

Vegan versus meat-based cat food: Study finds no significant difference in feline health

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Cat health outcomes reported by surveyed owners across a year

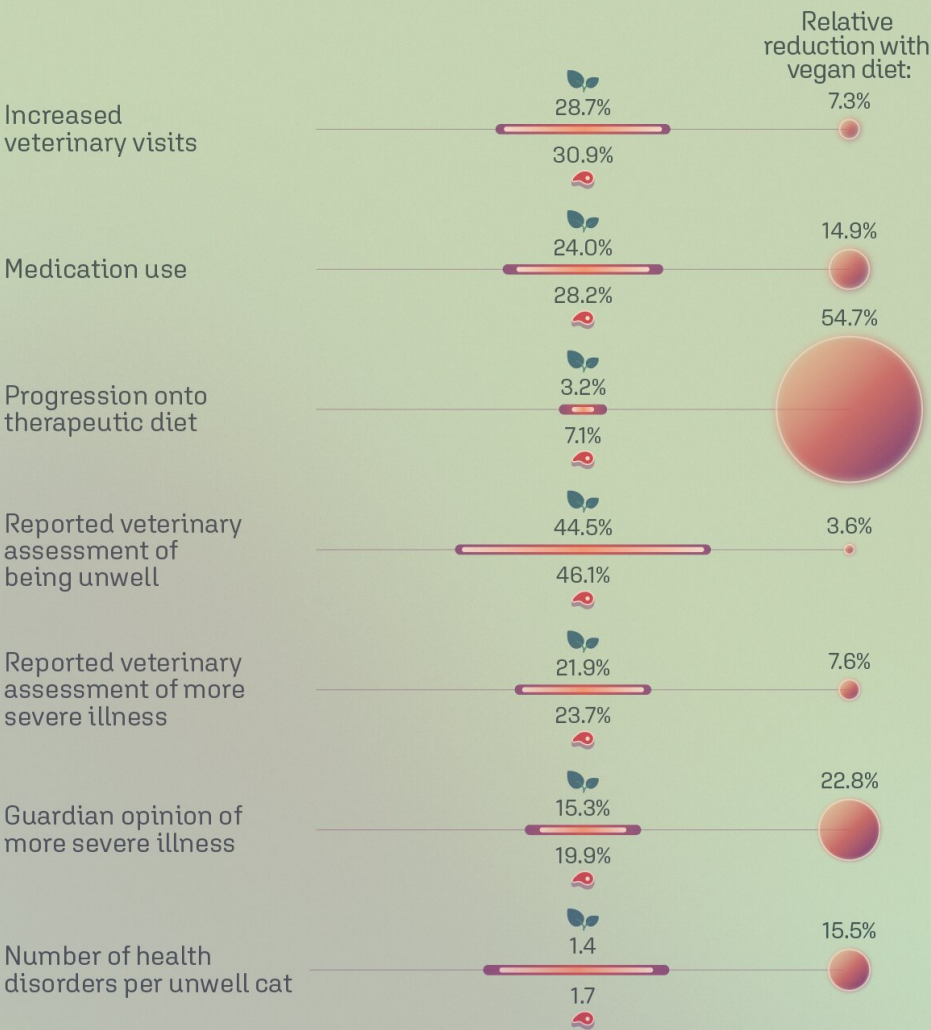
Owner-reported prevalence of general indicators of illness:



Vegan cat



Meat-fed cat



While differences were seen for cats on vegan and meat-based diets across seven health measures, these were not assessed to be statistically significant



Owners reported seven general indicators of illness for 1,369 cats, some fed a vegan diet and some on a meat-based diet. Despite some concerns about vegan diets being possibly less healthy, cats on a vegan diet were reported as being more healthy or as healthy as cats on a meat-based diet for the studied indicators (increased veterinary visits, medication use, progression onto a therapeutic diet, reported veterinary assessment of being unwell, reported veterinary assessment of more severe illness, guardian opinion of more severe illness and the number of health disorders per unwell cat), without statistically significant differences. Credit: Anne-Lise Paris, www.in-graphidi.com, PLOS, CC-BY 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

In a survey of cat owners, those who fed their cats vegan diets tended to report better health outcomes for their pets than those who provided meat-based diets, though the differences were not statistically significant. Andrew Knight of the University of Winchester, U.K., and colleagues present these findings in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* on September 13.

Many pet foods contain cooked meat as the primary protein source, but a growing number of available products use alternative protein sources, such as plants or fungi. Some veterinary professionals have voiced concerns that vegan diets—which lack meat, eggs, and dairy—are less healthy for [cats](#) than meat-based diets. However, limited research has examined these concerns.

To help clarify the healthfulness of vegan cat diets, Knight and colleagues analyzed survey responses from 1,369 cat owners who were asked to report about a single cat in their household that had been fed either a vegan or meat-based diet for at least one year. The survey asked participants several questions regarding the cat's health, followed by

questions about its diet. About 9% of participants reported feeding their cat a [vegan diet](#), and the rest a meat-based [diet](#).

After statistically accounting for other factors that could influence health—such as a cat's age or whether it is neutered—the researchers found that participants reported that vegan diets were associated with a lower risk of several health indicators, although none of the differences were statistically significant.

For instance, compared to owners of cats on meat-based diets, owners of cats on vegan diets tended to report fewer veterinary visits, less medication use, and that their veterinarian would be more likely describe their cat as being healthier. After analysis, there was no statistically significant difference between the reported health indicators of cats on vegan diets and those on meat-based diets.

The survey also asked about 22 specific health disorders; 42% of owners of cats on meat-based diets reported at least one disorder, compared to 37% of owners of cats on vegan diets.

The researchers say their findings support the healthfulness of [vegan](#) diets for cats. They note, however, that they did not analyze the nutrient content of the cats' diets.

More information: Vegan versus meat-based cat food: Guardian-reported health outcomes in 1,369 cats, after controlling for feline demographic factors, *PLOS ONE* (2023). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0284132](#). [journals.plos.org/plosone/article/journal.pone.0284132](#)

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