

## Poster topic 03

## Poster 18

### **Characteristics of a UK pet cat cohort**

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UK pet cats aged 8-16 weeks are being recruited to a (lifelong) longitudinal study (1<sup>st</sup> June 2010-31<sup>st</sup> December 2012). The aim of the study is to use prospectively collected data to study a range of outcomes, including feline unwanted behaviours, obesity and specific diseases. Following 20 months of recruitment, initial analysis of the data was conducted to provide descriptive data on the cohort. Characteristics of cats and owners recruited through different methods were compared with data collected from UK households in 2007 using telephone interviews. Questionnaires had been completed for 898 eligible (8-16 week old UK) cats. Cats were recruited through internet sites (including Cats Protection website, facebook and pet forums) (33%), veterinary practices (30%), 'word-of-mouth' (12%) and through rescue centres (7%). Most cats (49%) had been obtained from friends, relatives, colleagues or via advertisements for non-pedigree cats, whilst 21% came from rescue centres, 15% were from pedigree breeders, 7% had been bred by the owner (accidentally or deliberately) and 6% had been stray cats. Cats recruited to the cohort were significantly more likely ( $P<0.001$ ) than the 2007 telephone sample to be pedigree cats (21% vs 8%). Further analysis of breed differences revealed that the proportion of pedigree cats varied according to how the owner had heard about the cohort study (6% via rescue centres, 13% via vets and 26% of owners had had been browsing feline-related websites. One-third (33%) of the cohort had been obtained at no cost to the owner and a further 14% cost only £1-£29. Most owners planned to have their cats neutered; 10% when the cat was aged <4 months, 23% at 5 months, 44% at 6 months of age and 9% at 7 months or older. The results of this analysis will be used to direct future recruitment efforts to increase the external validity of the study through recruiting a sample that is as representative of the UK pet cat population as possible.