



Transforming Lives

2025

Hill's Pet Nutrition

World of the Cat Report



**SCIENCE
DID THAT.**

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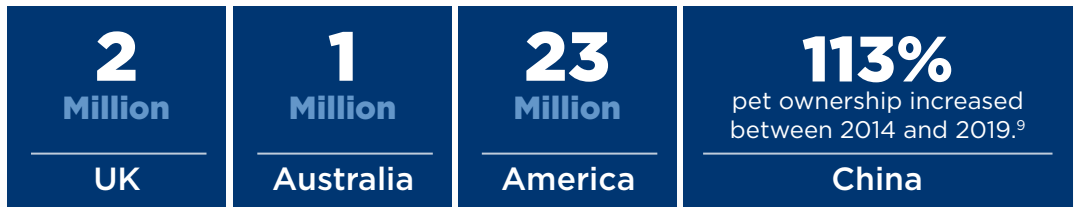
Introduction

Feline medicine has experienced a surge of interest over the past decade. On the industry side, we are seeing more cat-only products and an increase in research regarding cat specific diseases and conditions. With an estimated **220-373 million** cats kept as pets worldwide,^{1,2} this is not surprising – especially since this number continues to trend upwards.³ The goal of this report is to summarize trends, updates, and changes that are occurring in the feline veterinary community in order to increase knowledge and awareness. The four areas we will discuss are cat demographics; changes in veterinary care and expertise, including new diagnostics and treatments; pet food advances; and the impact of costs on veterinary care and pet food trends.

Cat demographics

There are an estimated 74 million domesticated cats in the US.⁴ China is second, with about 53 million pet cats,⁵ and Russia is third, with approximately 23 million pet cats.⁶ Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Ukraine, Japan, and Poland are among the top 10 countries with the highest number of pet cats.⁶

Pet ownership is increasing worldwide. During the pandemic, over two million people in the UK and one million in Australia adopted pets during the pandemic.⁷ Twenty-three million Americans adopted pets during the same period.⁸ In the world's most populous country, China, pet ownership increased 113% between 2014 and 2019.⁹



We know that many households own pet cats. In fact, 59% of Russians own a cat, which gives the country the highest share of cat owners in the world.¹⁰ In the US and the UK, about a quarter of households own cats.^{11,12} In the US, this equates to 37 million households, with an average of 1.78 cats per household.⁴





The other population of cats is stray cats. On average, in the US, there are approximately 30 to 40 million stray, feral, or uncared-for cats.¹⁰ Every year, 3.2 million cats find themselves in a shelter in the US.¹³ Approximately 2.1 million of these cats are adopted each year from shelters. You may be surprised to learn that this is a slightly higher number than that of dogs adopted each year (2 million).¹³



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Disney ‘employs’ semi-feral cats to help manage the rodent population on several of their properties.¹⁴ These cats receive basic veterinary care and have reportedly been part of a TNR (trap-neuter-release) program. Cats that become too friendly with guests are often adopted by Disney cast members.

There are **73 cat breeds** recognized by the International Cat Association.¹⁵ These breeds differ in popularity across the globe. The three most popular breeds worldwide are the **Ragdoll, Maine Coon,** and **Devon Rex.**

Top 3 Popular cat breeds by region in 2024:

Global¹⁶



Ragdoll



Maine Coon



Devon Rex

US¹⁷



Exotic Shorthair



Ragdoll



British Shorthair

UK¹²



British Shorthair



Bengal



Ragdoll

India¹⁸



Billi



Siamese



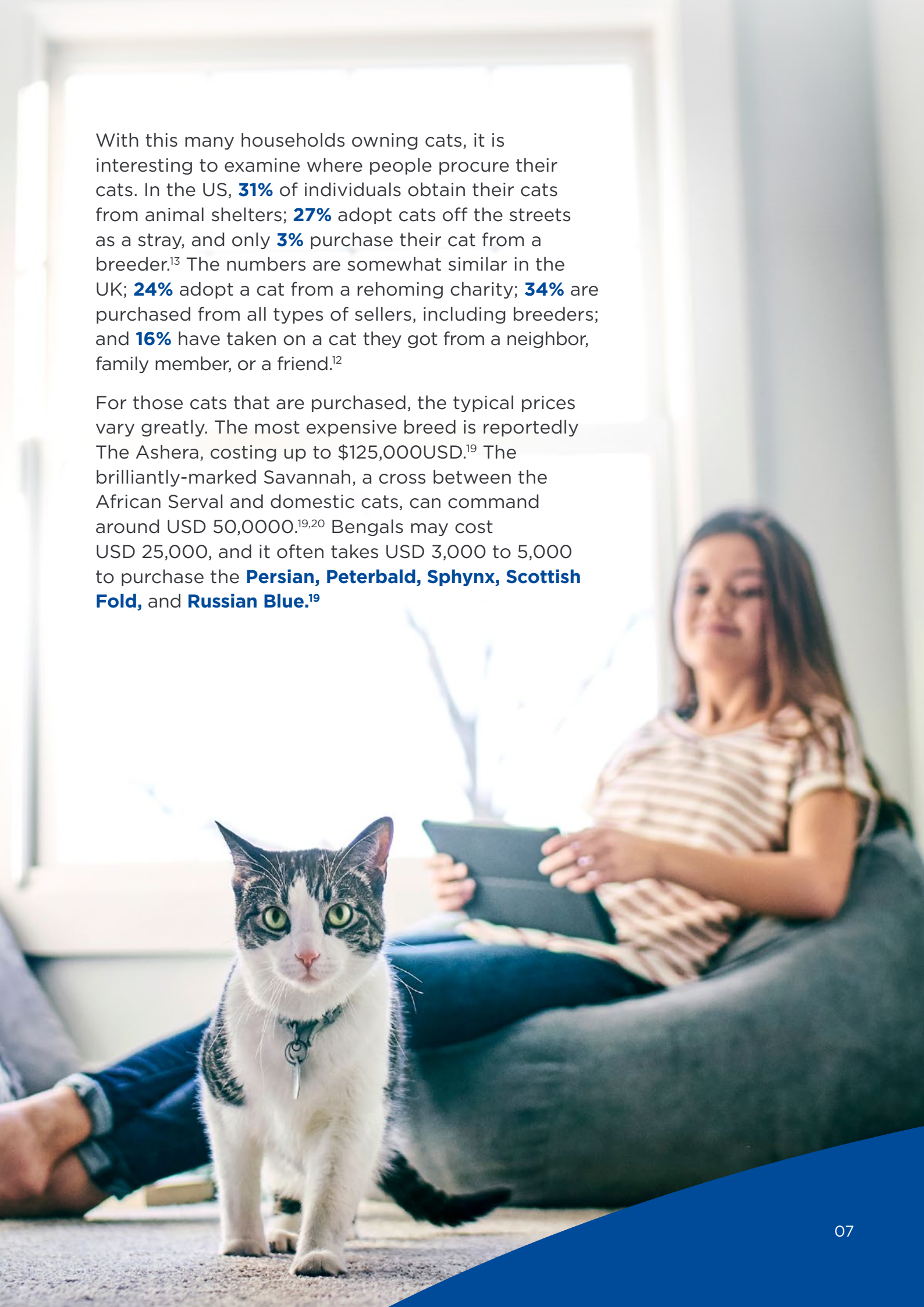
Persian



Among all the breeds of cat, there are also some that are very rare. Among the rarest globally are the American Wirehair, Brumilla, Chartreux, Cornish Rex, and Egyptian Mao.

With this many households owning cats, it is interesting to examine where people procure their cats. In the US, **31%** of individuals obtain their cats from animal shelters; **27%** adopt cats off the streets as a stray, and only **3%** purchase their cat from a breeder.¹³ The numbers are somewhat similar in the UK; **24%** adopt a cat from a rehoming charity; **34%** are purchased from all types of sellers, including breeders; and **16%** have taken on a cat they got from a neighbor, family member, or a friend.¹²

For those cats that are purchased, the typical prices vary greatly. The most expensive breed is reportedly The Ashera, costing up to \$125,000USD.¹⁹ The brilliantly-marked Savannah, a cross between the African Serval and domestic cats, can command around USD 50,000.^{19,20} Bengals may cost USD 25,000, and it often takes USD 3,000 to 5,000 to purchase the **Persian, Peterbald, Sphynx, Scottish Fold,** and **Russian Blue.**¹⁹





Changes in veterinary care & veterinary expertise

Veterinary care for cats

A group of global feline specialists pooled their data and reported the most common medical conditions they diagnose in cats. It may not surprise you to hear that they report urinary tract disease, encompassing both infectious and noninfectious lower urinary tract conditions, as one of the most common diagnoses. Gastrointestinal issues, upper respiratory infections, kidney disease, and behavioral concerns also made the list (see below).

Top conditions diagnosed in cats:²¹

- Gastrointestinal disease
- Dental disease
- Urinary tract disease (upper and lower)
- Upper respiratory tract diseases
- Overweight/Obesity
- Kidney disease
- Behavior concerns

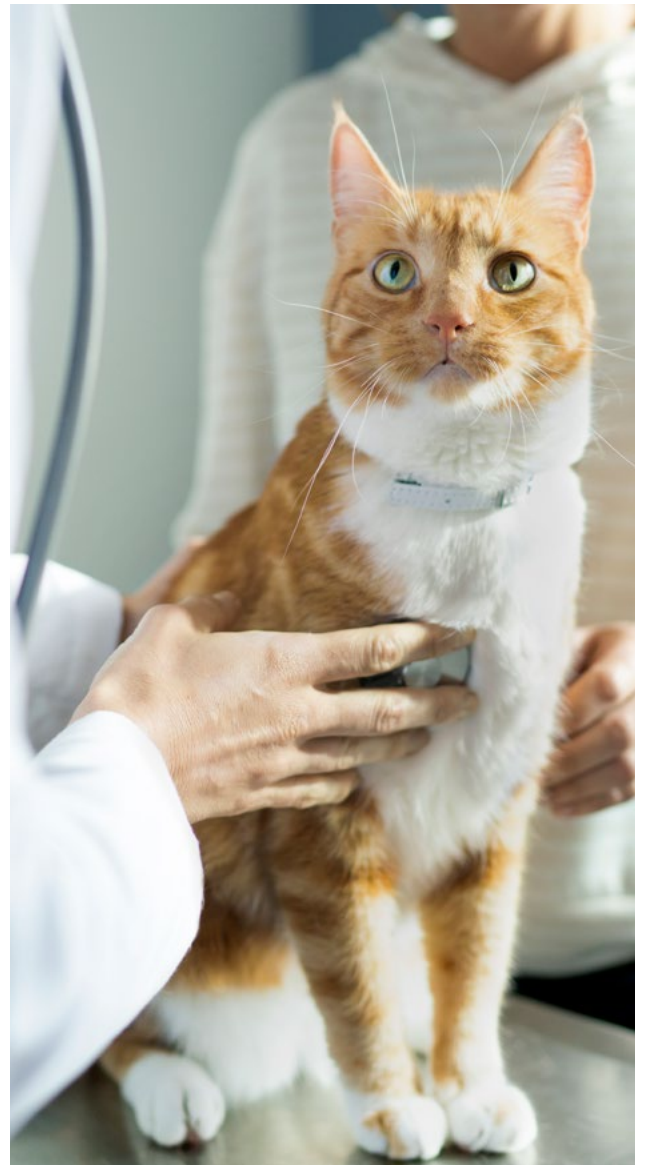
Feline immunodeficiency virus and **feline leukemia virus** remain two of the most common feline infectious diseases worldwide.^{22,23}

Feline Veterinary Expertise

The exact number of feline specialists and veterinary practices that are focused on cats only is unknown. Certainly the number has been increasing, albeit slowly. In the United States, there are currently **46 AAHA-accredited cat-only practices.**²⁴ There are a number of feline veterinary qualifications or certifications available across the globe. Each of these has its own unique criteria and/or guidelines for qualification.

The American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (Feline Practice) is based primarily in North America, but is available globally. The ABVP is committed to recognizing and advancing excellence in each species-specialized veterinary practice. Worldwide, there were a total of **96 ABVP Feline diplomates at the end of 2024.**²⁵

A search in the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, based in the UK, reveals 17 Veterinary Surgeons who are specialists in Feline Medicine, and 43 individuals that are Advanced Practitioners in Small Animal Medicine -Feline.²⁶ All RCVS Specialists must hold post-graduate qualification at Diploma level or above, demonstrate an active contribution to their specialty, have national or international acclaim, and publish widely in their field. The Advanced Practitioner designation requires a veterinary degree, five years of veterinary practice in the designated field, with primary responsibility for **200 cases/year**, at least 250 CPD credits over the five year period, and a few other professional activities.



“ In the United States, there are currently 46 AAHA-accredited cat-only practices.²⁴ There are a number of feline veterinary qualifications or certifications available across the globe. ”

In Australia and New Zealand, feline practitioners can successfully complete Feline Practice Online Learning, accredited by the International School of Veterinary Post Graduate Studies (ISVPS) as a training program for the General Practitioner (GPCERT) in Feline Practice. Veterinarians may also apply for membership in the Australia and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists - Feline Practice.²⁷

Based in Spain, the Asociación Veterinarios Especialistas En Pequeños Animales (AVEPA) confers Acreditación en Medicina Felina (AVEPA Accreditation in Feline Medicine).²⁸

The International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM) Academy of Feline Practitioners is the veterinary division of International Cat Care, a charity which aims to enable and inspire people to understand cats' individual needs and perspectives. The ISFM Academy is a community of veterinarians with further qualifications in feline medicine or surgery, or a specialist in a complementary field, dedicated to improving veterinary care for cats, and advancing developments in feline practice and welfare.²⁹

Designations of veterinary practices as 'cat friendly' have been around for over a decade, and over two thousand practices have achieved one of two major designations. The ISFM Cat Friendly clinic program was established to create an environment more sympathetic to the needs of feline patients and their pet parents. This program is available in 31 countries, all outside of North and South America. There are three levels of accreditation—gold, silver, and bronze. The 1270 accredited clinics worldwide includes 590 in the UK, 324 in the rest of Europe, 279 in Asia, and 77 in Australia.³⁰ In North and South America, the program is licensed by the Feline Veterinary Medical Association (Feline VMA; formerly the American Association of Feline Practitioners [AAFP]), as the Cat Friendly Practice®. **At the end of 2023, there were 880 Cat Friendly Practices®, with another 355 in progress.**³⁰





These 'cat friendly' designations have made a positive contribution to feline health and well-being during the past 12 years. A study published in late 2023 compared cat friendly to non-cat friendly (control) practices to determine what effect the cat friendly practices had on clinic visits and diagnoses of common feline conditions. The cat friendly practices had higher revenue per visit, higher revenue per visit when diagnostic testing was done, higher mean visits per cat per year, and more diagnoses of common endocrine, kidney, and electrolyte conditions.³¹

Cat friendly programs have additional data showing success of cat friendly guidelines. In practices following these guidelines, pet parents are better prepared and satisfied, stress is reduced during clinic visits,

Retention is improved and cats are seen more frequently. So clinics has reported

81% increased revenue.³²

Professional organizations in human medicine have been developing clinical practice guidelines for the last half century. Veterinary medicine is quickly catching up. The last five years have seen an explosion of guidelines for feline practice, feline medicine, wellness, the veterinary environment, and how the veterinary health care team should interact with cats in the clinic.

These guidelines were developed and put forth by the Feline VMA and ISFM, occasionally in conjunction with another veterinary organization. It's hard to believe the extent of the recent guidelines, listed below.

New Feline VMA/ISFM Feline Guidelines in the past 5 years:³³

[Click on the link to view each guideline](#)

2024	AAFP Intercat Tension Guidelines: Recognition, Prevention and Management
2024	ISFM and AAFP Consensus Guidelines on the Long-Term Use of NSAIDs in Cats
2023	AAFP/IAAHPC Feline Hospice and Palliative Care Guidelines
2022	AAFP/ISFM Cat Friendly Veterinary Interaction Guidelines: Approach and Handling Techniques
2022	ISFM/AAFP Cat Friendly Veterinary Environment Guidelines
2022	AAFP Everycat Feline Infectious Peritonitis Diagnosis Guidelines
2022	ISFM Consensus Guidelines on Management of the Inappetent Hospitalised Cat
2022	ISFM Consensus Guidelines on the Management of Acute Pain in Cats
2021	AAFP Feline Senior Care Guidelines
2021	ISFM Consensus Guidelines on the Collection and Administration of Blood and Blood Products in Cats
2021	AAHA/AAFP Feline Life Stage Guidelines
2020	AAHA/AAFP Feline Vaccination Guidelines
2020	AAFP Feline Retrovirus Testing and Management Guidelines

Feline Textbooks

The AAFP was rebranded as the Feline Veterinary Medical Association, as announced in September 2024.

In addition to the clinical practice guidelines, there have been a number of feline-focused veterinary textbooks published recently. Prior to five years ago, feline-specific textbooks have been available in ophthalmology, soft tissue and orthopedic surgery, internal medicine, behavior, cardiology, infectious disease, oncology, anesthesia and pain management, in addition to other topics. At least 12 new feline-specific text books have been published in the last five years. These include:

12 new feline specific text books

Coming Soon in 2026

The Feline Patient

6th edn,
Lisa Durso Keel and
Lisa Restine Drylewicz
2025

The Cat

2nd edn,
Susan Little
2024

Atlas of Feline Surgery Techniques

Alberto Barneto,
Salvador Cervantes Sala,
Anna Calvet Alemany, et al
2023

Clinical Handbook of Feline Behavior Medicine

Elizabeth Stelow
2022

Feline Orthopaedics

Harry Scott,
Juan Marti, and Phillip White
2022

Feline Dentistry

Jan Bellows
2022

Feline Reproduction

Aime Johnson and
Muchelle Kutzler
2022

Feline Emergency and Critical Care

Christopher G. Byers and
Massimo Giunti
2021

Feline Gastroenterology

Fabio Procoli,
Karin Allenspach, and
Silke Salavati
2021

Feline Diagnostic Imaging

Merrilee Holland and
Judith A. Hudson
2020

Feline Dermatology

Chiara Noli and
Silvia Colombo
2020

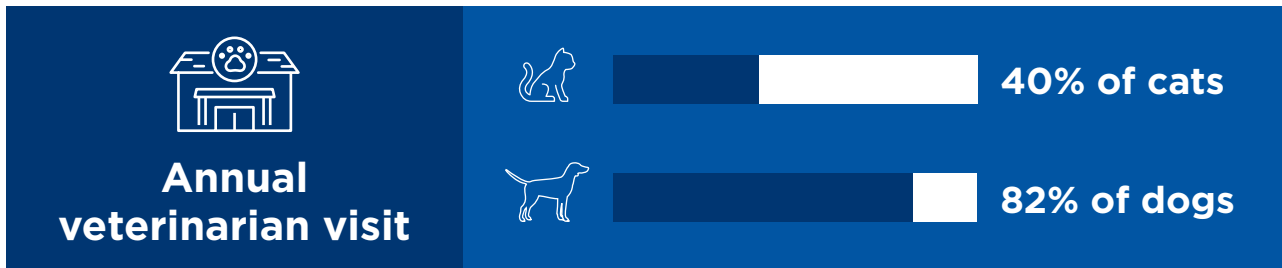
Feline Endocrinology

Edward C. Feldman,
Federico Fracassi, and
Mark E. Peterson
2019

New Treatments and Diagnostic Tests

Feline medicine continues to develop rapidly. Veterinarians now have more tools in their arsenal to help cats with veterinary visit fear and anxiety, and manage cats with diabetes mellitus, **feline infectious peritonitis (FIP)**, and **chronic kidney disease (CKD)**.

Only **40% of cats** visit the veterinarian annually, compared to **82% of dogs**. The stress of veterinary visits on cats and their pet parents can keep cats from receiving the care they need. Pregabalin is an anticonvulsant and neuropathic pain medication. Pregabalin oral solution is now available to veterinary clinics throughout the US (Bonqat®; Zoetis). It is indicated for the alleviation of feline acute anxiety and fear associated with transportation and veterinary visits. It is more potent than gabapentin, often used in these situations, so dosing can be lower (5 mg/kg vs. 10 mg/kg).^{34,35}



Fibroblast growth factor 23 (FGF-23) is a bone marrow cell-produced hormone that regulates phosphate metabolism by modulating its intestinal absorption and excretion by the kidneys. A lab test for serum **FGF-23** concentration is now commercially available, and can provide early detection of phosphorus overload and metabolic bone disease in cats in **IRIS CKD stages 1 or 2**. It can indicate the need for therapeutic intervention and may play a part in determining prognosis.³⁶



Another newly available lab test is for **cystatin B**, an intracellular protein in renal tubules. Levels increase in response to active or acute injury to the kidneys. It will show acute kidney injury earlier than increases in SDMA or creatinine. This assessment can be important in many cases, including potential toxin exposure, tracking treatment and recovery after acute kidney injury, monitoring progression from IRIS stage 1 CKD, screening for injury following NSAID use, and assessing the pet after a hypotensive event during anesthesia.³⁷



Molidustat oral suspension (Varenzin™-CA1®, Elanco) is the first conditionally-licensed veterinary option for treating nonregenerative anemia in cats with CKD. It stimulates endogenous production of erythropoietin when given daily.³⁸

Two new oral hypoglycemic agents have been approved for use in cats, **bexagliflozin and velagliflozin**. These SGLT2 inhibitors inhibit glucose resorption from the proximal tubule of the kidney, and are indicated for treatment of newly diagnosed diabetes mellitus. They decrease blood glucose, decrease serum fructosamine concentration, and improve clinical signs in a majority of newly diagnosed diabetic cats. A recent study demonstrated effectiveness of velagliflozin as the sole therapy in naive and previously insulin-treated diabetic cats.³⁹

GS-441524 is an antiviral drug that inhibits the replication of feline coronavirus strains that cause FIP. It is a parent nucleoside of remdesivir, a drug used to treat Covid-19. It was developed in 2018, and has been shown to be a safe and effective treatment for FIP in cats in a number of trials in the UK and Australia. It is now available in the US as an oral formulation. This makes **GS-441524** a more feasible treatment option for many cat owners to treat this almost routinely fatal condition.⁴⁰

This is not a complete list of all new innovations in feline medicine and may vary by region.



Pet food advances

New data was published in 2024 regarding obesity in cats and interactions about this topic with pet parents. The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention's 2022 US Pet Obesity Prevalence Survey found that a staggering 61% of pet cats are overweight or obese in the United States,⁴¹ indicating a widespread problem with pet health. A survey conducted in late 2023 revealed a lack of awareness of this problem on the part of pet parents. Only 28% of those surveyed believed their cat was overweight or obese, while 57% believed that their cat was at a healthy/optimal body condition.³²

Ontario Veterinary College recently surveyed cat owners in North America as part of a study which was designed to determine the relative importance of information communicated to cat owners during veterinarian-client obesity-related conversations.^{42,43} Published results suggest that, when compared to attributes including the change to cost of food, future quality of life, future mobility, and risk of developing diabetes, it is most important for veterinary professionals to consider discussing information



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Dry kibble continues to be the
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about the impact of excess weight on life expectancy with clients who own a cat that is overweight or obese. They indicated that the impact on life expectancy, in a conversation with a veterinarian about their overweight or obese cat, would most encourage them to pursue weight management for their pet. This was in line with responses received from dog owners in a related study.^{42,43}

Many forms of pet food are available—dry kibble, wet food in cans or pouches, and treats or snacks.

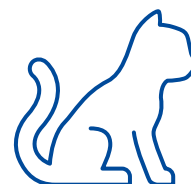
Dry kibble continues to be the most popular form fed, with **90 to 96%** of pet owners feeding it western Europe (UK, France, Germany, and Spain), Japan, and the US, according to surveys in **June 2023** and **March 2024**. Treats are the second most popular in western Europe and the US. Wet food, in single cans, multi-serving cans, or pouches, is steady or increasing in all surveyed countries, with the exception of a moderate decrease in use of pouches in the US. In Japan, feeding of treats and table scraps is increasing.⁴⁴

Feline diseases and conditions have new research leading to some new nutritional management technologies. For example, Hill's Pet Nutrition has developed a proprietary blend of prebiotic fibers (**ActivBiome+**) that works with, and is utilized by, each cat's unique bacterial population allowing the beneficial bacteria to thrive.⁴⁵

Effect of costs on pet food and veterinary care

Costs of veterinary care and pet food are always going to have some effect on the behavior of pet parents. Kynetec, in their Cost of Living Tracker: Wave 3, gleaned multiple insights related to trends in consumer behavior with pet food and veterinary care. They reported that approximately one in three pet owners have switched brands of pet food in the past six months. Top reasons for this were cost, perceived value, and available promotions. Other reasons prompting a change include recommendation by a veterinarian or veterinary health care team member and finding a food that the pet liked the taste of more.⁴⁴

In the same insights tracking, approximately half or more of veterinarians noticed that cat owners with cats on therapeutic pet foods switched to non-therapeutic foods due to financial pressures, cut out therapeutic pet foods altogether (highest in US and Spain), or refused a prescribed therapeutic pet food (highest in UK and US). A lower percentage of veterinarians noticed that cat owners cut out medication for a specific health condition (52% in the US; 26 - 44% in the western European countries surveyed, and 18% in Japan). Slightly fewer indicated their cat-owning clients spaced out medication for a specific health issue/condition.⁴⁴



A lower percentage of veterinarians noticed that cat owners cut out medication for a specific health condition

52%

US

26 - 44%

Western European countries

18%

Japan



Approximately one-third of cat owners have made cutbacks to veterinary-related expenses, and this is increasing in Germany and Japan. Veterinarians also reported treatment delay or cessation among cats suffering from all major health conditions. Dental issues and obesity lead the list, and over one in three veterinarians report mobility issues and kidney or urinary issues have gone untreated in cats.⁴⁴

Among pet owners, a range of **6% in Spain to 15% in the US** reported they had not visited their veterinarian in the last 12 months. Following 'my pet was not ill,' the next most common reasons for not visiting the veterinarian were that it has become too costly, to 'my pet gets stressed when going to the vet.' Spain and the US reported the most significant increases in the veterinary visits becoming too costly.⁴⁴

What is Hill's doing for the feline world?

Hill's has been taking a “feline first” attitude and really focusing on how to best help cats, cat parents, and veterinary professionals. In October 2024 following Hill's Global Symposium, the Cat Advisory Team (C.A.T) had its first annual meeting to discuss some of the trends and changes in feline medicine. The team included feline specialists, behaviorists, and nutritionists from around the globe involved in different aspects of feline medicine including private practice, academia, and industry. Keep an eye out for the fruits of their efforts in 2025!

Hill's has also increased focus on feline-centric diseases and conditions when it comes to new diets. Be sure to pay attention to some of the upcoming diets formulated specifically for common feline conditions.

Education is key when it comes to cats - there is a lot of misinformation out there. Hill's has been updating their online resources and creating new content aimed at providing education to both pet parents and veterinary professionals. This comes in the form of feline-focused lectures at internal conferences and congresses, social media posts, and even internal education events for team members. There is never enough time to spend learning about the *best* species.



Conclusion

The world of cats is growing rapidly and it is exciting to see what will happen in **2025** and beyond!



Feline Trivia



**Did you know
that cats' brains age
similar to ours?**



**Cats can smell
much better than
they can taste!**



**Cats can be right-
or left-handed.**



**Cats have a
good short term
and long term
memory.**

Feline Trivia

Did you know that the domestic cat shares their DNA with tigers?



Do you know why cats are known for getting stuck?



Did you know that cats have blind spot?



Egyptian Mau is the oldest breed of cat



C.A.T. Members



Susan Little
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(Feline)



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AdvCertFB



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Appendix

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