

## Fainting kittens die of rare disease

(<http://news.ninemsn.com.au/world/8139590/fainting-kittens-die-of-rare-disease>)

Two kittens that found fame on the internet because of their rare fainting disorder have died before they could receive treatment for their debilitating disease.

Charlie and Spike suffered from "fainting goat" syndrome, or myotonia congenital, a genetic condition that caused the 16-week-old brothers to collapse at the slightest noise or bump.

The condition gets its name after a breed of goat whose muscles freeze up when startled, causing them to collapse on their side for about 10 seconds.

The kittens' owner, Edward Scarr, said he was alarmed to find his cute pets frequently collapsing on the ground where they would remain paralysed for 20 to 30 seconds.

"You could move your hands slightly and if they caught sight of that, they could keel over," he told ninemsn in a phone interview from his home in London.

"During the seizure they were completely rigid, it was as if they were deceased."

Mr Scarr, a lifelong cat lover, said he would revive the kittens from their paralysis by patting them or pressing their abdomen.

"They were very uncertain on their feet but if you spent time with them, they would get a bit more confident and they would walk a few paces down the corridor."

Mr Scarr posted footage on YouTube of his kittens' bizarre syndrome and at last count more than two million people had watched the video.

He said a famous West Indies fast bowler even contacted Mr Scarr to offer his condolences and to say he was "deeply touched" by the video.

"He had been shown the film by his daughter and had been reduced to a sort of jelly," he said.

"I've gotten calls and messages from former US marines ... and this film reduced them to tears. People have been calling me from all over the world, it's been bizarre really."

Veterinarians were planning to treat the kittens using smaller doses of a drug used to successfully on fainting goats.

Before sadly before treatment could begin, Charlie and Spike suffered a fatal seizure that caused them to stop breathing.

According to the Royal Veterinary College, this is the first reported case involving cats in the UK —

there have been two such cases in the US and four in New Zealand.

The litter that produced Charlie and Spike included a third, female kitten which the College is trying to locate to see if this condition only affects male cats.

The mother cat apparently has had litters before that did not suffer the fainting syndrome.

Mr Scarr said he and his girlfriend are still too upset to adopt new kittens.

"I've had cats all my life but these two were different," he said. "They were just pure in heart, just beautiful animals, very loving and very affectionate."