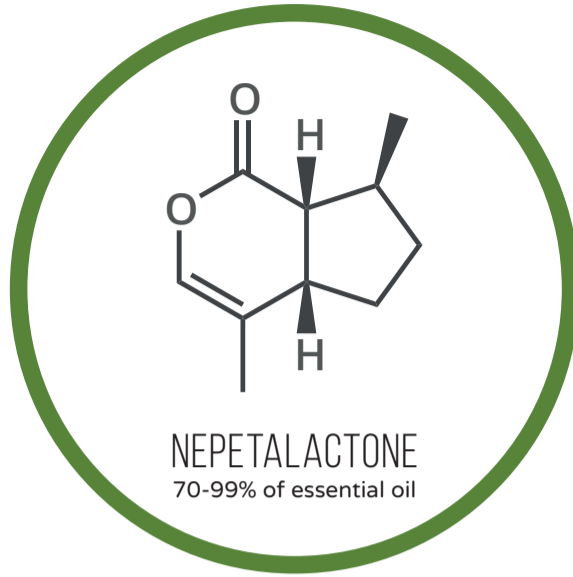


THE CHEMISTRY OF CATNIP

Why do cats go crazy for catnip? This graphic takes a look at the chemical compound responsible and how it works.



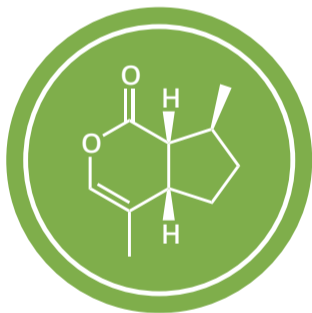
THE EFFECT OF CATNIP

- Member of same plant family as mint.
- Effect on cats known since the 1700s.
- Affects both domestic cats and wild cats, including lions, tigers and leopards.
- Is also used as a mild sedative and anti-spasmodic agent in humans.
- Can also be used as an insect repellent.

THE FELINE RESPONSE

SNIFFING LICKING CHEWING
HEAD SHAKING CHIN RUBBING
CHEEK RUBBING HEADOVER ROLLING
BODY RUBBING VOCALISATION

THE CATNIP RESPONSE



1

The compound nepetalactone, one of the volatile compounds given off by catnip, enters the cat's nasal tissue.



2

After entering the nasal tissue, the compound binds to protein receptors, stimulating neurons, which then signal to the brain.



3

The brain signals the amygdala, (responsible for emotional responses) and the hypothalamus (behaviour responses).



4

The cat exhibits behaviour similar to that seen in response to cat pheromones. This lasts for about 10 minutes.

APPROXIMATE PERCENTAGE OF CATS AFFECTED BY CATNIP

70%

The susceptibility of cats to catnip is gene dependent and hereditary, and as such not all cats will exhibit a response. Additionally, young kittens aren't affected until they reach sexual maturity. The response to catnip lasts for approximately ten minutes.

6-8
WEEKS

AGE UNDER WHICH CATS ARE UNAFFECTED



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