
Abstract
Six veterinary practices participated in a study of cats involved in road accidents. Of 127 cats, 93 survived, of which 58 had moderate to very severe injuries. The mean period of hospitalization was five days and the mean average length of veterinary treatment was 23 days. The cost of treatment was less than L400 for 84% of cats. Owners of 51 surviving cats completed questionnaires within three to five months of the accident. The mean time it took for their cats to recover was 47 days (n = 41; range 1 – 150 days). Eight cats had not recovered within 5 months, four of which had had a limb amputated. The severity of the cats’ injuries correlated positively with the cost of treatment, length of hospitalization and treatment, and time to recovery (r ≥ 0.69, P < 0.001). Behavioural changes were noted in 34 cats; 23 were described as being more nervous, going outdoors less, or being more fearful of cars, roads or going outdoors. Half of the owners treated their cats differently: 17 restricted the time their cat spent outdoors and 11 worried more about their cat. The effects of the accident on the owner’s emotions and finances were measured using a scale from 1 (minimum) to 7 (maximum). Most owners registered a score of 5, 6 or 7 for effect on emotions and a 1, 2 or 4 for effect on finances; the scores were not correlated. Road accidents are an important cause of poor welfare in cats and their owners.

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