Title: **Kittens that nurse 12 weeks or longer are less likely to become overweight adult cats**
Manuscript: 1468844
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Authors

Page 1

Line 4 The list of authors ends with "and", implying that there is another author which is not listed. Is there a name missing?

Abstract

Page 1

Line 29 The term 'gender' refers to a complex concept involving sexual identity, preference, proclivity and behaviour. It would be better to use the term 'sex' as this is a biological concept without the connotations associated with the term 'gender'. Applies throughout.

Introduction

Page 1

Line 41 The authors use the term 'overweight' as a noun throughout the document where it is an adjective. This should be corrected. 'Being overweight' would be an appropriate use of the term. Alternatively, the term 'obesity' would be an appropriate replacement. It would also be advisable to clarify that the subjects of this study were domestic cats, not just cats (which would also include species such as lions, tigers, leopards, etc.)

Page 2

Line 81 It would be helpful to list some of the putative risk factors that the authors intend to consider as part of the aim of their study.

Materials and Methods

Page 3

Lines 106-109 The difference in the adoption ages is a potential confound in the study. Domestic shorthair cats are likely to be far more genetically variable than pedigree cats to begin with, so the difference in adoption timing makes interpretation of this effect difficult. Why not separate the two groups out and analyse them independently?

Lines 120-122 Were none of the cats housed in environments with *ad libitum* access to indoor and outdoor spaces? Why was this not included as an option in the question presented to owners?

Line 127 What is "BCS"? This has not been mentioned and for readers who are not familiar with veterinary acronyms, it would be good to define this clearly.

Page 4

Line 136 "confounders" is not a statistical term. It would be better to describe these factors as covariates or explain what role they might play.

Results

Page 5

Lines 153-164 The description of the study sample would be better suited to the methods than the results section.

Lines 180-183 This should be explained in the methods section. Was a separate analysis conducted to separate out the effects of breed and SPL? If so, this needs to be described clearly in the methods.

Discussion

Page 7

Lines 213-214 This should be mentioned in the methods section rather than in the discussion as it pertains to how the sample was drawn for the study.

Lines 234-245 There is *a priori* evidence that one half of the sample has a higher risk of becoming overweight on the basis of breed. Whether this is based on genetics or pet management by owners, the effect remains the same. This evidence suggests that the two groups of cats should not be considered as a single sample but should be separated out in the analysis. By including the two groups together in the analysis, the confounding effect of breed and SPL makes it difficult to have confidence in the findings of the analyses.

Page 8

Lines 258-274 There is an additional effect which is not being accounted for. Given the apparent disparity in investment by owners of purebred and domestic shorthair cats, it seems reasonable to consider that the quality of food afforded to domestic shorthair cats would be lower than that availed to purebred cats. Food quality plays a critical role in the development and onset of obesity in humans and other animals and it seems reasonable to expect that domestic cats would be no different in this regard.

Line 293 Gender of the owners or of the cats? If the latter, sex is, again, a more appropriate term to use. If the former, it would be a good idea to explain what differences emerged as a result of the gender of the owners. Did the sex of the owner affect weight status of the cats? Was it sexual orientation? This needs to be clarified.

Supplementary material

Tables 3-5 What is meant by "...the previously submitted paper"? Is this not the first submission to the journal? If not, what changes have been made to the submission in the interim?