

Information for owners

What is the feline biobank?

The R(D)SVS Hospital for Small Animals and the Roslin Institute are developing a biobank of cat DNA. This will help us to identify the genetic basis of common diseases of cats, including hyperthyroidism, chronic kidney disease, diabetes mellitus, lymphoma (a type of cancer) and mycobacterial disease (e.g. tuberculosis [TB]). We are also investigating the genetic basis of brachycephalic features in cats (i.e. cats with short noses such as Persians and British shorthairs).

We hope that by identifying the genetic basis of a disease this will enable us to develop better and less stressful diagnostic tests, thus diagnosing cats earlier and improving quality of life for those affected. Through understanding the genetics of the disease process, we hope to develop new therapies to manage or cure these diseases.

What if my cat is healthy?

Healthy cats are vital to the success of the project as their DNA needs to be compared to the DNA of unhealthy cats. Geriatric health checks are a great way to ensure a cat is healthy both on the inside and the outside.

If you would like your healthy cat to be part of the biobank project, please speak to your veterinary surgeon about a geriatric health check. For allowing your cat to be a part of the feline biobank project, we will give you a discount on the cost of a geriatric health screen which checks your cat's blood for evidence of wellness and disease, including liver and kidney function.

Will this project just benefit cats?

We are very focused on "one health" initiatives. We hope any knowledge we gain from your cat can be used not only to help other cats, but also advance medical knowledge as a whole. Cats are frequently used as "models" for human diseases such as diabetes mellitus, HIV-Aids, and diseases of the brain and eyes. Your cat's DNA may help us understand more about diseases that occur in both cats and humans.

What is needed from my cat?

All that is needed is a small blood sample, a minimum of 3mLs of blood that your vet can take at any routine blood sampling visit or geriatric health check. Ask your vet to post us the sample and your cat's full medical history. Once we have run your cat's health check, we will forward the results to your vet and the left over blood is then used for research. DNA-specific information is for research only so will not be returned to your referring vet.