

What's it all about?

The 'Bristol Cats' study is a pioneering study investigating cat health, welfare and behaviour. It was launched in the Bristol area in June 2010, and rolled out across the U.K. in March 2011. The study has proved to be extremely popular with over 1300 kittens enrolled. We hope you will help us gather more information by encouraging kitten owners, breeders, carers or anyone with a kitten to take part. All kittens are welcome including non pedigree and pedigree breeds, kittens from the same litter and multiple kittens from the same household. We are particularly keen to hear from owners of stray cats as these are currently under-represented in the study. The aim is to enrol a further 700 kittens throughout 2012 so please get in touch and proudly tell your friends "My cat is a 'Bristol Cat!'".

How we collect information

Kitten owners complete online or postal questionnaires, initially when their kittens are between 8-16 weeks, then again at 6, 12, and 18 months of age. If further funding becomes available, the study will continue to a lifetime study of the kittens – but kitten owners can leave the study at any point should they wish to. We will then analyse the data to see what extent specific problems (e.g. obesity) are associated with management (e.g. diet, lifestyle) and other factors (e.g. breed).

What are the benefits?

The study aims to identify factors that increase or decrease the risk of common behaviour patterns and diseases of cats, for example, obesity and hyperthyroidism. We hope to provide information that can be used by veterinary practitioners, cat breeders and owners to improve the health and welfare of cats in the future. The study is the cat-equivalent of the 'Children of the 90's study' which has been collecting information relating to children in the Bristol region since the early 1990's. This study has identified ways to prevent many important conditions, such as cot death (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/alspac>). The lives of many children have been saved by those who gave their time and enrolled during the 90's and we hope you can spare a little time to help our study make a difference to cats.

How to get involved:

You can help by spreading the word to kitten owners, cat breeders or anyone with a kitten. Please contact us, using the details below, for a supply of posters and flyers to display and pass on to kitten owners who visit your premises.

If you have a kitten between 8 and 16 weeks of age, are resident in the UK and over 18 years of age, then please log-on to our updated website and tell us about your kitten. Full details can be found at www.bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/cats together with a link to the first questionnaire. Please also contact us if you prefer a paper copy of the questionnaire sent in the post.

Can I speak to someone about the study?

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the study, then please do not hesitate to get in touch. My colleague Emma Gale, will be working with me over the coming months and either Emma or I will be happy to talk over the phone, or to answer questions by email. You can also check our website for newsletters and updates about the study.

Thank you in anticipation of your help and support with this study.

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