

Periodontal disease in cats

(a common form of dental disease)

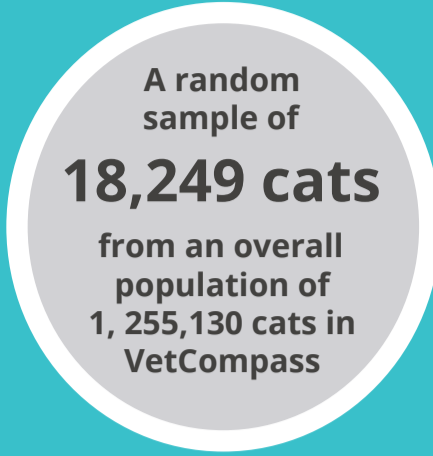
Periodontal disease is a form of dental disease in cats which describes a range of oral health issues including gum inflammation, attachment loss of the structures supporting the teeth, tooth mobility, and pain. Periodontal disease should be considered a welfare priority in cats because it is common and can cause severe pain lasting months or even years that can be very difficult for owners to spot. Always ask your veterinary surgeon to check your cat's teeth on every veterinary visit.

This study aimed to identify the frequency of periodontal disease in UK cats under veterinary care during 2019 and to explore which types of cats were most at risk.



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Total number of cats in the study



One-year frequency of periodontal disease which was the most common disorder in cats in the UK



Breed prevalence for periodontal disease

The cat breeds with the highest annual prevalence of periodontal disease were **Siamese (18.7%)**, **Maine Coon (16.7%)** and **British Short Hair (15.5%)**.



Siamese



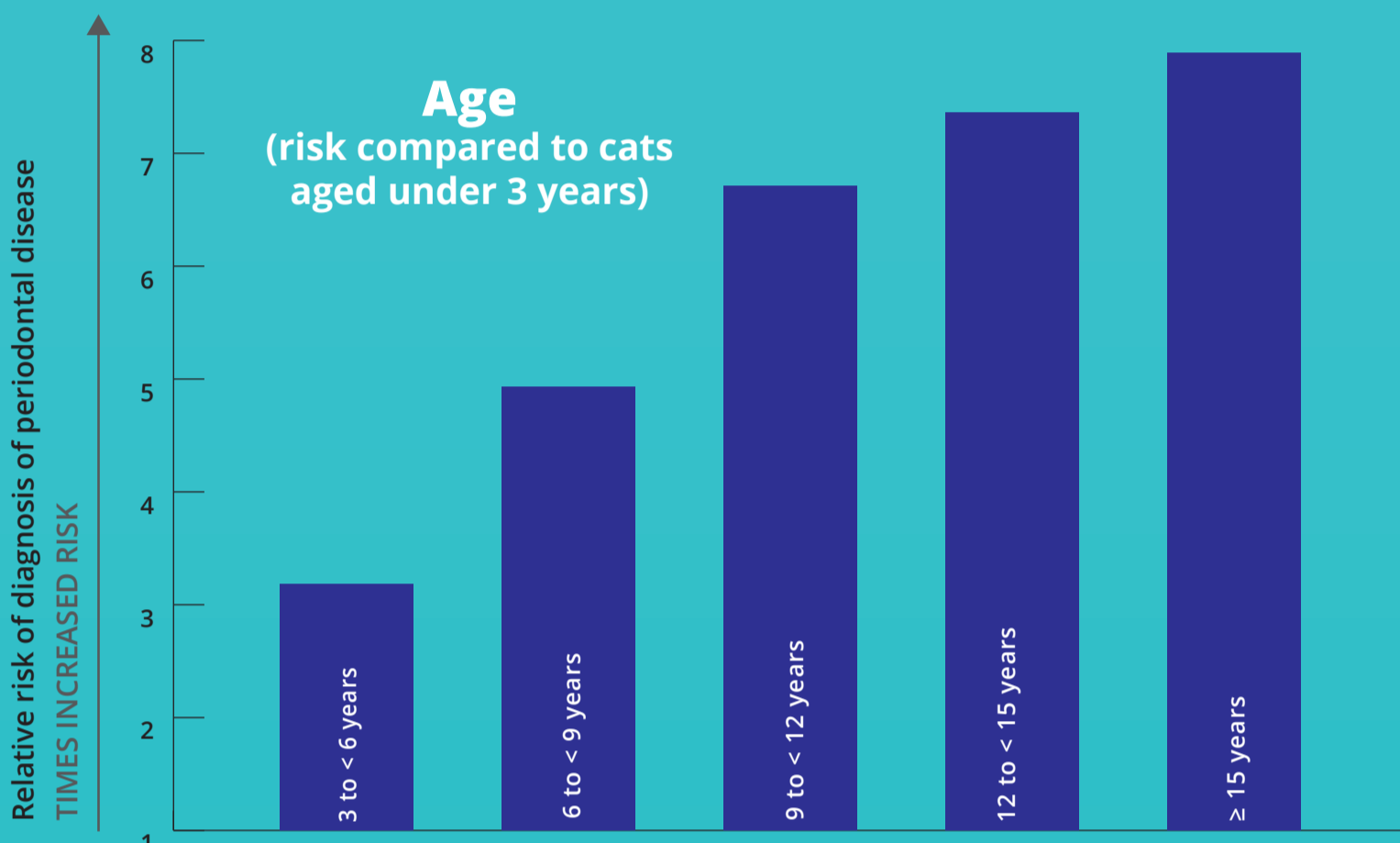
Maine Coon



British Short Hair

Risk factors for periodontal disease

The risk of periodontal disease rose steeply as cats aged, before levelling off from 12 years of age.



The average age of cats with periodontal disease (9.47 years) was **higher** than cats without periodontal disease (4.94 years)



Cats weighing 4.0 to 7.0kg had **higher risk** of periodontal disease than cats weighing under 3kg

What disorders are linked to periodontal disease?

Cats with periodontal disease had **1.79 times** the risk of diagnosis with at least one other disorder compared with cats without periodontal disease.

The disorders with the lowest associations with periodontal disease included:

- road traffic accident (x 0.34 risk)
- traumatic injury (x 0.40 risk)

The top ten disorders with the highest associations with periodontal disease

Analysis accounted for effects of purebred status, adult bodyweight, age, sex-neuter, and veterinary group



Conclusions

Ageing is the strongest predictor of periodontal disease in cats, suggesting the value of **increased care and health** on dental care as they age.

The high risk of several **other health conditions** with periodontal disease in cats suggests that periodontal disease may seriously **reduce overall health** in cats.

This study largely confirms periodontal disease as a **leading health issue** in cats and flags the growing value of big data resources such as VetCompass to increase our overall understanding of feline health at a population level.

Tips for brushing cats' teeth:

1. Establish a **routine** - try to brush at roughly the same time each day and consider giving food afterwards so your cat has a positive association with brushing.
2. Use a **veterinary/cat toothpaste** - these are safe for your pet and come in meaty flavours your cat should enjoy.
3. Start **gradually** - allow your cat to taste the toothpaste and get accustomed to having their mouth opened before attempting brushing.
4. Speak to your **vet** - if your cat simply won't tolerate brushing, your vet can help you identify dietary changes or chews that may limit ongoing dental damage.

CLICK TO READ THE FULL STUDY

O'Neill et al. (2023) "Periodontal disease in cats under veterinary care in the UK: frequency and risk factors" <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098612X231158154>

RVC VetCompass <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass> carries out welfare research based on anonymised clinical information shared from over 30% of UK veterinary practices. We are very grateful to the owners and veterinary professionals who contribute to VetCompass research.