

Quit smoking for the sake of your pets

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Smokers are being urged to quit smoking for their New Year resolution for the sake of the health of their pets.

An ongoing study by the University of Glasgow shows a direct link between the effects on pets living in a smoking environment and a higher risk of health problems including some animal cancers, cell damage and weight gain.

Professor Clare Knottenbelt, Professor of Small Animal Medicine and

Oncology at the university's Small Animal Hospital, has been studying the effects of smoking and the health impact it has on family dogs and cats.

Professor Knottenbelt said: "Our findings show that exposure to smoke in the home is having a direct impact on pets. It risks ongoing cell damage, increasing [weight gain](#) after castration and has previously been shown to increase the risk of certain cancers.

"We have already shown that dogs can take in significant amounts of smoke when living in a smoking household. Our current study in cats, (funded by BSAVA Petsavers) shows that cats are even more affected. This may be due to the extensive self-grooming that cats do, as this would increase the amount of smoke taken in to the body.



"As an incidental finding, we also observed that dogs living with a smoker owner gained more weight after neutering than those in a non-smoking household."

Victoria Smith MRCVS, who is investigating the links between [passive smoking](#) and lymphoma, a cancer of the blood cells in cats, said: "Our work so far has shown that cats take in significant amounts of smoke and even having outdoor access makes very little difference."

"Owners who consistently smoked away from the cat did not protect their cat from exposure but did reduce the amount of smoke that was taken into the body."

The study has also shown that when owners reduced the total numbers of [tobacco products](#) smoked in the home to less than 10 per day the nicotine levels in the hair dropped significantly but were still higher than those in cats from non-smoking homes.

When Glasgow researchers examined the testicles of male dogs after they were castrated they found a gene, which acts as a marker of cell damage, was higher in dogs living in smoking homes than those in non-smoking homes.

The gene has been shown to be altered in some dog cancers in other studies, so the concern is this could be a worrying indicator. The effect on this gene was reduced when owners chose to smoke outside the home to reduce their pet's exposure.

Professor Knottenbelt, commenting further on the research, concluded: "We are all aware of the risks to our health of smoking and it is important we do everything we can to encourage people to stop smoking. As well as the risk to the smoker, there is the danger of second-hand smoke to others. Pet owners often do not think about the impact that

smoking could have on their pets."

Whilst you can reduce the amount of smoke your pet is exposed to by smoking outdoors and by reducing the number of tobacco products smoked by the members of the household, stopping [smoking](#) completely is the best option for your pet's future health and wellbeing."

This study is ongoing and the research paper is expected to be published in 2016.

Provided by University of Glasgow

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