

Study to examine welfare aspects of cat containment

23 April 2014, by Marie Daniels



The first study of its kind will assess the impact that electronic containment systems may have on cat welfare.

Researchers at the University of Lincoln, UK, aim to recruit around 60 cat-owning households from across England in order to evaluate the effects these systems have on pets.

The study, which is sponsored by the charity Feline Friends, will assess cats' emotional states using behavioural observations, behavioural tests and questionnaires for their owners.

A monitoring programme will also be set up for cats that have been using the system for more than a year. By giving them special collars to wear the team will be able to see how many warnings and corrections they receive in a set period of time.

It is the first time a study of this nature has been carried out anywhere in the world, providing scientific data on the effect electronic containment systems have on cats' roaming areas and emotional wellbeing.

Researcher Dr Naima Kasbaoui, from Lincoln's School of Life Sciences, said: "The tests we are

going to perform are going to allow us to have a good picture about cats' behaviour, both with and without a containment system. Modified collars will be used to monitor the cats' movements and the effect the system has on their roaming.

"Owners who agree to take part will potentially get to know their cat like they have never done before."

Cats are well known for their tendency to wander. This can create problems, from straying onto roads (an estimated 250-300,000 cats are run over on the UK's roads each year), to angering neighbours.

The use of electronic containment systems appears to keep cats safe, but the potential emotional or physical impact on animals is not well understood.

The systems were originally designed to confine animals to certain areas by transmitting a radio signal from a boundary wire to a receiver on the animal's collar. If a warning beep is ignored, an electric stimulus is delivered by the collar. However, many owners feel cats learn to avoid the stimulus very quickly so are not stressed by them.

The research team at the University of Lincoln, which includes Dr Marta Gil, Professor Daniel Mills, Dr Oliver Burman and Professor Jonathan Cooper, have already concluded a study looking at people's attitudes and perceptions towards wandering cats and the possibilities of cat containment. The results are now being compiled and will be published in academic literature soon.

Three groups of volunteers are needed for the new study - a control group of cats that are free to wander outside the home and do not have a system; a home that has had a system operating for more than one year; and a third group where the decision has been made to install the system but it is not yet in use.

To be eligible, [cats](#) should be neutered and

between one and 15 years of age.

Provided by University of Lincoln

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