

MEDIA RELEASE

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Purina seeks New Zealand's oldest cat

Diet research reveals new ideas about feline aging

New Zealanders are a nation of cat lovers - from the Prime Minister's Moonbeam to the most humble moggy - and we naturally want our feline companions to live long healthy lives, nine if possible!

Now, new research from a study by Nestlé Purina PetCare has re-evaluated the dietary needs of aging cats, and shows that longer, healthier lives for our beloved cats is possible.

Dr Jill Cline, a Senior Nutritionist for Purina PetCare in the US – who recently toured New Zealand speaking about senior pet health – says the study of 90 cats by the company's research team in the US has redefined the way cats age.

“We used to classify cats age levels as kittens, adult and senior. We now know this is not quite accurate, and that cats have two distinct age phases in their later years which have distinct nutritional needs; Mature from ages 7 – 10 and Senior from age 11.”

Dr Cline says the geriatric cats – those aged over 11 years – in the study's control group started to lose body condition and become thin with compromised immune health. However, the cats that were put on a special dietary programme that included a proprietary blend of antioxidants, vitamins, fibre and fatty acids after age 11 had their healthy life extended by up to one year.

“The changes that begin to occur in cats at 11 years are subtle, but they definitely start to assimilate food differently. Cats that start an appropriate diet after reaching this age will be able to better combat these bodily changes, resulting in longer life,” says Dr Cline.

Dr Cline says that this research is one of the most comprehensive nutrition programmes to specifically tackle the signs of aging in cats.

“For those who have had a cat as a faithful companion for many years, it can be hard to admit to ourselves that our cat is no longer as agile or active as it once was, and it is difficult to recognise the signs of aging that a veterinarian looks for,” says Dr Cline.

“With this new understanding of the life stages of cats, we can now make sure that New Zealand cats do receive that special attention and age appropriate diets.”

A special food formulation developed through the research called Pro-Plan Senior 11+ that helps support senior cats and improve their lean tissue mass and immune system is now available in New Zealand.

To help raise awareness of the new product, Purina is now looking to find New Zealand's oldest – and most loved – companion cat.

Cat owners from all areas of New Zealand are invited to send photos and proof of age of their beloved senior cat to Purina and be in to win a year's supply of Pro-Plan Senior 11+ cat food.

If you think you have the oldest cat in New Zealand, send your story with a picture and verification of your cat's age to Purina PetCare, PO Box 109078, Newmarket, Auckland.

For in-depth information about maintaining optimal nutrition and care for cats, visit the Purina web site at www.purina.co.nz

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For more information or interview requests, contact:

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Notes to Editor

- It's estimated that there are almost 1.5 million companion cats in New Zealand, one of the highest per capita ownership levels in the world.
- Guidelines for cat ownership in New Zealand outlined by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee say "special attention should be given to providing an appropriate diet for the age and health of the older cat."
- Purina has over 75 years of expertise in pet nutrition research and development. It is committed to innovation and has a research and development network comprised of food scientists, chemists, animal behaviourists, veterinarians, pet nutritionists, engineers and technicians to ensure that every product developed provides the optimum benefit to pets in terms of nutritional integrity and enjoyment. Purina seeks to understand the needs of its customers through sustained communication with pet owners and the specialist community.
- According to Guinness World Records, the oldest cat ever was Creme Puff, owned by Jake Perry of Austin, Texas, USA, born August 3, 1967 and still living at the age of 37 in 2004.

About Nestle Purina New Zealand

- For over eighty years Purina has been a leader in the advancement of pet care and pet nutrition.
- Purina's expert nutritionists, food scientists, vets, and animal behaviorists are constantly discovering new ways to help pets lead healthier, happier, longer lives.
- No one invests more in research and development, and as a result Purina has made more breakthroughs in the field than any other company.
- Today Purina is one of the world's leading pet care companies, producing some of the best known pet food brands; many of which have served pet owners for generations. Each is the result of the very latest advances in quality, taste and nutrition.
- Purina products are designed to give pets and their owners the best possible choice of recipes and formats, for every life stage and lifestyle.
- Purina is also a committed member of the wider pet care community, supporting charitable organisations, working closely with the communities in which we work and operate, and promoting responsible pet ownership in New Zealand and worldwide.
- With over seventy per cent of New Zealand households owning pets, Nestlé Purina is servicing a growing market.
- Throughout the company's long history in the pet care business, it has built strong brands such as TUX, FRISKIES and FANCY FEAST.
- In 2002 the company acquired Ralston Purina, which saw the introduction of brands such as Purina ONE, BENEFUL and PRO PLAN.