

## News & Comments

# Catnip Protects Cats Against Mosquitoes

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It's no secret that some cats love catnip. As if they were eating treats, they not only got as close to it as possible but also bit and rolled all over it. How come? Scientists in Japan found that cats damaging the plants increase the release of compounds that increase a plant's ability to repel insects.

If your cat is rolling around catnip, it is being very sensible. Mosquitoes are repelled by chemicals called iridoids in catnip/silvaine. which are transferred into the cats' fur when it rolls into the plants.

So why would a cat lick or bite catnip?

It was found that crumpled and chewed vine leaves had a much stronger odour than intact leaves when exposed to feline licking and chewing. As a result of cat damage, they measured the number of chemicals released from the leaves. They discovered that firstly damaged leaf releases a kind of iridoids, which is more volatile than the one released by an intact leaf, causing a much more prolonged response in cats. Secondly, Iridoids transfer from plants to cats' fur, which makes them mosquito-repellent.

In cats, olfactory and behavioural sensitivities are fine-tuned to detect plant-specific iridoids that provide mosquito repellency that is gained from their damage to plants.

Cats that damage plants by rolling, licking, chewing, rubbing, and rubbing seem to be given an incentive to do more damage, so they release higher amounts of strong insect repellents.

### KEYWORDS

biological science, ethology, zoology, felines, plants, catnip, silvaine, Iridoids, mosquito-repellent, Iridoids

