



MEDIA RELEASE

The secret life of Australia's 'indoor only' cats

Study shows owner misconceptions about their cats lifestyle may be placing their pets at risk

EMBARGOED 8 August 2018 – International Cat Day: Australians may think their indoor cats are safe and protected inside their homes, but research reveals that 83% of Australian cats have some level of outdoor access, which increases their risk of traumatic injuries, and their exposure to infectious and parasitic diseases.

To mark International Cat Day, the [Have We Seen Your Cat Lately?](#) Program is putting the spotlight on the hidden health risks Australian cat owners may not be aware of.

A recently conducted [Feline Lifestyle Study](#)*, published in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, showed that 66% of cat owners described their cats as having outdoor access, while 34% said their cats were indoor only. However, further questioning revealed that more than half of these "indoor only" cats actually had outdoor access. In total, 83% of pet cats had some form of outdoor access during their lives.¹

According to **Bondi Vet Dr Lisa Chimes**, this new study shows us that many cat owners may be under-estimating their cats risk of infectious and parasitic diseases.

"Many owners think their indoor cat is safe from disease, but even if you're just letting your cat go outside to the toilet or to have a quick breath of fresh air, they may be at risk of some diseases," says Dr Chimes. "A proper understanding of a cat's lifestyle is essential to ensure that appropriate measures, like vaccination and flea and worming treatments can be given to those animals at risk."

Australia's love for cats shows no signs of waning, with a total estimated pet cat population of almost 3.9 million.²

"Our cat population has actually increased by 6% since 2013, with a pet cat being found in almost a third of Australian household. International Cat Day is the perfect time to celebrate our loyal and

Research summary¹

- 66% of cats are reported by their owners to have outdoor access while 34% of Australia's pet cats are described as indoor only
- 58% of these 'indoor only' cats actually have outdoor access, which increases their risk of exposure to infectious and parasitic diseases.
- In total, 83% of pet cats had some form of outdoor access during their lives.
- 28% of cat owners did not know that annual check-ups were recommended
- 12% of cat owners did not believe that regular vaccinations were necessary



loving companions, but it is also a timely reminder that we need to be vigilant about their health,” said Dr Chimes.

Despite Australia’s love for its fur babies, a recent pet ownership report by Animal Medicines Australia confirmed that only 65% of cats are receiving annual check-ups, compared with almost 80% of dogs.²

“It is important that health issues are detected early. For cat owners, this means regular visits to the vet for health checks, and ensuring their cats receive appropriate vaccinations and worm and flea treatment.”

Dr Chimes recommends a minimum of one health check for cats every year, with more frequent check-ups for senior and geriatric pets, or cats with medical or behavioural conditions.

“Unlike dogs, cats are actually quite adept at masking pain and illness, so it’s even more crucial that you go to the vet for a regular visit. If you don’t know what risks your cat has, don’t worry, your vet will guide you on what protection is needed.”

Want to make your next visit to the vet less stressful? Visit www.HaveWeSeenYourCatLately.com.au for more information on cat illnesses, what to expect during a health check-up.

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Issued on behalf of Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health Australia, sponsor of the ‘Have We Seen Your Cat Lately?’ campaign.

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*The Feline Lifestyle Study was commissioned by Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health.

References:

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2. Animal Medicines Australia. *Pet Ownership in Australia Report* (2016). Available at http://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/AMA_Pet-Ownership-in-Australia-2016-Report_sml.pdf