

Feline fine!

How Feliway® spray affects the fear, anxiety and stress response in cats before neutering

Assessing the effect of Feliway® Classic spray on cats admitted to a veterinary practice for routine neutering procedures in relation to their fear, anxiety and stress (FAS) status before their procedure

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BACKGROUND

Cats can find it very stressful when they visit the vets, which can impact their welfare and recovery when hospitalised [1-8].

This study aimed to assess whether Feliway® would help reduce fear, anxiety and stress in cats when admitted for neutering

METHOD

- Blinded randomised controlled trial
- Compared blanket cover alone Vs blanket impregnated with Feliway® in its impact on fear, anxiety and stress (FAS) scores (before any chemical intervention)
- Used *'Fear-Free Spectrum of feline fear, anxiety and stress (FAS)' spectrum/ score* [9,10]

Link to feline FAS score sheet

- Baseline FAS score taken within 10 minutes of a cat being placed in kennel (before blanket application), and then cat was re-scored 15 minutes after blanket application
- FAS levels graded 0 (relaxed) to 5 (highly stressed), and the difference between the FAS score at baseline and after blanket application calculated for each cat
- Inclusion criteria - owned/ fostered cats weighing ≥1kg, aged 4 months - 7 years, presenting for routine neutering
- Exclusion criteria – sick or known to be pregnant cats, cats that had had recent contact with synthetic pheromones/ anxiolytic medication, owners had not given informed consent, cats that scored FAS level 5 at baseline







RESULTS

- 36 cats enrolled over 23 days. Final dataset of 34 cats (18 in control group, 16 in Feliway® group)
- Change in FAS scores was not significantly different between the two groups
  (z=-0.311, p=0.78; mean change in FAS score ± SD, Feliway® group: 0.406 ± 0.554; Control group: 0.528 ± 1.131)
- **No participants in the Feliway® group experienced a worsening of their FAS score, but one participant in the control group did**

DISCUSSION

Feliway® did not adversely affect the FAS of hospitalised cats

Whilst this small study did not show any definitive impact on FAS scores, further work to examine pheromone use, alongside other stress-relieving species-appropriate measures, is needed

CONCLUSION

This study is an example of how a relatively small and easy to implement change can potentially have a beneficial effect on a patient. To help maximise the wellbeing of cats in our care in practice, more work is needed to see what other species-specific measures could help cats feel more at ease when they come in for neutering

RVNs should be encouraged to undertake clinical research in practice to improve patient care, no matter how small. Following ethical approval from the RCVS, this study was easy to implement and did not require a raft of resources. This study highlights how accessible in-practice research is to RVNs, and the potential for RVNs to lead clinical research in practice to benefit patient care

Link to RCVS ethics review panel



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(All images are by the author)

Further reading

Fear Free website: https://www.fearfree.com

Other studies involving Feliway: https://www.feliway.co.uk/pages/clinically-proven