Animal Health Prod and Hyg (2026) 15 (3) : 1 - 6

Animal Health, Production and Hygiene

www.dergipark.or.tr/tr/pub/aduveterinary

Research Article

Retrospective Evaluation of Feline Surgical Cases: 1524 Cases (2018-2023)

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to retrospectively evaluate surgical cases in cats presented to the Animal Health Application and Research Hospital at Siirt University between 2018 and 2023. A total of 1.524 cases were analysed. Traumatic disorders accounted for 39.50% of the cases, while 14.83% had bone and skeletal system diseases, 13.58% had eye diseases, and 10.43% had various lesions in the oral cavity. While the rate of surgical interventions in the treatment of the diseases identified in the cases was determined to be 19.88%, the majority of cases were treated conservatively. The data from this study provide important information on the distribution of diseases observed in the field of veterinary surgery in cats. Cats presented to veterinary clinics commonly had various health problems, such as traumatic disorders, orthopaedic issues, eye diseases, and oral cavity diseases. However, the need for surgical procedures varied depending on case type and severity. When compared with other retrospective studies conducted to better understand the surgical treatment needs of cats, the results of this study revealed the effects of various clinical and regional factors on surgical approaches. Furthermore, this study distinguishes itself from other retrospective studies by focusing exclusively on cats and provides important information on cat health.

Keywords: *Cat, clinical epidemiology, retrospective evaluation, surgical diseases*

Kedilerde Cerrahi Olguların Retrospektif Değerlendirilmesi: 1524 Olgu (2018-2023)

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, 2018-2023 yılları arasında Siirt Üniversitesi Hayvan Sağlığı Uygulama ve Araştırma Hastanesine getirilen kedilerde tespit edilen cerrahi vakaların retrospektif olarak incelenmesini amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada 1.524 olgu analiz edilmiştir. Vakaların %39,50'si travmatik bozukluklardan oluşurken, %14,83'ünde kemik ve iskelet sistemi hastalıkları, %13,58'inde göz hastalıkları ve %10,43'ünde ağız boşluğunda çeşitli lezyonlara rastlandı. Olgularda tespit edilen hastalıkların tedavisinde cerrahi müdahalelerin oranı %19,88 olarak tespit edilirken, vakaların çoğuna konservatif tedavi uygulandığı belirlenmiştir. Çalışmadan elde edilen veriler, kedilerde veteriner cerrahi alanında görülen hastalıkların dağılımı ile ilgili önemli veriler sunmaktadır. Veteriner kliniklerine getirilen kedilerde travmatik bozukluklar, ortopedik sorunlar, göz hastalıkları ve ağız boşluğu hastalıkları gibi çeşitli sağlık problemlerinin yaygın olduğunu göstermektedir. Cerrahi müdahale gereksinimi ise vakaların türüne ve şiddetine bağlı olarak değişkenlik göstermektedir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, kedilerin cerrahi tedavi gereksinimlerini daha iyi anlamak amacıyla yapılan diğer retrospektif çalışmalarla karşılaştırıldığında, farklı klinik ve bölgesel faktörlerin cerrahi yaklaşımlar üzerindeki etkilerini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, bu çalışma sadece kedilere odaklanmış olmasıyla diğer retrospektif çalışmalardan ayrılmakta ve kedi sağlığı üzerine önemli bilgiler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Cerrahi hastalıklar, kedi, klinik epidemiyoloji, retrospektif değerlendirme*

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Received Date: 20.07.2026 - Accepted Date: 07.09.2026
DOI: 10.53913/aduveterinary.1999225

Introduction

Retrospective studies are studies that systematically analyse past clinical data. Such studies use existing data, such as patient records and treatment outcomes, to determine the types and frequencies of cases encountered and the treatment methods used. Therefore, retrospective analyses are critically important for assessing the effectiveness of animal health practices and shaping future treatment approaches. Large-scale analyses of routinely collected electronic patient records can quantify the frequency of feline disorders and identify age and sex associated patterns that may inform targeted veterinary care (O'Neill et al., 2023).

Various veterinary medicine faculties and animal hospitals across Türkiye contribute to the advancement of veterinary medicine through research on the medical conditions of sick animals. Previous studies have analysed the distribution of surgical disease categories and determined their frequencies (Elma, 1992; Görgül et al., 2002; Cihan et al., 2006; Altan et al., 2013). Analyses of diseases diagnosed in animals of different species, such as cattle, dogs, and cats, have provided information on the incidence of these diseases and facilitated the evaluation of effective treatment options (Alkan et al., 1994; Sarıerler and Kılıç, 2003; Hayat et al., 2019).

Thus, this study aimed to examine the distribution of surgical diseases observed in cats brought to the Animal Health Application and Research Hospital at Siirt University between 2018 and 2023 as well as to collect regional data on the subject.

Material and Methods

This study was approved by the Siirt University Animal Experiments Local Ethics Committee (Approval no: 2026/05/51, Date: 30.06.2026).

During the study period, records of 2.186 cats presented to the Surgery Clinic of the Animal Health Application and Research Hospital at Siirt University were screened for eligibility. After the application of the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, 662 records were excluded, resulting in a final study population of 1.524 cats diagnosed with conditions within the scope of veterinary surgery (Figure 1). For the purposes of this study, the term "surgical case" referred to an eligible feline case within the scope of veterinary surgery and did not imply that an operative procedure was performed; subsequent management could be surgical or conservative. Clinical data were retrospectively collected from the E-VET electronic patient information recording system and the archived physical patient files of the hospital. These records were reviewed to obtain the demographic, diagnostic, and treatment-related information required for the present study. Repeated visits of the same cat during the study period were not counted as separate cases; records from multiple admissions were reviewed together, and each cat was included only once in the final study population. Cases with incomplete or insufficient demographic, diagnostic, or treatment-related information were excluded; therefore, only complete records for the variables evaluated were included in the final dataset and statistical analysis. Diagnoses were established on the basis of the clinical and radiological findings documented in the patient records. Only cases with a definitive diagnosis documented in the patient records were included in the analysis; cases recorded only with a provisional or suspected diagnosis were excluded.

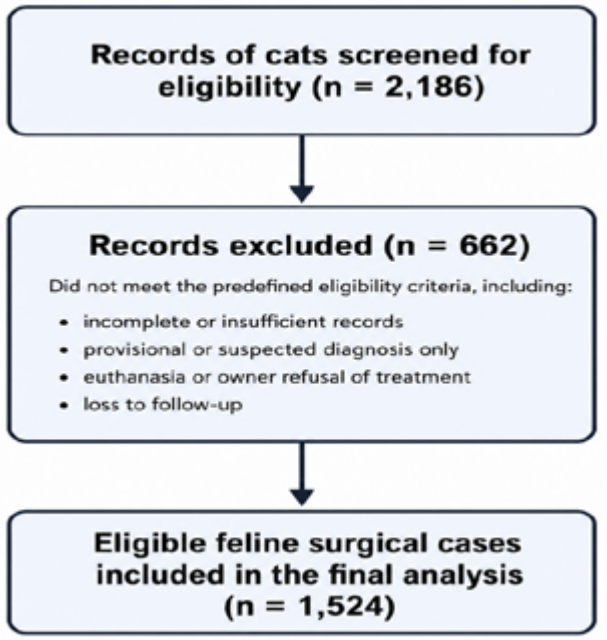


Figure 1. Flow diagram of case selection for the retrospective study.

In the study, the cats were divided into three age groups: 0–1 year (excluding 1 year), 1–2 years (including 1 and 2 years), and over 2 years (excluding 2 years). With respect to breed, the cats were classified into the following categories: Cross-Breed, British Shorthair, Scottish Fold, Van, Ankara, Siamese, Persian, Chartreux, Chinchilla, Himalayan, and Russian Blue. Age was analysed according to the categories available in the analytical dataset: 0–<1, 1–2, and >2 years. Comparable age groupings have been used in previous retrospective studies of feline clinical and surgical populations (Kouamo et al., 2021; Gülaydın et al., 2024). Because exact ages were not available at the individual level, the animals could not be retrospectively reclassified using more detailed feline age categories.

The diagnoses and reasons for presentation recorded in the hospital records were organized using a hierarchical classification framework. Each case was counted once according to the primary diagnosis or reason for presentation recorded in the hospital records. In cats with multiple diagnoses, each case was assigned to a single category according to the primary diagnosis or principal reason for presentation recorded in the hospital records. Concurrent or secondary conditions were not counted separately in the prevalence calculations. Traumatic disorders formed an etiological category and included cases recorded as trauma-related; these cases

were not additionally counted in the anatomical-system categories. Accordingly, when trauma was documented as the primary aetiology, classification was based on the traumatic origin of the condition rather than the anatomical system involved. For example, a fracture caused by a road traffic accident was classified as a traumatic disorder rather than as a bone and skeletal system disease, whereas a traumatic corneal injury was classified as a traumatic disorder rather than as an eye disease. Bone and skeletal system diseases, eye diseases, ear diseases, oral cavity diseases, muscle disorders, and nervous tissue disorders were grouped according to the primarily affected anatomical system. General inflammatory conditions and neoplastic lesions were classified as pathological-process categories. Congenital anomalies comprised atresia and other congenital anomalies. Requests for castration were presented separately as surgical interventions rather than as a disease category. The classification of disease categories was based on retrospective studies evaluating veterinary surgical cases (Sarıerler and Kılıç, 2003; Hayat et al., 2019).

Treatment was classified as surgical or conservative according to whether an operative procedure was performed. Cases undergoing an operative intervention under general or local anaesthesia were categorized as surgical treatment, whereas cases managed without surgery, including medical treatment, bandaging or splinting, wound care, and clinical follow-up, were categorized as conservative treatment. Cases involving euthanasia, owner refusal of the recommended treatment, or loss to follow-up were excluded from the study and were not included in the surgical or conservative treatment groups.

Statistical analysis

All medical records fulfilling the inclusion criteria were incorporated into the analysis. Statistical evaluations were strictly descriptive in nature. Categorical variables were presented as absolute frequencies (n) and relative percentages (%). Cases with incomplete or insufficient demographic, diagnostic, or therapeutic data were excluded prior to statistical processing; hence, the final analytical dataset consisted exclusively of complete cases across all evaluated variables.

Results

Of the cases brought to the hospital, 10.36% (n=158) were recorded in 2018, 16.92% (n=258) in 2019, 24.40% (n=372) in 2020, 19.81% (n=302) in 2021, 14.50% (n=221) in 2022, and 13.97% (n=213) in 2023. The highest number of cases (n=372) was recorded in 2020. The number of cases reached a peak in 2020 and declined steadily thereafter.

Regarding sex distribution, 45.86% of the cats (n=699) were male, and 54.13% (n=825) were female. Regarding age distribution, 54.59% of the cats (n=832) were in the age group of 0–1 year, 33.20% (n=506) were in the age group of 1–2 years, and 12.20% (n=186) were in the age group of 2 years or over. Table 1 summarizes the sex and

Table 1. Distributions of breed, age, sex, and treatment methods in the study population

Signalment	n	%
Male	699	45.86
Female	825	54.13
0-1 age	832	54.59
1-2 age	506	33.20
>2 age	186	12.20
Cross-Breed	1158	75.98
British Shorthair	73	4.79
Scottish Fold	50	3.28
Van	74	4.85
Ankara	55	3.60
Siamese	33	2.13
Persian	40	2.62
Chartreux	7	0.45
Chincilla	5	0.32
Himalayan	11	0.72
Russian Blue	18	1.18
Treatment method		
Conservative treatment	1221	80.12
Surgical intervention	303	19.88
Total	**1524**	**100**

Note: n = number of cases; % = percentage.

Table 2. Distribution and classification of diseases identified in the cases

Classification category	n	%
Etiological category		
Traumatic disorders	602	39.50
Pathological-process categories		
General inflammatory conditions	79	5.18
Neoplastic lesions	14	0.92
Anatomical-system categories		
Bone tissue and skeletal system diseases	226	14.83
Eye diseases	207	13.58
Ear diseases	52	3.41
Oral cavity diseases	159	10.43
Muscle disorders	18	1.18
Nerve tissue diseases	74	4.86
Congenital anomalies		
Anorectal atresia	12	0.79
Other congenital anomalies	32	2.10
Elective surgical intervention		
Requests for castration	49	3.22
Total	**1524**	**100**

Note: n = number of cases; % = percentage.

age-group distributions. Regarding breed distribution, 75.98% of the cats (n=1,158) were identified as cross-breed. Among the other breeds, Van cats accounted for 4.85% (n=74), followed by British Shorthair cats at 4.79% (n=73), Ankara cats at 3.60% (n=55), Scottish Fold cats at 3.28% (n=50), Persian cats at 2.62% (n=40), Siamese cats at 2.13% (n=33), Russian Blue cats at 1.18% (n=18), Himalayan cats at 0.72% (n=11), Chartreux cats at 0.45% (n=7), and Chinchilla cats at 0.32% (n=5) (Table 1).

Of the 1.524 cases, 303 (19.88%) underwent surgical treatment, whereas 1.221 (80.12%) were managed conservatively.

Table 2 presents the cases according to a classification based on the diagnoses or reasons for presentation documented in the hospital records. Traumatic disorders constituted the most common etiological category (39.50%, n = 602). Among the anatomically based categories, bone and skeletal system diseases were the most prevalent, accounting for 14.83% (n = 226), followed by eye diseases (13.58%, n = 207), oral cavity diseases (10.43%, n = 159), nervous tissue disorders (4.86%, n = 74), ear diseases (3.41%, n = 52), and muscle disorders (1.18%, n = 18). The pathological-process-based categories included general inflammatory conditions (5.18%, n = 79) and neoplastic lesions (0.92%, n = 14). Castration requests, classified separately from the disease categories as surgical interventions, accounted for 3.22% of the cases (n = 49). Congenital anomalies included atresia (0.79%, n = 12) and other congenital anomalies (2.10%, n = 32).

Discussion

Traumatic disorders constituted the most frequent diagnostic category in the present study, accounting for 39.50% (n = 602) of the 1.524 feline cases, while cats aged <1 year represented 54.59% (n = 832) of the study population. These findings indicate that trauma-related presentations and young cats constituted substantial components of the feline surgical caseload. Similar patterns have been reported in previous studies. Hernon et al. (2018) identified road traffic accidents as the most common cause of trauma among 185 cats (104/185), whereas Nascimento et al. (2022) reported that 90% of traumatized cats were young, blunt trauma accounted for 76% of cases, and falls accounted for 30% of traumatic events. The greater representation of young cats in the present study may therefore partly reflect age-related behavioural characteristics and environmental exposure. Rochlitz (2003a) reported that the odds of involvement in a road traffic accident decreased by 16% with each one-year increase in age, while GPS-based observations showed that younger cats tended to use larger roaming areas and that cats older than seven years spent less time away from home, were less active, and had smaller home ranges (Jensen et al., 2022). Greater mobility and exploratory behaviour may consequently increase exposure to vehicular traffic, falls, interactions with other animals, and other sources of trauma. Rochlitz (2003b) further reported that cats involved in road traffic accidents were more likely to live in areas with higher traffic levels, although the amount of time spent outdoors did not differ after adjustment for age, suggesting that local environmental conditions may be as relevant as

outdoor access itself. Recent multicenter cohort registry data further corroborate that the epidemiological distribution and patterns of feline trauma vary according to environmental and geographical settings. In the 2022–2023 VetCOT registry analysis, despite marked variations between urban and rural referral centers, the primary etiologies of feline trauma comprised non-witnessed blunt trauma, bite wounds, and falls from height (high-rise syndrome) (Wedig et al., 2025). Cross-breed cats also predominated in the present study (75.98%, n = 1.158), which may partly reflect the demographic structure of the regional feline population rather than an intrinsically greater susceptibility to surgical disease. However, indoor–outdoor lifestyle, traffic exposure, specific trauma mechanisms, and population-level demographic data were not available in the present study; therefore, these factors should be regarded as plausible explanations rather than causal determinants of the observed distribution.

The number of eligible feline surgical cases increased from 158 in 2018 to 372 in 2020 and subsequently decreased to 302 in 2021, 221 in 2022, and 213 in 2023. These figures represent only the 1.524 cases included in the analysis. Although 2.186 feline records were screened, the annual distribution of the 662 excluded records was unavailable; therefore, it could not be determined whether the decline after 2020 reflected a decrease in all feline presentations to the Surgery Clinic or a change in the proportion of records meeting the eligibility criteria. Data on annual admission and referral patterns, clinical service organization, and the completeness of record capture were also unavailable. Consequently, the possible contribution of the infrastructural improvements introduced in 2021 or other temporal factors could not be assessed. The reason for the observed decline therefore remains uncertain and should be considered a limitation of this study.

In the present study, disorders of the skeletal system accounted for 14.83% of all feline cases, making them the second most frequently recorded disease category after traumatic conditions. This finding is broadly consistent with the retrospective data reported by Hayat et al. (2019), who documented 224 surgical conditions in 219 cats. In their study, skeletal disorders constituted the most prevalent category, representing 37.95% (n = 85) of cases, followed by traumatic conditions (19.64%, n = 44) and ocular diseases (12.50%, n = 28). Taken together, these findings indicate that skeletal lesions represent a substantial proportion of feline surgical presentations. Their frequent detection may also reflect the clinical visibility of musculoskeletal injury and the frequent need for radiographic assessment and specialist management, which may increase referral to surgical services.

Our study found that eye diseases accounted for 13.58% of cases, whereas oral cavity diseases accounted for 10.43% of cases. Eye diseases are prevalent health problems, particularly in cats. The study by Elma (1992) also indicated that eye diseases were among the major reasons for referral to veterinary clinics for both dogs and cats. However, making general comments about the need for surgical intervention in these diseases should be avoided; treatment for such conditions varies depending on the condition of the eye and the specific nature of the disease. Without further data, it is not possible to judge definitively to what extent surgical intervention is necessary or not.

The present study identified neoplastic lesions in 0.92% of the cases. This rate indicated that tumour cases were rare among cats brought to veterinary clinics. Likewise, the literature reports that tumour cases in cats are rarer than in dogs. For example, in their study, Altan et al. (2013) found higher rates of tumour cases in dogs in Konya and the surrounding areas and reported that 53.4% of these cases were benign and 46.6% were malignant (Altan et al., 2013). However, the present study provided no details regarding the types of tumours (whether benign or malignant). Therefore, it is not possible to make a general evaluation of treatment methods (such as surgery or chemotherapy) for tumour cases. Although the literature indicates that surgical intervention has been an important treatment method in tumour cases (Altan et al., 2013), it is believed that such cases may vary across regions. Future studies are important for a more detailed classification of these cases and the evaluation of treatment methods.

Because all cats older than 2 years were included in a single category, potential differences among young adult, mature, and geriatric animals could not be evaluated. This broad classification may have masked age-related patterns in neoplastic, oral and dental, ophthalmic, and degenerative disorders. The limited age resolution should therefore be considered a limitation when interpreting the findings.

The proportion of cases managed surgically in the present study was lower than that reported in some previous retrospective studies. For instance, İşler et al. (2015) reported a surgical intervention rate of 42.92% at Mustafa Kemal University. One possible explanation for this difference is that the present study focused exclusively on feline cases, whereas studies including multiple species may encompass a broader spectrum and a greater number of surgical conditions. In addition, regional differences, variations in patient populations, and differences in the scope and specialization of clinical services may also contribute to discrepancies in surgical intervention rates. The relatively low surgical intervention rate observed at Siirt University may further reflect the fact that a substantial proportion of cases were managed conservatively. Future multicentre or multispecies studies with more detailed case stratification may provide a clearer understanding of the factors influencing the frequency of surgical intervention in veterinary patients.

Most retrospective studies in the literature also cover dogs, cattle, and other pet species (Altan et al., 2013; Pamuk et al., 2009). This study, which was conducted exclusively on cats, allowed for a more in-depth

examination of the specific needs and health problems of this species in terms of surgical cases. Nevertheless, the focus solely on cats may limit the generalizability of the results. Although this focus does not allow comparisons with other species, it also offers the advantage of creating a more focused source of information on cat health.

Conclusion

This retrospective study characterized feline surgical cases presented to the Animal Health Application and Research Hospital at Siirt University between 2018 and 2023. Traumatic disorders, skeletal diseases, ocular diseases, and oral cavity diseases were the most frequently recorded conditions. Although traumatic and orthopaedic disorders constituted a substantial proportion of the caseload, most cases were managed conservatively.

The findings demonstrate the clinical relevance of trauma and skeletal disorders in feline surgical practice and highlight potential variations in case distribution and treatment approaches among veterinary centres. By focusing exclusively on cats, this study provides species-specific data on the distribution and management of surgical conditions. Further multicentre studies involving larger feline populations may help clarify regional differences and provide a broader understanding of feline surgical caseloads.

Acknowledgements

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. The authors would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Özgül GÜLAYDIN from the Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Siirt University, for her valuable contributions to manuscript editing and writing support.

Author contribution statement

Author contributions: MHS conducted data collection or processing. OY and AG performed data analysis and/or interpretation. Literature review was carried out by OY and MHS, OY, AG, and MHS prepared the manuscript. All authors contributed to the study, read, and approved the final manuscript.

Authorship order: The order of authorship was determined based on the relative level of contribution to the research.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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