

## HEALTH NEWS

# Largest Cancer Risk Factor Study Completed

A 2011 STUDY BY THE UNIVERSITY OF Missouri analyzed data from 1,129 feline intestinal tumors to determine risk factors associated with the development of specific forms of intestinal cancer. The data was obtained from the Veterinary Medical Database (VMDB), which is the largest existing database in veterinary medicine.

The most common intestinal tumor was lymphoma, which occurred primarily in the small intestines, followed by adenocarcinoma, which was generally localized to the large intestines.

The diagnosis of cancer, particularly feline intestinal lymphoma, is on the rise in the United States. This may be a reflection of improving veterinary care with more advanced diagnostic capabilities, as well as increased



reporting to the VMDB.

High risk factors for the development of intestinal cancer included being a Siamese purebred cat, as well as being over the age of 7, with risk increasing as the cats advanced in age.

## THE DIAGNOSIS OF CANCER IS ON THE RISE IN THE UNITED STATES.

Other possible risk factors not evaluated in the study included diet, environment (indoor vs. outdoor cats and smoking households, for example) and geographic location. This type of data was not available for all cases but

should be considered in future retrospective studies.

Kim Selting, DVM, a professor of oncology at MU College of Veterinary Medicine in Missouri, is optimistic that large-scale studies evaluating risk factors in the development of cancer in cats can help establish patterns that may help identify the same risk factors in humans. This study is the largest to date and contributes to the university's concept, "One Health, One Medicine: The Convergence of Human and Animal Health" and is undoubtedly a step in the right direction.

# Progress Made in Vaccine to Sterilize Feral Cats



Feral cats are the offspring of lost or abandoned pet cats that grow up and survive in the wild. Overpopulation and concern for the cats' welfare are motivating factors for the development of efficient and effective methods for preventing feline reproduction.

Surgically sterilizing the cats and returning them to their environment (trap-neuter-return) is presently the most popular, humane and effective method of reducing the numbers of feral cats. However, this method is costly, labor-intensive and logistically complicated.

Feral cat advocates have been hopeful for the development of a vaccine that would render cats sterile, a method termed immunocontraception. The vaccine would be given to feral cats in a humane trap without the need for anesthesia and would be less costly and easier to implement.

**A vaccine could be more efficient than trap-neuter-return.**

A recently published study led by Julie Levy, DVM, at the University of Florida, evaluated the efficacy of a single dose vaccine, GonaCon™, which was approved in 2009 for the control of white-tail deer populations. The vaccine triggers the production of antibodies against the main reproductive hormone, gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH). By blocking GnRH, the production of ova and sperm is prevented, making the cat infertile. The vaccine was found to be effective in all cats but the duration of infertility varied from five months to over five years.

Further research will be needed, but the GnRH vaccine shows promise for effective immunocontraception in cats. Hopefully, it will provide another tool to battle feral cat overpopulation in the future.

*Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, DVM, founded The Cat Care Clinic in Orange, Calif., in 1991. She is board-certified in feline practice and is one of 24 charter*



*diplomates. She was on the board of the American Association of Feline Practitioners for six years. She has been a contributor to CAT FANCY since 1993 and has written three cat books.*



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