

## Study Says Cats Can Get Alzheimer's

**A protein can build up, causing mental deterioration in felines, research says.**

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Aging cats can develop a feline form of Alzheimer's disease, according to a new study conducted by scientists at three universities in the United Kingdom and another scientist in the United States.

Researchers at the Universities of Edinburgh, St. Andrews and Bristol in the United Kingdom and in California say they have identified a key protein which can build up in the nerve cells of a cat's brain and cause mental deterioration.

In humans with Alzheimer's disease, this protein creates "tangles" inside the nerve cells which inhibit messages being processed by the brain. The team says that the presence of this protein in cats is proof that they too can develop this type of disease.

"We've known for a long time that cats develop dementia, but this study tells us that the cat's neural system is being compromised in a similar fashion to that we see in human Alzheimer's sufferers," said Danielle Gunn-Moore of the University of Edinburgh's Royal School of Veterinary Studies.

The shorter lifespan of a cat, compared to humans, is expected to allow researchers to more rapidly assess the effects of diet, high blood pressure and prescribed drugs on the course of the disease.

Experts say that good diet, mental stimulation and companionship can reduce the risk of dementia in both humans and cats: "If humans and their cats live in a poor environment with little company and stimulation, they are both at higher risk of dementia," Gunn-Moore explained.

The study's findings are published in the December 2006 Journal of Feline Medicine & Surgery, published by the European Society of Feline Medicine.