



News Release

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Cat study finds flat-faced breeds may suffer breathing problems

Pedigree cats bred to have flat faces may suffer from breathing difficulties, a study has found.

Researchers say owners of breeds with flat faces – such as the Persian and the Exotic – should be aware of the risks and seek veterinary care if they suspect their pet is in difficulty.

Facial features such as short noses are considered desirable for some pedigree breeds of cat but they may be linked to health risks, as they are in dogs.

Research led by the University of Edinburgh analysed photographs submitted by cat owners around the world to measure the faces of hundreds of animals.

Owners were also asked to complete a detailed health survey about their pets, including questions about the animals' lifestyle and breathing patterns.

The team found that flat-faced cat breeds were more likely to have breathing problems after exercise and while asleep.

Impaired breathing is a hallmark of a condition called Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS), which can lead to health problems throughout an animal's life.

The condition occurs as a result of abnormalities in the shape of the animal's mouth and nose, which prevents normal breathing.

Dogs with the same condition also have problems with their skin and tear ducts and can experience stomach trouble.

The difficulties are well-reported in dogs but the incidence of breathing problems in flat-faced cats has not been fully investigated. The study indicates that facial features may affect cats' health.

The research is published in the journal *PLOS One*.

Professor Danielle Gunn-Moore, of the University of Edinburgh's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, said: "This study demonstrates the need to further understand the genetic basis of brachycephalia in cats. Owners worried about their cats' breathing should consult a vet immediately."

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