Does the Phenotype of Rex and Sphynx Cats Affect Their Health and Welfare?

Project start date: 1 November 2026
Planned duration: 21 months

About the Project

Can a cat's visible physical characteristics be associated with its health, physical fitness and well-being? This is the central question of a research project investigating the health and welfare of Rex and Sphynx cats. The aim of the study is to assess whether and to what extent feline phenotype is associated with physical and mental health, physiological status, behaviour and responses to stress. The findings will help expand our knowledge of the needs of cats with specific phenotypic traits and their overall welfare.

Which Breeds Will Be Included?

The study will include cats from five breeds:

- Sphynx
- Don Sphynx
- Peterbald
- Devon Rex
- Cornish Rex

The results will be compared with a control group consisting of domestic cats and British Shorthair cats. This comparison will help identify potential differences between the groups in terms of health, physical fitness and behaviour.

What Will the Study Investigate?

The project will focus on several key areas relevant to feline health and welfare:

- **Health and physiological status** – assessment of health profiles and selected parameters related to the functioning of the body.
- **Physical fitness** – evaluation of cats' physical condition and capabilities.
- **Mental state and behaviour** – assessment of selected behavioural characteristics and aspects of welfare.
- **Responses to stress** – analysis of how cats respond to stressors.
- **Veterinary records** – retrospective analysis of anonymised veterinary records containing information about the cats' health.

How Will the Study Be Conducted?

The project will be comparative and observational in nature. The planned methods include clinical and biological examinations, behavioural tests, questionnaire-based data collection and analysis of anonymised veterinary records.

For the clinical and biological components, the planned minimum sample size is **15 cats in each study group**. The final sample size will depend on the number of confirmed study groups and the success of participant recruitment.

This project is funded by a grant from the FIFe Feline Fund

Which Cats Can Participate?

The study will include cats meeting the following criteria:

- over one year of age;
- male or female;
- neutered or spayed;
- living in a domestic environment;
- originating from Poland or from European Union countries affiliated with FIFe.

Detailed information on recruitment and participation requirements may be provided to interested breeders and owners by email – info@felispolonia.eu

Who Is Involved in the Project?

The project brings together representatives of the feline community and scientific institutions.

Organisations involved in the project:

- Polish Feline Federation – Felis Polonia;
- Federation International Feline (FIFe Feline Fund).

Participating scientific institutions:

- Institute of Biology, Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW);
- Institute of Animal Sciences, Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW);
- Institute of Veterinary Medicine, Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW).

Cooperation between the feline community and scientific institutions will combine expertise in biology, animal sciences, veterinary medicine and cat breeding.

Animal Welfare and Data Protection

The study will be conducted in accordance with applicable Polish and European legislation concerning animal welfare, veterinary procedures and personal data protection. This includes, in particular, Directive 2010/63/EU, the Polish Act of 15 January 2015 on the protection of animals used for scientific or educational purposes, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, EU 2016/679).

Veterinary records used for analysis will be anonymised.

Why Is This Project Important?

A better understanding of the relationship between phenotype and feline health may help expand our knowledge of cats' needs and the factors affecting their welfare. The findings could provide valuable information for breeders, veterinarians and cat owners, supporting efforts to improve feline health and promote responsible breeding practices.