

A cat's game of hide and seek

August 2 2011



Honors student Mark Owens is researching the role of hiding in relaxing cats

Hiding may play an important role in relaxing cats according to University of Queensland honours student Mark Owens.

Working in the Center of [Animal Welfare](#) and Ethics (CAWE), Mr Owens' project focuses on the behaviour and welfare of [domestic cats](#) in shelters.

“Welfare is a major issue in many countries for animals that are kept in cages, shelters and captive environments like zoos,” Mr. Owens said.

The study looks at cats' behaviors and emotions, which indicate if they are feeling stressed, anxious, frustrated or content and examines 37 cats over seven days.

Half of the cats Mr. Owens is observing are provided with a hiding box, and the remaining cats are in open view.

“A big part of my research is whether hiding provides a certain type of enrichment for cats in stressful situations,” Mr Owens said.

“Unfortunately I am not sitting in a room playing and watching cats, I have pre-recorded the cats for 24 hours over seven days, and have just finished coding their behaviors on the videos,” he said.

A cat's position in the cage, its posture and certain escape behaviours are all observations that contribute to identifying their emotions, stress levels and ability to adapt to their environment.

“I chose to do this project because I am very interested in the behavior of domestic animals,” Mr. Owens said.

"I hope my research will benefit animal shelters, and will allow them to recognise stressful behaviours in cats and ways to decrease these kinds of behaviors,” he said.

The study continues on from preliminary research in Canada where over three days, 39 [cats](#), which were housed in a shelter, showed significant behavioral and emotional changes.

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: A cat's game of hide and seek (2011, August 2) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-08-cat-game.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.