory (breathing) rate, temperature and blood pressure at various points before and after surgery. We also looked at behavioural measures of stress, and some surgical factors such as post-operative pain and wound healing time. The pilot was a success, with some interesting data collected and some really constructive feedback on what we can improve when we launch our larger study on this topic.

I've also been looking into measuring cortisol (a stress hormone) in cats. Cortisol levels in cats aren't always easy to interpret, as levels vary a lot between individuals but also depend on time of day and other factors such as exercise and excitement. Assessing stress in cats can be tricky, so I want to investigate as many options as possible to make sure I can draw the most accurate conclusions from my data. Lizzie Youens.

## Kidney Disease and Dementia in Cats

Hello, I'm super excited to update everyone on the progress of my PhD so far. I've mainly been focusing on developing the methods I'm going to use to assess the cognitive (brain) function of the cats in my study to enable me to diagnose dementia. To assist this, I have performed a scoping review, meaning I have searched the published literature to identify which methods have been used in cats to assess cognition before. I identified twenty different papers using a variety of techniques and have chosen a few to adapt and take forwards into my PhD.

Firstly, I have spent some time adapting a previously published owner questionnaire to ensure it is easy to read and fill in for owners. This will help identify cats displaying behaviours that are thought to be associated with dementia. I have also completed a pilot study asking owners to test different methods of assessing learning in their cat, this was very useful and has enabled me to refine my methods to ensure the instructions are easy and the approach super cat friendly. Sara Lawrence-Mills



## Cat Toy Competition!

Win an interactive treat-dispensing cat toy by sending us your favourite fact about your Bristol cat! If there is something special that you'd like to share about your fabulous feline and would like them to feature on our Facebook page, please send us a short paragraph along with a photo of your purrfect companion to [cat-study@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:cat-study@bristol.ac.uk) by **30/04/26** for a chance to win!



## 2026 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;



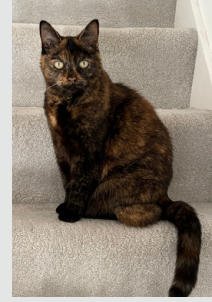
**Loki**



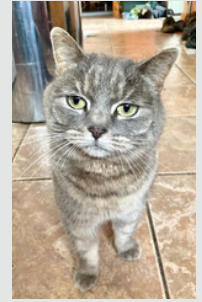
**Leo**



**Sapphie**



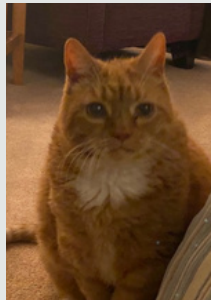
**Maisie**



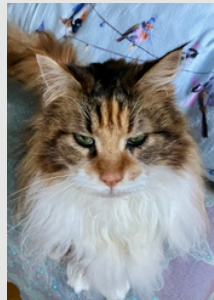
**Boudica**



**Tia**



**George**



**Khamsin**



**Oliver**



**Percy**



## In Loving Memory



*Cosmo, Bertie, Pearl, Daisy, Wiggo, Warbler, Dylan, Loki, Jasper, Froglet*

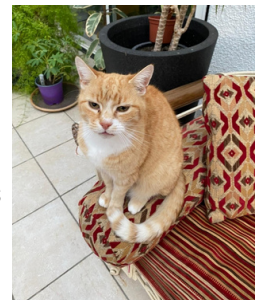
"Cosmo loved his food and a good loll in his favourite spots around the house and garden. One maple tree will always be known as Cosmo's parasol. He was a keen hunter and was generous with his gifts.



**Bertie**

He loved to play with a toy rhino, which is a fond reminder of our lovely ginger boy. RiP Cosmo 25.2.26 aged 14."

"Bertie has left many painful gaps in our life which we keep stumbling into. Gaps such as his welcome when we came home, his waking us up in the morning with a paw on the face but perhaps most of all his loud voice with which he spoke directly to us and everyone who came into our home. He will be greatly missed."



**Cosmo**



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. We would also like to thank

WALTHAM® Petcare Science Institute and Cats Protection for funding the study.

## 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 on your annual questionnaire. Alternatively, you can 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

