



INFORMATION SHEET

Study title: Contagious yawning in cats

Thank you for considering participating in this research project. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important to understand why the research is being done, what it will involve and the potential implications it may have for you and your animal(s). Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

We are interested in the relationships between people and their animals and how these relationships are affected by emotions. In this experiment we are investigating how cats behave when they see humans in different situations. A comprehensive debrief will occur at the end of testing to explain further.

Why have I been invited to participate?

As an animal owner, you are being invited to participate alongside your animal(s) in the present study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to consent to participation with your animal(s) in the present project. If you do decide to consent you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You will remain free to withdraw your consent and you do not need to give a reason.

What will happen during the experiment?

The experimenter will take you through a short training session to practice how to perform yawning in a standardised manner. You will then continuously yawn in the presence of your cat and video recordings taken of the interaction. The behaviours displayed by your cat will be coded by experimenters and provide the data for the study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

All testing takes place in your home which minimises stress to your cat, however, to facilitate filming, you and your cat will be required to remain in the allocated space which may potentially alter their activity. Although we do not anticipate any, researchers will be monitoring cats for any signs of distress and if at any time you or the researchers feel your cat is unduly distressed the testing will be stopped.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Despite our close relationships with companion animals, we know relatively little about what they understand about us. This research may reveal key insights that could

benefit human-animal relationships and thereby improve the welfare of cats by increasing our bonds with them. It will also provide a basis for development of future research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be written up for student reports, publication in scientific journals, and presented in scientific meetings.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This study, carried out by undergraduate students at the University of Sussex, forms part of a larger doctoral project within the Mammal Vocal Communication and Cognition Research Group. This research is funded by the School of Psychology, University of Sussex.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been approved by the University of Sussex Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) as a non-ASPA project. The ethical guidelines of the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB) have been considered and will be adhered to.

Contact for Further Information

Should you have any questions or queries about the project, or should you wish to withdraw consent at any time, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Primary researcher – Karen Hiestand, email catcatchyawn@gmail.com

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet!

