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CARING FROM THE INSIDE OUT



Deputy web editor Lara: 'I'm looking forward to putting my knitting skills to the test with our cat blanket — turn to page 29!'



Head of brand strategy James: 'We've had such an amazing response to the new look Your Cat — let us know what you think!'



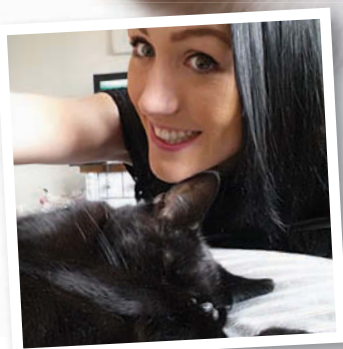
Advertising exec Andrea: 'I always love seeing readers' cats in our Pawtraits gallery (page 60). Some great pics!'



Advertising exec Emma: 'I love this month's shopping pages — I want it all!'



THE £3 DEAL IS BACK!
Turn to page 33 for our subscription offer!



HELLO!

Welcome to the January issue of Your Cat! With just a couple of weeks left until Christmas, this is the perfect issue to curl up and read if you manage to grab a moment to yourself — from short stories to true cat tales, real life features, puzzles and readers' photos, there's plenty to keep you entertained!

This month, we head down to Surrey to meet pioneering TV 'Supervet' Noel Fitzpatrick. Life-changing and often ground-breaking procedures are all in a day's work for this world-famous referral vet, as

we found out — turn to page 20.

One pair whose lives have changed immeasurably are James Bowen and his feline pal Street Cat Bob. We catch up with them this month, finding out how the once homeless pair will be spending their Christmas — turn to page 31.

Are you still looking for the perfect gift for a cat lover this Christmas? Don't miss our last-minute gift guide on page 68 — you'll find lots of goodies to buy for your feline pal too!

And if you've got something to say about Your Cat, don't forget to fill in the survey included with

this issue. Everyone who answers our questions about the magazine will have a chance of winning a £100 high street gift voucher! The survey will only take a few minutes to complete, and your answers will ensure Your Cat just keeps on getting better and better!

I hope you and your cats have a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

Chloë

Chloë Hukin, editor
chloe@yourcat.co.uk

GET IN TOUCH - WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!



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Get three issues of Your Cat for just £3 when you subscribe today!

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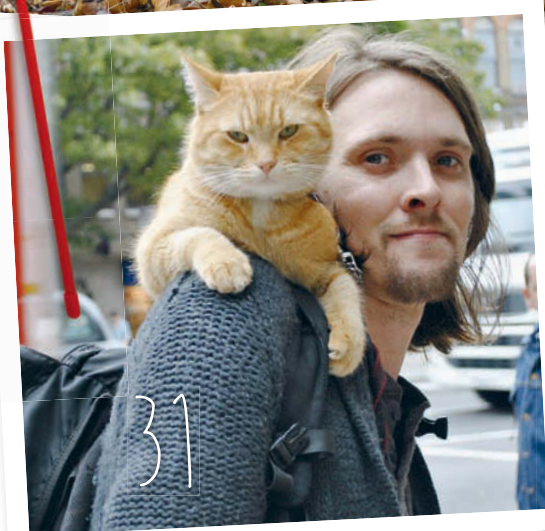
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Readers' kittens star in our oh-so-cute gallery!

THE £3 DEAL!

Get three issues for £3 when you subscribe today! See page 33.



Cover photo: Mark Taylor/Warren Photographic

INTO THE WILD

Wildlife photographer Suzi Eszterhas shares stunning images from her time with a family of tigers in India.

Award-winning wildlife photographer Suzi followed a family of tigers around India for many months, capturing defining moments for the cubs and their mother. From splashing in water to learning to hunt, Suzi accompanied the feline family until, at two years old, the cubs were fully grown and ready to rule a territory of their own.

“Being able to spend months at a wild tiger den was an incredible experience and one of the highlights of my career,” says Suzi. “Tigers are such elusive animals, and working with the tigress at her secret, very well hidden den site was an absolute privilege. I was able to witness and capture intimate moments that people usually never see.”

“To photograph the den site, I worked on elephant back. Tigers in India’s national parks are quite used to the presence of elephants and are much more comfortable with them than vehicles or humans on foot — tigers have learned to fear people due to widespread poaching throughout India. The mother tigress was already comfortable with the elephant, but getting her tiny cubs used to such a large creature was certainly a challenge; it took weeks to get the cubs used to our presence.”

They say you should never work with children or animals, so did the tigers have any surprises in store for Suzi? “One day we arrived early in the morning to find that the mother was moving with three of her four cubs. She was walking out in the open, with the tiny cubs in tow. We feared the worst; that the fourth cub had died. That day she took the cubs a few kilometres away to a kill and they stayed there all day and all night. The next day we followed her as she brought the cubs back to her den, where the fourth cub was waiting for them! We have no idea why he didn’t make the trip, but we were very relieved that he was alive.”

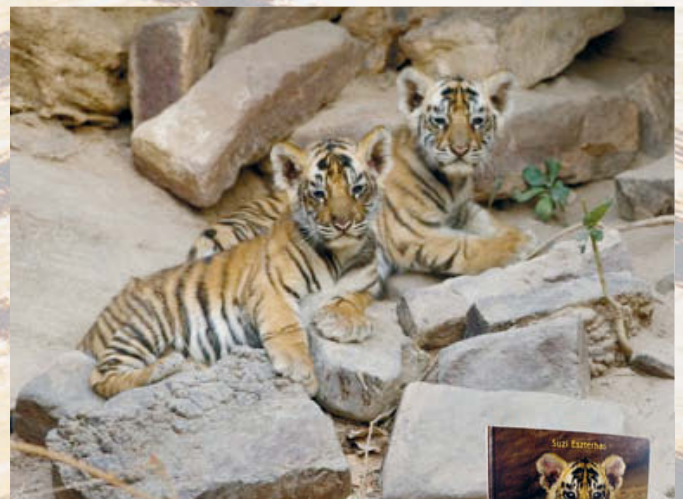
“It’s very rewarding to have a job that I love to do every day — and big cats are one of my favourite subjects to photograph!” ■



Photos: courtesy of Suzi Eszterhas

SUZI'S TOP TIP:

"As with any animal, take some time to quietly watch what your cats do, so that you can plan out your photography shots. Be patient. And don't try to get your cat's attention all the time — sometimes it's nice to just get some photos of animals looking natural and relaxed in their own environment."



These images were taken from Suzi's book 'Tiger', published by Frances Lincoln Children's Books and priced at £11.99 (hardback). Find out more about Suzi at www.suzieszterhas.com



Missing cat Marmie is found!

A missing cat has been making headlines around the country for the past few months. When indoor cat Marmie went missing from his Maidstone home on July 21, his owner Tracy Brewster, who believes he was stolen, set about campaigning to get Marmie home.

Tracy's 'Find Marmie' campaign gained nationwide coverage, with both a Facebook and Twitter page being set up to raise awareness, as well as a 'Find Marmie March'. The support from the thousands of people helping to find Marmie has obviously paid off, as in November — three months after he went missing — Marmie was found



near a motorway in the Surrey area. Despite being very thin, he appears in good health and is now back home with Tracy just in time for Christmas. On her Facebook page, Tracy said: "Thank you all my Marmie Army supporters."

Will you vote for animals?



Have you ever considered how your vote may affect your cat? Animal Aid has launched a new website devoted to encouraging the public to consider how their vote affects animals. The site — www.voteforanimals.org.uk — allows voters to find out exactly what their MP thinks about various animal issues, as well as seeing if their MP is in a safe seat or a precarious position. Will you be checking out the site before placing your vote in the spring?



According to a recent survey by PetSafe, 83% of owners rate their cats as one of their most valued possessions.



Kitten heroes



RSPCA staff had to step in to save a litter of three-week-old kittens after their stray mother was struggling to care for them. Animal welfare officers have been feeding Toad, Frog, Tadpole, Newt and Minnow every two hours since their rescue.

Aileen Scheers, from the charity's Middlesex North West branch, says: "We would like to urge people to remember to get their cats neutered to try and avoid unwanted litters of kittens. Hand-rearing is so time intensive and our staff are overwhelmed by the sheer number of cats and kittens that need our help."

Visit www.rspca-middlesex.org.uk

Office gossip



NO HOLIDAYS FOR PET LOVERS!

New RSPCA figures have revealed that pet owners who don't want to leave their animals home alone miss out on the luxuries in life, including holidays abroad and meals out!



ON THE HUNT

Amazing footage taken from a GoPro placed on the back of a lioness has been released, showing the majestic feline hunting. Watch it online at www.yourcat.co.uk/blog



POP WITH PETS

What's your favourite pet song? According to a recent survey by MobileSlots.com, 'Who Let the Dogs Out?' by the Baha Men has been named the UK's favourite pet-related song, with 'What's New Pussycat?' coming in third.

PUSSYCAT PASSWORD

A notorious Internet hacker who was on the FBI's 'Most Wanted' list has revealed that he may have been caught due to the password he used — his cat's name!

RSPCA PARTNERS WITH SANTA!

RSPCA has partnered with www.santa.co.uk so every time you buy something from the Christmas themed website, a donation will be made to the charity.



CAT LOVERS' TRAITS REVEALED

According to You Gov's new profiler app, a cat lover is someone who loves vegetarian food, lives in Yorkshire and describes themselves as imaginative!

To the rescue



The RSPCA was recently called to rescue a five-week-old kitten that had been found abandoned in an oil container on an industrial estate in Watford. When the kitten was pulled out of the container, he was covered entirely in thick, black oil — and he was quickly named Gollum due to his big, sorrowful eyes.

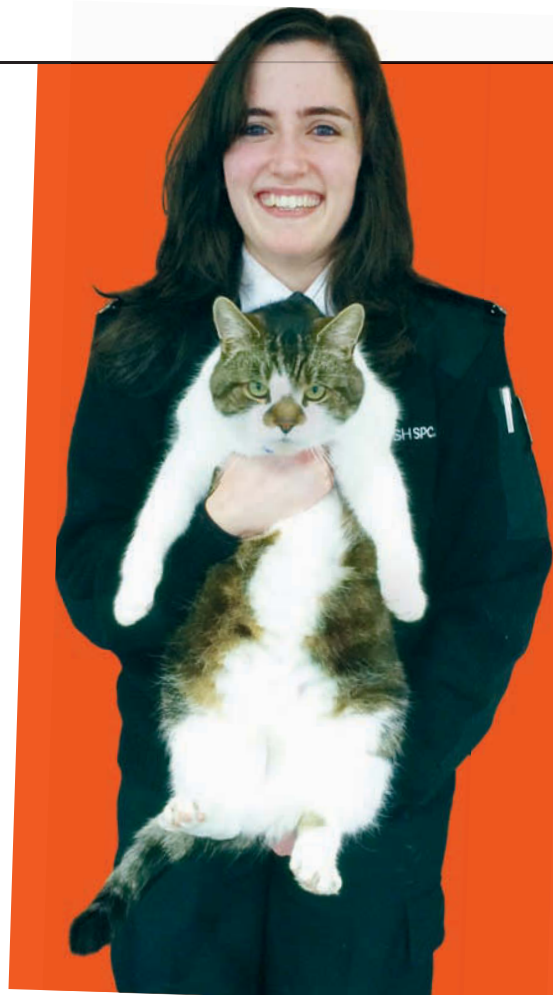
However, once he had been carefully bathed, it was revealed that he was, in fact, a ginger kitten — and unrecognisable in comparison to his previous state. He is now on the road to recovery and has secured a forever home, which he will be going to once he's old enough.



Ex-stray slims down

Previously obese cat Mr Pickles has lost almost half of his body weight, thanks to staff at the Scottish SPCA. When Mr Pickles first came into the care of the Aberdeenshire centre back in July 2013, he weighed in at a whopping 12kg — despite being found as a stray. Since then staff have put him on a strict diet and exercise regime in a bid to get him down to a healthy weight of 6.5kg.

Debbie Innes, assistant manager at the branch, says: "We're all so proud of Mr Pickles for reaching his goal weight. We've decided that he'll stay with us as the centre cat as he is so at home here."



Cat café to hit The Big Apple



New York will soon be welcoming its first cat café. The Meow Parlour is teaming up with cat rescue group KittyKind to create a permanent space where adoptable cats can roam free, while being petted by the customers for a small fee.

The café is going to be the first of its kind in New York and is set to open over the coming weeks — will you be paying it a visit?

Picture of the month

We couldn't resist printing this amazing photo of Carly Bradbury and a cheetah pal, taken while Carly was volunteering at the Cheetah Experience — a big cat conservation centre — in South Africa earlier this year.

Find out more about Carly's big cat adventure in our March issue.



Hopes dashed for wild animal circus ban

We've been following the prospective ban on wild animals in travelling circuses for some time now, and it would appear that things have been put on hold as Conservative MP for Christchurch, Christopher Chope, spoke out to block the Private Members Bill brought forward by Jim Fitzpatrick MP.

Campaigners are not giving up, however, and are continuing in their efforts to ensure the Government honours its promise to bring a ban. Want to help put the ban back in motion? Get in touch with your MP (visit findyourmp.parliament.uk to find out how) and ask them to write to the Prime Minister to request that the Government bring a ban without further delay.



DIARY DATES



December 4-23

Visit Chester Zoo and get a chance to write your letter to Santa, get creative with a lantern workshop and experience the nocturnal sounds of the zoo after dark! Sessions start at 4pm and then every half an hour until 6.30pm. Tel. **01244 650209** or book online at www.chesterzoo.org

December 13-24

Visit Santa at Dudley Zoo from 10am to 3.30pm. Tickets for children over a year old cost £9.75 and include zoo admission, a train ride, a trip to Santa's Grotto, a gift and a magical Christmas show. Tel. **0844 474 2272** or visit www.dudleyzoo.org.uk

December 19-24

ZSL London Zoo is hosting daily opportunities to meet Santa. Children will be able to write a letter to the man himself, take a guided tour around 'Elfville' and hear talks on the zoo's 'reindeer royalty'. Visit between 10.15am to 3.45pm — tickets cost £24.09 per child, including entry to the zoo. Visit www.zsl.org

December 20 - December 22

Visit Santa and the elves at Belfast Zoo's grotto, as well as enjoying festive crafts, wrapping presents for the chimpanzees and gorillas, decorating the elephants' Christmas trees and much more. Visiting Santa costs £6.50 and booking is essential. Tel. **0289 077 6277**.

December 23

Head over to Wood Green's Godmanchester Centre at King's Bush Farm, London Road, Cambs. PE29 2NH, for a behind-the-scenes Christmas tour. Make fun pet toys and feed the animals! The tour costs £5 and takes place from 10am to 12pm. Tel. **0844 248 8181**.

Brave kitty returns home



Despite having lost her sight in a road accident, a Brighton cat is now enjoying life back home with her family.

Two-year-old Suki suffered terrible facial injuries after being run over near her home. PDSA vet nurse Karen Davis says: "Things weren't looking good for little Suki when she came into us. Her face was very badly damaged and we had to operate on her as soon as we possibly could to give her as much chance as possible of surviving."

After 11 days with PDSA, she is now back home. Her owner Polly Phillips says: "You honestly wouldn't know she is totally blind as she copes so well with life."

75% of owners say their pet is equally, if not more important than other family members, according to research by Vetsure Pet Insurance!

Nominations now open for welfare awards

The nominations are now open for the Ceva Awards for Animal Welfare. Now in its fourth year, the awards recognise volunteers, charity workers, veterinary professionals and anyone else who works with or on behalf of animals, and has demonstrated outstanding commitment to supporting and improving animal welfare. This year, the Charity Team of the Year Award is sponsored by Your Cat.

Do you know someone who has shown dedication to improving the lives of animals? If so, make your nominations online at www.cevawelfareawards.com before January 13, 2015.

Festive fun with The Mayhew

The Mayhew Animal Home is holding its 'Tinsel and Tales' evening from 6.30pm to 10.30pm on December 16, at St Paul's Church, Hammersmith, London W6 9PJ. The fundraising event will include a celebrity-hosted auction and raffle, a vegetarian buffet and games.

The event costs £30 per person, which includes dinner, dessert and a glass of sparkling wine on arrival. Visit themayhew.org or tel. **0208 962 8000**.



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www.naturalvetcare.com



Cat Sitter

Chris Pascoe meets a furry, feline-shaped member of staff at a garden superstore.

I know a cat named Willow who has the largest, most cat-perfect home imaginable... for Willow, a small black cat with ambitions well above what would normally be expected of your average feline, has taken over an entire garden superstore.

Willow first wandered in to her local branch of Notcutts seven years ago, and immediately headed for the centre's in-house Optiplan kitchen store. It seems that Willow recognised a kitchen as a place where cats should naturally be fed, and as there were many kitchens all in one place here, she should therefore be fed many times. Had she accidentally stumbled into paradise?

While being slightly surprised to find a small black cat in their workplace, staring intently at a kitchen worktop and

impatiently demanding her dinner, staff members Vanessa and Alex did exactly as Willow ordered and rushed off to the pet department to purchase a tin of cat food. Of course they did — cats shout, we jump, it's the natural order of things. Seven years later, Willow still doesn't appear to be making any plans to leave. She's gradually extended her empire and now commands 20 staff members in a 25,000 square-foot feline playground. She has a choice of eight kitchen worktops to stare at, 30 comfy chairs to settle down in, hundreds of metres of shelving to patrol, a massive garden complete with ornamental pools, scores of sculpted statues, teeming fish ponds, and her very own bird and small rodent

"Cats shout, we jump, it's the natural order of things."



display centre.

Over the years, Willow has not only charmed the staff into accepting her, she's also become something of a tourist attraction. Customers often visit

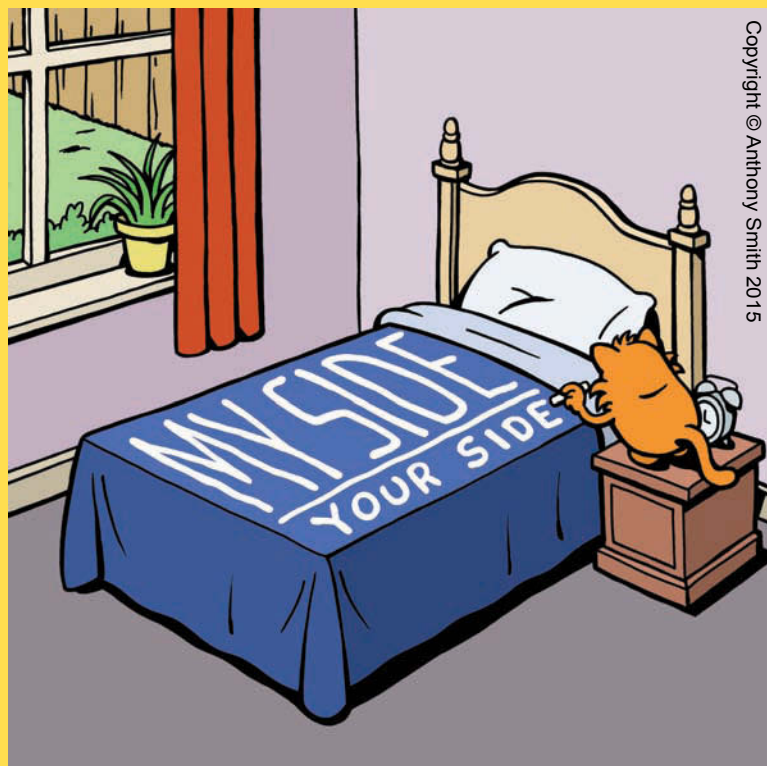
the store just to see Willow and

give her a stroke or two. I know, because I'm one of them. Of course, it'd be rude to leave without buying anything, so Willow's effect on footfall also ups sales — so much so that when one particular manager a few years ago suggested Willow should (say this in whispered tones) maybe... leave, he received word from above that HE was very welcome to leave if he so wished, but Willow would be going nowhere!

Willow tends to let her staff deal with customer service, which is just as well, because when she did attempt to participate, things went rather awry. When a customer approached Alex in the kitchen department one day, asking where she could find the pet department, Willow decided to escort the pair, her being the expert on such matters. As the swiftly-moving threesome paced urgently through the store, they approached a garden bench which halved the available walking space. No matter, thought Willow, and paced straight under its length, emerging the other end in perfect step with her companions. The problem was that she'd picked up quite a few bits and pieces along the way. The customer was the first to notice. As she glanced down at Willow, she stopped dead in her tracks and performed a stunned double-take — Willow's entire face was so covered in cobwebs and dust that only her eyes and ears were visible from inside what appeared to be a full-face Batman mask. Or in this case, Spiderman, possibly.

The nice thing about the feline star of this month's column is that it's very easy to meet the wonderful Willow in person. If you're ever anywhere near Junction 4 of the M40 at High Wycombe, it's just a three-minute drive to Notcutts Booker. She'll be there to greet you. Being indispensable, she won't be leaving anytime soon... ■

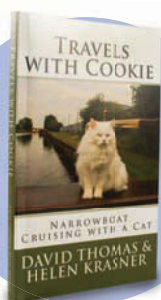
Learn to Speak Cat by Anthony Smith



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BOOK SHOP

For your
chance to
win, turn to
page 90.



5 to
win!

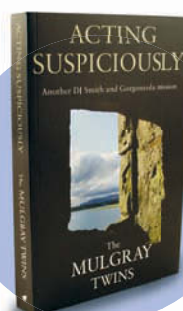
'TRAVELS WITH COOKIE'
by David Thomas &
Helen Krasner

After learning that he only had a short time left to live, David set about fulfilling his dream of living on a narrowboat, taking Cookie, his fluffy white cat with him. The story follows their adventures on the open water.
Price: £7.99 (paperback) or £3.60 (Kindle).



'BAD ANGUS'
by Laura Bennett

The perfect bedtime story for cat-loving children, 'Bad Angus' follows the monstrous, fluffy cat Angus as he explores Kate and Sorley's house, wreaking havoc and meeting a fox along the way. This is a sweet story that makes for a great children's read.
Price: £7.35 (paperback).



'ACTING SUSPICIOUSLY'
by The Mulgray Twins

This story follows DJ Smith and her sniffer cat Gorgonzola as they investigate a potential drugs cover-up, focused around historic re-enactments from Mary Queen of Scots' life, which allude to history repeating itself.
Price: £8.99 (paperback) or £2.99 (Kindle).



5 to
win!

'ALFIE: THE DOORSTEP CAT'
by Rachel Wells

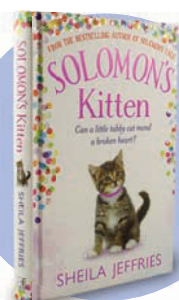
In this heart-warming tale, Alfie is left to fend for himself when his elderly owner passes away. Setting up home on Edgar Road, Alfie is shooed away by its residents, until they realise just how much they need him.
Price: £9.99 (hardback) or 99p (Kindle).

2 to
win!



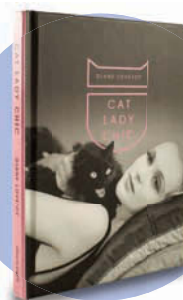
'THE PAWTRAITS EXHIBITION'
by Maria Slough

A collection of stunning black and white images featuring well-known faces, each photographed alongside an animal of their choice. Each image tells a story of love and companionship, as well as raising awareness for selected animal charities.
Price: £15 for a small hardback or £25 for a large hardback.



'SOLOMAN'S KITTEN'
by Sheila Jeffries

From the bestselling author of 'Soloman's Tale', this book tells the story of Tallulah, who is taken from her father and abandoned. It follows Talullah as she is rehomed and becomes part of the Lee family's life, exploring the gift an animal can bring to our lives.
Price: £8.99 (hardback) or £3.80 (Kindle).



'CAT LADY CHIC'
by Diane Lovejoy

Cat ladies have always been some of the most beautiful, glamorous and accomplished women in modern history, as this book proves!
Price: £11.99 (hardback) or £7.41 (Kindle).

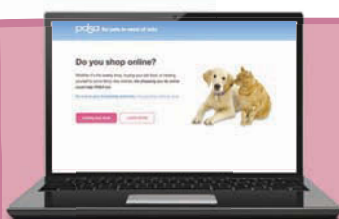


'THE GUEST CAT'
by Takashi Hiraide

The charming tale of a cat who enters the lives of a struggling couple, only to turn everything around and make them see things for the better.
Price: £7.99 (paperback) or £3.59 (Kindle).



Save money — buy cat books directly from the Your Cat bookshop, online at www.yourcat.co.uk/books

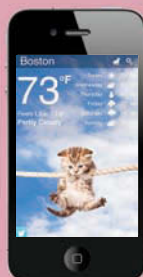


PDSA SHOPPING

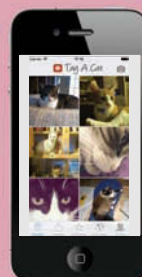
Make a purchase at any of the online shops highlighted and they'll make a donation to the PDSA, with no extra cost to you! Download the app to your computer from www.give4sure.co.uk (not yet available for mobile devices).

LET'S GET DIGITAL

WEATHER KITTY
Brighten up rainy days with this free weather app! It displays different cat images that change based on the current weather. You can even add your own cat photo to the app!



TAG A CAT
For all feline photographers, this free app is perfect for sharing your favourite cat photos with other cat owners, as well as befriending local cats using the app's map feature.



CAT ALONE 2
If you're looking for a way to keep your cat entertained while you're out of the house, Cat Alone 2 is the perfect solution. With six different stages including catching a mouse, scattering a dandelion and playing with a feather, this 69p app will keep your cat busy for hours.





Goodbye George

After putting his own feelings aside, Tom Cox bids farewell to ex-stray George.

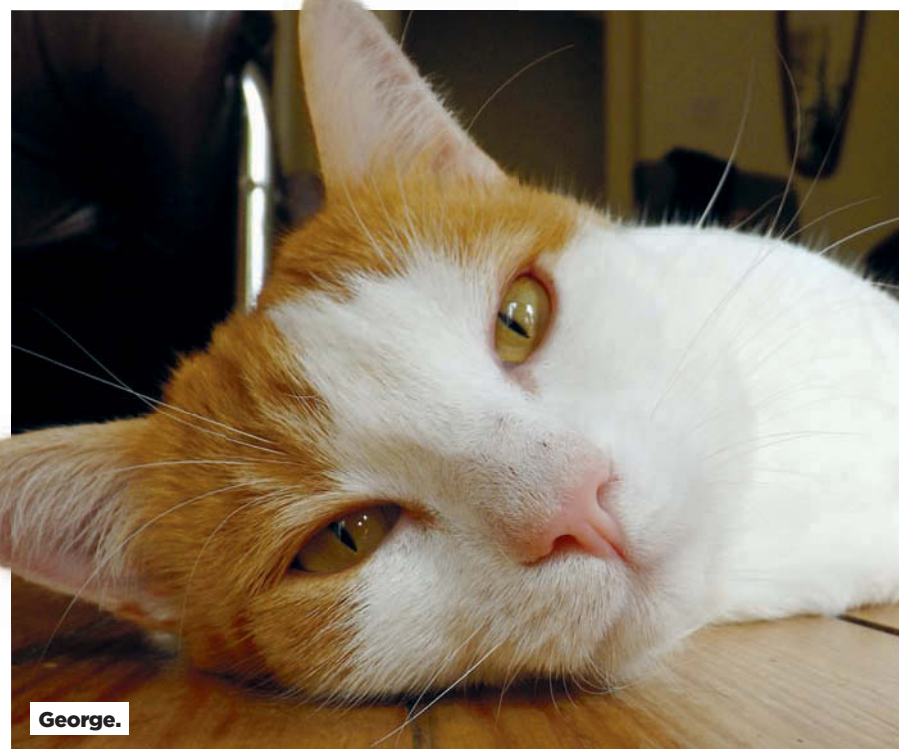
My former stray cat George went to live with my parents today. George is an amazingly easy-going, almost hippy-like cat, who arrived at my house in Devon almost as soon as my girlfriend and I moved here, back in spring, and has made our lives a little bit more sunny ever since, but also a little bit more complicated.

George, for all his plus points, had one major character flaw: he was obsessed with our female cat, Roscoe, and would not leave her alone. For the last few months I've existed as a kind of semi-human, doing many of the social and outdoorsy things that normal humans do, but largely serving as a shield between George and Roscoe — searching for her in the fields surrounding our house at night, and making sure the passage was safe for her to get in and out of the house, and eat her meals, without being attacked by a great ginger lunthead with a one track mind.

This situation could not go on, and left us with only two options: either George had to go, or Roscoe — who is, after all, a cat chosen by us — did.

To be honest, I think George will be very happy living with my mum and dad in Nottinghamshire. Their own cat, Floyd, was killed by a car a few weeks ago and, while George could never replace Floyd directly, he is every bit as cuddly, but seemingly without Floyd's strong somewhat worrying wanderlust. They only got him back to their place an hour ago, and already my mum has sent me a photograph of George happily curled up on the bed, napping alongside my dad. George, who has never seemed to stop being ecstatic just to be out of the wind and rain, will hopefully be even more ecstatic to be an only cat. He'll probably

"The bond with any rescued cat is strong, but the one with a stray you've lured in yourself is unique."



George.

miss The Bear a little bit, who was his old napping pal, but certainly won't miss Shipley's overactive fists and foul mouth, both of which went into overdrive each time George emerged from the catflap.

Have I been selfish in trying to keep George here as long as I have? Perhaps. Roscoe has been unhappy for months, living on her wits between our bedroom, a copse about 300 yards from the house and the local pub garden, where she would sometimes befriend strangers, perhaps with a view to asking them if they, too, had a feline sex offender living back at home and, if they didn't, whether she could go home with them.

My worries about George living with my parents — that he'd wander to the same road (almost a mile away) that killed Floyd, that he'd miss me and my girlfriend — were genuine, but now I see that they were also a slight cloak for my stronger worries about how much I'd miss him. The bond with any rescued cat is strong, but the one with a stray you've lured in yourself is unique — especially one who has then



The Bear and George.

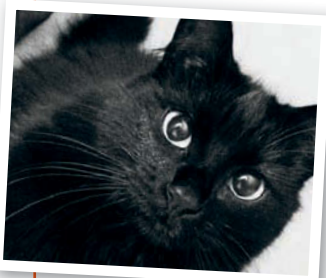
turned into the most docile cat you've ever lived with. George relaxed me, but he did not relax most of my other cats.

Now, with him gone, the house seems amazingly quiet: after a succession of strays and intruders, at our succession of geographically diverse homes, could we be entering a rare period of total feline harmony? Ralph and Shipley are in front of the fire, their sleeping positions somehow more limp than they've been for months. The Bear is behind them on the sofa. Roscoe just popped her head into the living room for the first time since June. Outside, a cold winter night is falling. It seems eerily silent but who knows who else is out there, just waiting for the right moment to strike? ■



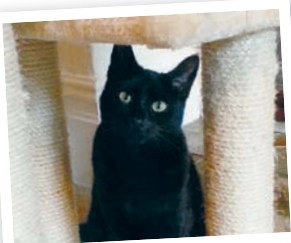
▲ YOUR CAT MAGAZINE:

It's #NationalBlackCatDay and we'd love to see your black cats celebrating!



▲ NIKKI HARGREAVES:

This is Rolo, one of my black cats — she loves to headbutt!



▲ ALISON YOUNG: My beautiful girl, Phoebe.

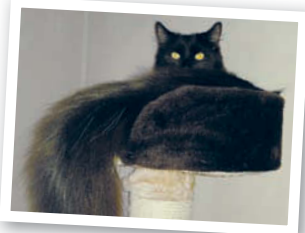


▲ SUE SPURRIER: My beautiful black velvet girl, Holly.



▲ JOAN VELEZ: My Boo. We celebrate his birthday on Halloween. Happy Birthday, Boo.

▼ MARISA DUARTE BRITO MOURA: My Alfie.



Star Letter



SAVING GREEK CATS



Write & win!

This month's star letter writer has won a PetSafe FroliCat Pounce™ and an Egg-Cersizer™ toy, worth a total of £39.98! Every other letter writer has won an Egg-Cersizer toy — simply fill with kibble for a fun way to feed. For more details visit www.petsafe.net or tel. 0800 046 1414. Write to us by emailing catchat@yourcat.co.uk or by post (see page 89). *UK only



My husband and I recently relocated to Greece. One day we were on the balcony when we heard a kitten crying. We immediately grabbed a beach towel and headed to where the sound was coming from.

We looked in the bin on the corner and saw a washing powder box tied up with a carrier bag. I opened the box and a little black kitten came scrambling out and sat on my shoulder, followed by another, and another, and there was another huddled in the corner.

We immediately made up a box with old towels and hot water bottles and set up our spare room as the 'kitten room'. We put them to bed and read everything we could about three-week-old kittens. We were told to expect the worse, but to do what we could. I syringe fed them and luckily they survived the night.

A few times we thought we were going to lose one, but luckily they have all pulled through. They are now nine weeks old — very boisterous and getting fatter by the day. Hopefully our cats will be outdoor cats but stay close to home as we cannot bear to part with Ariel, Calgon, Lenor and Persill!

L Speakes, via email.



@1981CSS

You can tell it's getting colder as we push towards #Christmas. @LimpyCat relaxes by the Everhot...



@Natlee101

Happy Halloween :)



@CHedditch

Cleo loved waiting for trick or treaters to arrive...



@NotPoshLady

Can't believe he was small enough to hold in one hand! #big #cat now.



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catchat@yourcat.co.uk

DOOR TO OUR HEARTS

We love our cats Barney and Bramble, so when we had our front door changed we had a picture of them put on it! They are brother and sister and have just turned four.

We've had them since they were kittens. They came to us with terrible cat 'flu, but with a lot of love and help from the vets they are having a good life.

Sarah Asson, via email.



CHIP 'N' SNIP

I am writing in response to the letter from Sarah Marshall in your November issue.

She is absolutely correct in saying that a low-cost neutering scheme would benefit rescue centres, help the stray population and low income households.

I am the neutering officer for Cats Protection's Waveney branch and for the last year East Norfolk RSPCA has been organising monthly 'chip 'n' snip' events for people who are in receipt of income-based benefits. For a minimum donation of £10 the cat is microchipped and Cats Protection issues a voucher to cover the cost of neutering.

We have issued 350 neutering vouchers this year and the manager of the RSPCA branch has reported a reduction in the number of kittens taken in. Next year we hope to run similar events in association with the RSPCA's East Suffolk branch.

Linda Holland, via email.



AROUND THE WATERING HOLE

I would just like to show you our early morning routine at the waterhole! Our cats are called Ripley Cash (the Sphynx) and Edwin Levi.

Tracey Ingram, via email.

THE NAME'S BOND

My cat Bond has had lots of adventures in his life and he is only five. The first thing happened when I was at my auntie's house. When we were coming into our drive, my mum broke the news — she couldn't find Bond.

A few days later we had a phone call from one of our neighbours saying that they had seen a black thing being chased by their dog into their attic. My dad rushed over and he heard mewing coming from the floor. He pulled up the floorboards and there was Bond. If we had left it even a day longer, he would have died.

The second thing was when the top of Bond's head seemed to be swelling and the vet found an abscess. The vets removed it easily but it wasn't very nice for him. The last thing happened this summer. We were on holiday and when we came home Bond would not get out of his bed, and when he did he had a terrible limp. My mum phoned the vet and we had to try and get him into his carrier, which was tricky because Bond kept yowling in pain. Bond stayed at the vets for two days — he had broken his pelvis! We think he was hit by a car. He had to stay inside for a month, which he hated — he broke the cat flap trying to get out! He is better now; he is still a bit wonky but I wouldn't change him for the world.

**Maeve Slater (age 10),
West Byfleet, Surrey.**



BEST BUDDIES

I thought you might like this picture — it is my four-month-old son Reuben with a six-week old kitten currently being fostered for Yorkshire Cat Rescue before she is old enough to be rehomed.

Christina Savage, via email.

SPOILT FOR CHOICE

While reading 'How to be the perfect owner' (November 2014) I had to smile when I read the advice about swapping around toys so your cat won't get bored. Belle, now four years old, came to live with me almost a year ago. I've put the majority of toys in a cardboard box, and I have to laugh when I see her half in and half out of the box getting the toy she wants to play with. It was hard in the beginning because she came with her own individuality which clashed with mine. Thankfully I think we're almost there. It is sweet when she snuggles on my chest and licks my cheek.

Carol Rosenberg-Fox, Stevenage, Herts.

BACK TO BLACK

Our cat passed away in February this year, so when we went to Animal Welfare in Stockton in October we were not sure which cat to get — then we saw a black male. My husband said he liked him but I wasn't sure, but he won us over and we took him home. We have called him Salem and he is about three years old.

I then read articles about black cats being hard to rehome, and I don't know why as Salem is very loving and friendly. People should not go by colour, but what the cat is like.

Susan Lindo, Middlesbrough, North Yorks.



BLACK CATS NEED LOVE TOO!

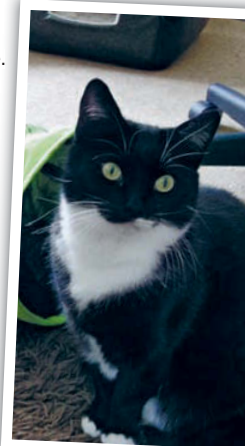
I'm so glad you highlighted National Black Cat Day on October 30 in your magazine.

There must be so many black cats who are in desperate need of loving homes. My partner and I have a black and white cat called Molly and have never had an issue with colour. It's their individual personalities that shine through.

We also have a lovely tabby and white cat called Oscar who is a bit of a rascal!

We both love reading the stories of The Bear by Tom Cox which remind us of Casper — he looks so similar!

Mark Chappell and Anna Challoner, via email.



BEAUTIFUL IN BLACK!

This is my beautiful cat Bramble, who we adopted in 2008. He is now 13 and since we adopted him we have been trying to get a good photo of him. This proved very difficult, partly because he is black so the lighting really affects photos. He is also a spirited fellow and getting him to keep still is no mean feat!

On this day he happily changed his mind and posed for lots of photos, but has since resumed normal service and we cannot get another photo!

Toni Taylor, Grimsby, North Lincs.

SANTA CLAWS!

Santa Paws is coming to town...
Isabelle Highway, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.



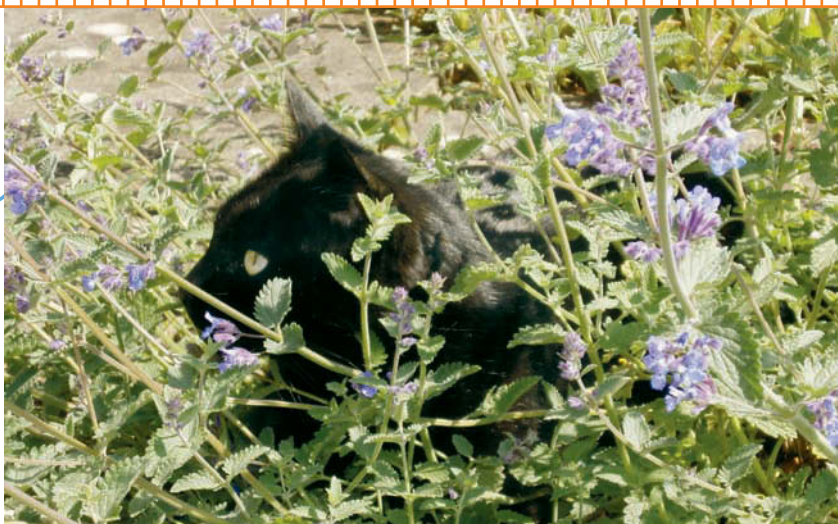
AN OPEN DOOR

We don't know what it is about our front door, but first of all Panther (pictured) adopted us, then a little black cat we called Ollie decided he wanted to live with us too — but when we took him to the vets we were told he was a girl, so she's now Hollie.

Then a couple of weeks ago I walked into the kitchen and a very guilty little ginger cat looked up from stealing food and made a run for it. Since then, he comes in when he thinks no one is around and helps himself to whatever is in the cat bowls. The other day I took a bowl out to him and actually got to stroke him — he couldn't get enough fuss! However, today it's back to dashing in and out again. Doubtless, we shall end up with three strays eventually — must be something about our front door!

Patricia Starkey, Westonzoyland, Somerset.





SPIKE'S IN HEAVEN!

This is a photo of my rescue cat Spike. I brought him home seven years ago from my local Cats Protection branch at Fishcross in Sauchie.

This is Spike at his happiest, sitting in the middle of his catnip patch. Spike is my best friend and companion — I love him so much.

Christine Carroll, Kincardine, Fife.

AWOL 'CHIP

I recently bought two kittens and had them microchipped when they were spayed at six months old.

Approximately six months later, I was stroking one of my cats when I noticed that she had a matt in her coat around her neck. On closer inspection it looked like a plastic capsule with a little bit of dried blood on it. I took it to the vet who initially laughed but sure enough, when she scanned it, it was definitely my cat's microchip. She even insisted

that I bring my cat in and double-check that the microchip was missing. The vet said she had never heard of a cat losing a microchip. It just made me think that I was so lucky to have spotted the microchip in my cat's fur. My vet does not routinely check for microchips during their normal health checks and so if anything had happened to my cat she would have been unidentifiable.

I would definitely recommend to people that they get their vet to check that their cat hasn't lost theirs.

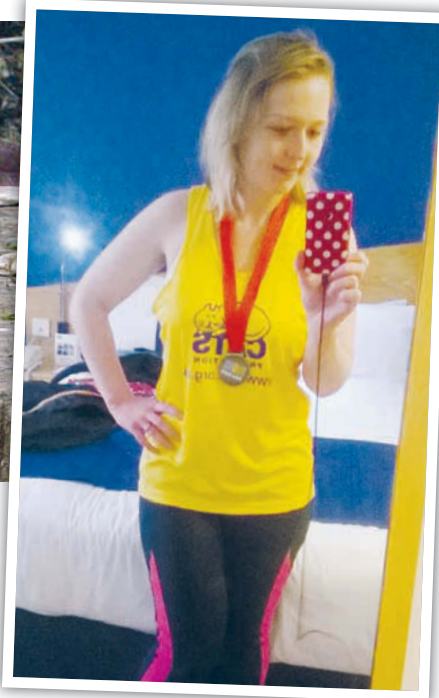
Kate Harrison, Over Whitacre, Coleshill.



RUNNING FOR CATS!

On September 26 I ran in the Big Fun Run in Birmingham for Wolverhampton Cats Protection in my Mouseski's memory, who sadly passed away in June 2012.

I completed the 5km course in 28 minutes with my dad and raised £90 for Cats Protection. I'm so very grateful to everyone who donated to my cause and to his memory as he was a fighter, a very much loved and missed member of the



family. I plan to raise more money for this branch and can't wait to start planning!

Rachel McCosker, Wolverhampton, West Mids.

HELP IS OUT THERE

A little over a year ago my cat Tabby died — she was roughly 16 years old. I took her in on a very cold November night in 1999 and within a couple of hours she gave birth to the first of her three kittens. I was advised to have Tabby neutered as soon as was possible to save her from another traumatic pregnancy.

Now, at that time I was working so the cost of this operation wasn't that bad, mainly due to the fact that the vet let me pay in weekly instalments. Sadly none of the vets in my area use this system of payments — they demand cash upfront which is only fair I suppose, but it doesn't make it easy for those of us who are on state benefits.

At the moment we are looking after two cats; one is a tom who we have been feeding for about two years, the other cat is a queen. Cats Protection kindly neutered these two cats for us due to our financial condition, and they also supply us with cat biscuits to help with the cost of feeding them.

The saying goes 'A cat is not for Christmas it's for life'. As most of us know cats are loving and feeling creatures, and as such they need a loving and caring home. I am sure that if all potential cat owners thought about what they were about to get involved in the cat charities would perhaps not be up to their necks with kittens and the cats who needed attention would surely receive it.

Pauline Graham, Eccles, Mancs.

COSY CAT

This is Ging, one of the three strays that I have taken in over the years. He has the most wonderful temperament and he loves his cushions on the settee!

Debbie Wearing, Erdington, Birmingham.



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Meet the Supervet

Love, hope and redemption — that's what TV vet Noel Fitzpatrick promises every animal who comes through his door.



Oscar 'the bionic cat'.

Those of you who have seen the BBC series 'The Bionic Vet' and the recent series of 'The Supervet' on Channel 4 will be familiar with Noel Fitzpatrick and his unconditional love for all creatures great and small. But what really goes on behind the doors of Noel's referral clinic in leafy Godalming in Surrey?

Not only does the clinic promise first-class veterinary treatment with top vet professionals, but life-changing procedures and a full rehabilitation programme tailor-made to each patient, including one-to-one physiotherapy and hydrotherapy. You won't find a single barred cage in Noel's clinic, as he explains: "It's very important to me that animals have an environment to recover in that's not like a prison."

A SUPERVET IS BORN

An animal lover from a young age, Noel's passion for animal care started while growing up on a farm in rural Ireland, and his 'thunder-bolt moment' came when he sadly tried and failed to save a sick lamb — he then made a pledge to dedicate his life to providing care for animals in need.

"I've felt since I was a kid that cats have feelings and are sentient, and I want to provide them with solace in their time of need and get rid of their pain. My desire to be a vet was born from frustration with animals not getting a fair shot at a pain-free life. I had an appreciation for the animal kingdom and felt it was my duty to do veterinary work. I had a hard time at school and for me it was nicer to be around animals than humans!"

Fast-forward to 2005 when Noel



“THE PRACTICE WAS SET UP TO PROVIDE THE BEST LEVEL OF CARE FOR EVERY ANIMAL THAT COMES IN.”

Noel with Dexter and his new hip joint.

Photos: Bob Atkins

established Fitzpatrick Referrals in its first building, before setting up his cutting-edge clinic in Godalming in 2008. Noel says: “The practice was set up to try and provide the best level of care for every animal of any size that comes in, whether it’s a cat or a dog. It’s very important that every animal’s journey here is world class.”

What Noel very firmly believes is that the treatment chosen is right for the animal, and he will never perform a procedure on a patient if it is not suitable for that animal: “There are three things that are important for me,” he explains. “One is the correct decision for the pet; it’s important to me that people understand that a number of cases are sent away without surgery because it’s not morally right. For example, a 15-year-old cat with joint issues and kidney

problems may not be a good candidate for a hip replacement. We give people advice about what’s best for the cat; I see it as holding their hand and advising them about what’s right for their pet.

“Two, to provide an environment in which cats can recover without affecting their well-being — the psychology is as important as the physiology. We try to provide an environment with no bars and every animal gets social interaction. And third, every patient receives appropriate rehabilitation. Every patient gets regular physiotherapy just like in any human.”

TAILOR-MADE TREATMENT

A cat having hydrotherapy? It might seem a strange concept but at Fitzpatrick’s the hydrotherapy pool is a hub of activity and forms a vital part of

a patient’s rehabilitation programme.

Six-year-old Maine Coon Jeremy is one such patient, who came into Noel’s surgery when he was in a road traffic accident and suffered severe fractures to his right leg. In order to get Jeremy back to health, he had to have serious rehabilitation and spent lots of time in the hydro pool building his strength back up.

One of Noel’s current feline patients is Mel and Barry Cramer’s two-year-old silver mackerel Maine Coon Dexter, who had both his hip joints replaced after being diagnosed with slipped capital femoral epiphysis, a common condition where the top of the femur had fractured. He was originally diagnosed with arthritis, but when he was still in pain his vet referred him to Fitzpatrick’s. Following a discussion with Mel and Barry, Noel

decided that the best option to improve his quality of life was a double hip replacement.

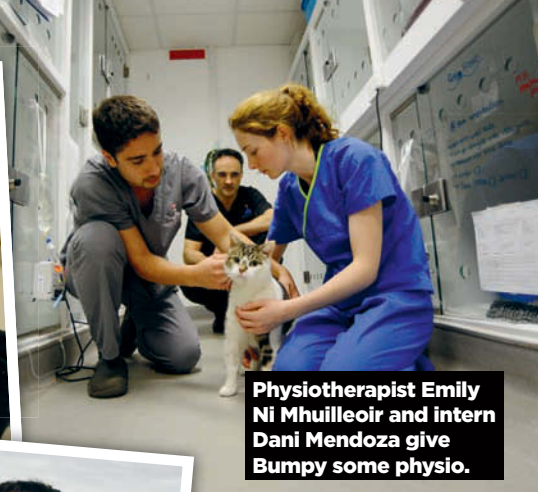
Dexter charms everyone he meets at the clinic, and constantly demands fuss while Noel checks him over, a far cry from the pain-stricken puss he was not long ago. "He's such a sweet cat — I thought I had a special bond with him but he head-butts everyone!" laughs Noel.

Thankful for the care provided by Noel's dedicated team, owner Barry says: "We're so glad we brought him here, there's no two ways about it."

Another of Noel's patients is Bumpy, a cat who is suffering from osteoarthritis. Noel fitted an extracapsular suture (sterile material placed inside the knee to mimic the actions of the cranial cruciate ligament) and an external skeletal fixator to keep his new and improved leg in place. This was removed after six weeks and he is currently undergoing physiotherapy to improve the range of motion in his leg and increase his strength.



Satisfied customers — Barry and Mel with Dexter.



Physiotherapist Emily Ni Mhuilleoir and intern Dani Mendoza give Bumpy some physio.

"I EMPLOY 137 PEOPLE AND THEY WERE ALL HIRED BY ME BECAUSE THEIR HEARTS ARE BIGGER THAN THEIR HEADS!"

One of the most famous patients to come through Noel's doors is undoubtedly Oscar, the 'bionic cat' who lost his back paws after a combine harvester accident near his home in Jersey in 2009. Oscar hit national headlines when Noel came to his aid, becoming the first vet surgeon in the world to perform a double prosthesis, where the black moggy received two artificial feet — implanting a titanium rod into the remains of Oscar's hind legs, on which prosthetic legs could be attached.

Since then, hundreds of animals have passed through the doors for intricate, specialist treatments.

LOVE, HOPE AND REDEMPTION

It's easy to see why Noel has been given the nickname Supervet, as his love for animals and his dedication to improving their quality of life is clear to see.

"Our job is to provide hope for animals — I genuinely want to look after companion animals and provide them with the best available treatment," says Noel. "The reason I do this is because it's important — if someone sits in their home with their cat, that's an important

relationship and we want to show society that the world would be a better place if we treated each other the way we do our pets. I employ 137 people and they were all hired by me because their hearts are bigger than their heads!"

Noel says that he

is keen for cats to be seen as of equal importance as dogs in a veterinary environment: "I believe that both cats and dogs have equal rights in the world — some people see cats as small dogs, but they require a whole different package of medical and surgical management. A practice like mine needs to be completely equipped to deal with cats as an entity in their own right.

"They need specific treatment and I've spent a lot of time over the years working on special techniques for cats."

Noel is the only vet in Europe who has performed a knee replacement on a cat, and the only person in the world to have replaced a cat's knee affected by cancer, and Noel says he is now two years clear of cancer. "I want to be able to give more options than just amputation or death," he adds. "What we want to do is give people love, hope and redemption — Dexter's parents were so grateful and love him unconditionally, that's why we do what we do. We only ever want to do our best for the animals." ■



Noel.



Jeremy undergoing hydrotherapy with Amie Slade.

Photo: courtesy of Fitzpatrick Referrals



Fitzpatrick's bustling preparation area.

Choosing a new kitten or cat this New Year?

New Year is traditionally a time for looking ahead and often starting something new. You may find that now's the perfect time for getting a cat. To help it all go smoothly, it's best to have a good idea of what cat will suit you, your family and your lifestyle. Tesco Bank Pet Insurance and expert advisors, vetfone®, suggest some practical points to consider when choosing a cat.



Different breeds are happier in different kinds of home

Cats can add an interesting new dimension to life, whether you're a family with children, empty-nesters or living alone. The therapeutic effects of owning a cat are well known. They're also a good choice if you live in a smaller house or flat. And there's all the excitement of choosing the perfect name for your fluffy new friend.

Children and kittens are a good mix too as they have the time and energy to enjoy each other's sense of play. They also offer an

opportunity for children to take responsibility for daily care such as feeding and grooming.

For the elderly, cats can make great companions, providing affection and being fairly undemanding and able to exercise themselves.

When choosing a cat, look out for attributes such as being tolerant of loud noises and sudden movements. Ideally they shouldn't be territorial and should like being handled without nipping or clawing. Some breeds,

such as Persians, prefer quiet environments, so it may be an idea to steer clear of them if your children tend to be loud or if you have a very busy household.

When you go to see a cat you're thinking of adopting, take everyone who is going to be living with it. This is an opportunity to see if the cat is comfortable and affectionate with you all. Purring is a good sign. Pet the cat firmly (but not so that you hurt it) to make sure it doesn't bite when touched.

Why not see if there are any suitable 'rescue' cats? Some perfectly amiable cats can end up needing a new home because their owner has died or gone into care.

So you've done your research and you're ready to give a loving home to a cat. Now is also the time to ensure that help will be at hand if your cat has a mishap or isn't feeling its happy self. Tesco Bank Pet Insurance offers three levels of cover, so visit tescobank.com/pet to find out about which product is right for you and your cat. And as a standard benefit with every Tesco Bank Pet Insurance policy, you get 24/7 telephone access to vetfone® and their team of nurses qualified with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. vetfone® is provided by Vetsdirect Ltd.



Some expert advice from
vetfone® on...
choosing a kitten or cat

vetfone™

Kitten:

You need to be aware that the kitten's enthusiastic exploration of its environment means it can be messy and accidentally destructive; your furniture, fittings, ornaments, curtains and carpets, can be played with, climbed on, chewed and scratched. Kittens also enjoy exploring people and playing with them, so feet and hands are vulnerable to being scratched. This is particularly important to bear in mind if you have young children or elderly people in the house.

Cat:

Adult cats can be a lot more sensible than kittens, but once they settle in and their true personality starts to come through you will find they are just as much fun as a kitten, only in a slightly more grown up way! There is a financial advantage in adopting an adult cat in that they are likely to already have been vaccinated, neutered and possibly microchipped. Whilst this will depend where the cat came from, it is worth knowing that many rescue organisations will ensure this is done before the cat is rehomed.

For more information about caring for your cat, please consult your veterinary surgeon.

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Indorex 500mls contains Pyriproxyfen 0.02%, Permethrin (technical) 0.93% and Piperonyl butoxide 1.98%. This product is approved under the Pesticides Regulations 1986 (HSE 6626) for use as directed. Virbac Ltd. IP30 9UP. Tel 01359 243243 Email enquiries@virbac.co.uk www.virbac.co.uk †GfK MAT Data September 2014

Shaping the future of animal health

Virbac

6
TO WIN

CHESHIRE & WAIN LIMITED EDITION COLLARS

Cheshire & Wain is giving six lucky readers the chance to win a limited edition adult cat collar! The collar is handmade in London using speckled bronze-effect brown leather lined with soft, red suede. Safe as well as stylish, all Cheshire & Wain collars incorporate a high quality safety buckle, designed to break apart if your cat gets his collar caught,

as well as brass hardware. The collar costs £45 and is available exclusively from www.cheshireandwain.com or email info@cheshireandwain.com

**We have six limited edition festive collars to give away!*

(*One size: 19-25cms — not suitable for kittens or cats weighing less than 2.5 kgs.)

OVER
£1,000
WORTH OF
PRIZES!20
TO WIN

MEDIKET VALERIAN CAT SPRAY

Medipet's new Valerian Cat Spray is a 100 per cent natural way of dealing with stress and anxiety in your cat. The spray releases valerian and lavender essential oils which help pets to feel at home in any environment. Use before long car journeys, in pet carriers, in new homes and whenever your cat might be feeling anxious. It costs £12.49 for a 250ml spray bottle and is available to buy from www.medi-pet.co.uk or tel. 01594 827755.

**We have 20 spray bottles up for grabs!*

FREEBIES

For your chance to win prizes* turn to page 90 for the entry coupon or enter online at www.yourcat.co.uk/giveaways using the code JYC15GT. The closing date for online and postal entries is January 14, 2015, and you can enter online from December 15, 2014. Good luck! (*UK only)

ACANA REGIONALS CAT FOOD

We have 15 bags of biologically appropriate, high-protein, low-carbohydrate ACANA Regionals cat food up for grabs! The ACANA Regionals range includes Wild Prairie, Pacifica and Grasslands, each replicating the same rich and diverse balance of meats, fruits, vegetables and grasses that your cat would encounter in a wilderness setting. Loaded with authentically fresh and locally sourced ranch-raised meats, cage-free poultry, nest-laid eggs and wild-caught fish, these unique foods feature 70 per cent meat and 30 per cent fruit and vegetables to nourish your cat or kitten completely. Buy a 2.27kg bag for £18.99 (that's just 50p per day based on a 4kg cat) — visit www.AcanaPetFoods.co.uk or tel. 01737 767679. **We have 15 2.27kg bags of ACANA Wild Prairie to give away!*

15
TO WIN1
TO WIN

A YEAR'S SUPPLY OF FRONTLINE® SPOT ON

Fleas are a problem for pet owners throughout the year — they thrive in an environment where they sense warmth and vibrations. Frontline® Spot On helps to keep pets protected from these pesky parasites throughout the year, while also providing protection against ticks. No product will stop new fleas from jumping onto

a pet when they spend time outdoors, but Frontline Spot On will continue to kill any new fleas within 24 hours and ticks within 48 hours for up to five weeks. To ensure ongoing protection, make sure you keep up flea treatments throughout the year. Visit uk.frontline.com for more tips and advice.

**We're giving one reader the chance to win a year's supply of Frontline Spot On and £250 Pets at Home vouchers!*

ENTER ONLINE AT WWW.YOURCAT.CO.UK/GIVEAWAYS

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

The Your Cat Product Awards are now in their eighth year and with that we decided to up the ante — without providing a shortlist, we left it entirely up to you, the reader, to decide which products made the cut, making this our toughest year yet! Are any of your favourites in there? Send us a message on Facebook or Twitter with the hashtag **#ycproductawards** and let us know what you think to the results!



BEST INSURANCE

WINNER: Petplan

Achieving the Best Insurance award for the seventh consecutive year is Petplan!

Ingrid Wakefield, acting head of marketing for Petplan, comments: "To be independently voted number one provider by pet owners is hugely important to us, particularly as this is the seventh time we have been awarded this honour. We were the first to offer lifetime cover with our Covered for Life® policies, and this combined with over 37 years' experience in the insurance marketplace, showcases that we truly understand what pet owners need and want from their pet insurance."

Highly commended: Tesco and Animal Friends.



BEST SPECIALIST CAT FOOD

WINNER: Royal Canin Maine Coon

Winning the award for the second year in a row, Royal Canin Maine Coon helps maintain a healthy heart through adapted mineral content and a formula rich in nutrients with antioxidant properties. An exclusive combination of specific amino acids, vitamins and fatty acids help maintain skin and coat health while the 'Emerald 10' tailor-made kibble is adapted to the Maine Coon's unique large jaw to encourage them to chew, which helps support oral hygiene. Emma Greaves, marketing executive at Royal Canin, says: "We are delighted to have won the Best Specialist Cat Food award for our Maine Coon diet and we would especially like to thank the Your Cat readers for voting."

Highly commended: Arden Grange Sensitive and Hills T/D.

BEST DRY CAT FOOD

WINNER: Arden Grange Adult

Arden Grange has been awarded the prize for Best Dry Cat Food for its Adult diet, which is hypo-allergenic and free from wheat gluten, beef, soya, dairy products, artificial flavours, colours and preservatives.

Wendy Stephens, Arden Grange co-founder, comments: "We are thrilled to accept this award, in recognition of our commitment to optimum feline nutrition. We are an independent, family-run business and to receive this national award is a great achievement. I would like to thank our faithful customers for voting for Arden Grange — we are so grateful."

Highly commended: Go-Cat and James Wellbeloved.

BEST WET CAT FOOD

WINNER: Felix As Good As It Looks

Felix has taken the title for Best Wet Cat Food once again, making this the third year in a row. Specially prepared with tender meaty or fishy pieces in a succulent jelly, your cat will find Felix As Good As It Looks irresistible!

Hayley Lynch from Purina says: "Knowing that cats enjoy Felix As Good As It Looks is really important to us and we are so pleased to have won this award for the third time in a row this year. So, a huge thank you to all Your Cat readers and their cats for voting for us."

Highly commended: Applaws and Purina Gourmet.



BEST FLEA PRODUCT FOR HOME

WINNER: Virbac Indorex

Another repeat winner, Virbac Indorex is an easy to use, odourless spray which kills adult fleas and prevents the development of their eggs and larvae. When used in conjunction with a monthly spot-on treatment on the pet, it helps keep homes flea-free for up to 12 months.

Virbac marketing manager Simon Boulton says: "This latest endorsement from the readers of Your Cat confirms Indorex's consistently outstanding performance as an environmental flea control solution. We're absolutely delighted that it has won in its category again!"
Highly commended: RIP Fleas, Acclaim and Johnson's 4Fleas Spray.

BEST CAT TREAT

WINNER: Dreamies

Dreamies has won the award for Best Cat Treat for the third year running! Aimed at cat lovers who seek variety to surprise their cats, Dreamies is a tasty treat for cats of all ages.

Clementine Wilding-Taylor, senior brand manager at Mars Petcare UK, says: "We are overjoyed to have again been awarded the Best Cat Treat and Product I Can't Live Without by the Your Cat readers! Dreamies are delicious treats developed to help cat owners have fun moments of connection with their pets and give them an extra bit of love — so it's fantastic to be recognised in this way."
Highly commended: Arden Grange Tasty Liver Treat, Webbox Cats Delight Sticks and Whiskas Temptations.

PRODUCT I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

WINNER: Dreamies

Winning the award for the second year in a row, Dreamies also takes the title for the Product I Can't Live Without, in association with the Pet Industry Federation, as well as winning the award for Best Cat Treat!

Highly commended: Arden Grange Tasty Liver Treat and ProtectaPuss Fencing.

BEST CAT LITTER

WINNER: Catsan Hygiene

Another repeat winner, Catsan Hygiene cat litter is specifically developed to provide your cat with clean, fresh and hygienic litter that rapidly absorbs moisture. Elen Gyulnazaryan, brand manager at Mars Petcare UK, says: "Winning the Best Cat Litter award for a third consecutive year is a reflection of our ongoing commitment to providing high quality cat litter. We're thrilled to have won and would like to thank all the readers of Your Cat."
Highly commended: World's Best Cat Litter and ÖkoPlus.

BEST FLEA PRODUCT FOR PET

WINNER: Frontline®

Winning the award for Best Flea Product for Pet for the eighth year running, Frontline® Spot On is a long lasting, easy to use and water resistant product designed to kill fleas and ticks on application.

Christine Male, marketing manager for Frontline, comments: "This is a very important award for us to win as it was voted for by the readers. We are committed to the health and welfare of animals and will continue to strive to provide the best advice."
Highly commended: Advantage and Advocate.

BEST WORMING PRODUCT

WINNER: Drontal

Drontal has taken the title for Best Worming Product once again in this year's product awards, proving it is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to banishing worms. It is the only wormer that kills every type of intestinal worm commonly found in UK cats, and can be given with or without food. There's no need for your cat to fast before or after treatment, making this a fool-proof product to use.

Tracy Dawson, product manager at Drontal, comments: "We are absolutely delighted that Drontal has won in the Your Cat Product Awards again! It is a great product and we are glad that so many cats are being kept happy and healthy with Drontal."

Highly commended: Advocate, Milbemax and Profender.

It's hard enough being a cat



Cats really have it tough. Sitting around all day, sleeping, having their tummies rubbed. It's not easy.

That's why our range of **award-winning grain free** diets make it simpler than ever for your feline friend to get the food they deserve – nutritionally complete, super premium and hypoallergenic.

In fact, the hardest thing for them could be choosing a place to snooze away the hours before meal time.

A big thank you to all the readers of **Your Cat** for voting!



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Craft

Pawprint patchwork blanket

Knit your cat a cosy blanket to see
in the winter months in style!

YOU WILL NEED:

- ☐ Yarn: approx 125g of colourful acrylic DK in as many colours as you like
- ☐ 4mm knitting needles
- ☐ One tapestry needle to sew squares together
- ☐ Knitting, purling and basic sewing skills!

Abbreviations:

K = Knit, P = Purl

Easy for
beginners

PLAIN PATTERN

(MAKE 9)

Cast on 23 sts
Rows 1 to 3. K across
Row 4. K2, p to last 2 sts, k2
Row 5 and all odd numbered rows. K across
Row 6 and all even numbered rows. K2, p to last 2 sts to row 34.
Rows 35 to 37. K across
Cast off knitwise.

SMALL PAW PATTERN (MAKE 10)

Cast on 22 sts
Rows 1 to 3. K across
Row 4. K2, p to last 2 sts, k2
Row 5 and all odd numbered rows. K across
Row 6 and all even numbered rows K2, p to last 2 sts, k2 to row 10.
Rows 12 and 14. K2, p6, k2, p2, k2, p6, k2
Row 16. K2, p3, k2, p8, k2, p3, k2
Row 18. K2, p3, k2, p2, k4, p2, k2, p3, k2
Row 20. K2, p6, k6, p6, k2
Row 22. K2, p5, k8, p5, k2
Row 24. K2, p6, k6, p6, k2
Row 25. K across
Row 26. K2, p to last 2 sts, k2
Repeat rows 25-26 to row 34
Rows 35 to 37. K across
Cast off knitwise.

MEDIUM PAW PATTERN

(MAKE 9)

Cast on 22 sts
Rows 1 to 3. K across
Row 4. K2, p to last 2 sts, k2
Row 5 and all odd numbered rows. K across
Row 6 and all even numbered rows K2, p to last 2 sts, k2 to row 8.
Row 10. K2, p6, k2, p2, k2, p6, k2
Row 12. K2, p5, k3, p2, k3, p5, k2
Row 14. (K2, p2) across

Row 16. K2, p2, k3, p8, k3, p2, k2
Row 18. K2, p3, k2, p2, k4, p2, k2, p3, k2
Row 20. K2, p3, k1, p2, k6, p2, k1, p3, k2
Row 22. K2, p5, k8, p5, k2
Row 24. K2, p4, k10, p4, k2
Row 26. K2, p3, k12, p3, k2
Row 28. K2, p5, k8, p5, k2
Row 30. K2, p7, k4, p7, k2
Row 31. K across
Row 32. K2, p to last 2 sts, k2
Repeat row 31-32 once
Rows 34 to 37. K across
Cast off knitwise.

LARGE PAW PATTERN (MAKE 8)

Cast on 22 sts
Rows 1 to 3. K across
Row 4. K2, p to last 2 sts, k2
Row 5 and all odd numbered rows. K across
Row 6. K2, p5, k2, p4, k2, p5, k2
Rows 8 and 10. K2, p4, k4, p2, k4, p4, k2
Row 12. K2, p2, k1, p2, k2, p4, k2, p2, k1, p2, k2
Row 14. K2, p1, k3, p10, k3, p1, k2
Row 16. K2, p1, k3, p2, k6, p2, k3, p1, k2
Row 18. K2, p2, k2, p1, k8, p1, k2, p2, k2
Row 20. K2, p5, k8, p5, k2
Row 22. K2, p4, k10, p4, k2
Row 24. K2, p3, k12, p3, k2
Row 26. K2, p2, k14, p2, k2
Row 28. K2, p3, k12, p3, k2
Row 30. K2, p4, k10, p4, k2
Row 31. K across
Row 32. K2, p to last 2 sts, k2
Repeat row 31-32 once
Rows 35 to 37. K across
Cast off knitwise.

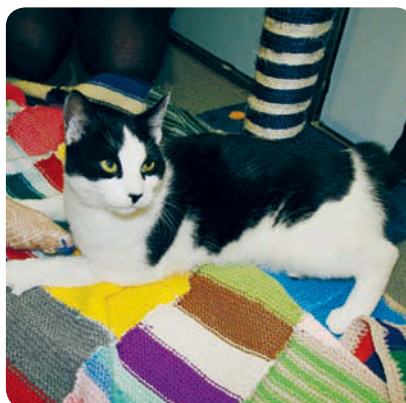
ALMOST THERE...

Once all the squares are finished, darn in all the ends, arrange them into any pattern you like and sew the squares together!

Blanket appeal

If your cat will be cosy enough this winter, spare a thought for the animals at Battersea Dogs and Cats Home. Send your creation to Blanket Appeal, 4 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4AA. Or pop along to the London cattery's monthly Knitting Kittens Club where crafty cat lovers get together to create knitted goodies for the cats in the charity's care. The next session is on January 14 from 5pm to 8pm — visit www.battersea.org.uk/knittingkittens

Features writer Rachel joined the charity for a knitting session earlier this month — read all about it at www.yourcat.co.uk/blog With thanks to Battersea and Lauren O'Farrell (www.whodunnknit.com) for this pattern.



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CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

Christmas with James and Bob...

James was talking to Jill Eckersley.

We catch up with the owner of Britain's most famous feline, finding out how much life has changed for the once homeless pair.

Walking around London's Covent Garden with James Bowen and Street Cat Bob these days is like strolling round with a rock star. Fans of all ages keep wanting to chat to James, stroke Bob, talk about their own cats and take photos. There are even a few tourists who need to have it explained to them that this is Britain's most famous cat...

It wasn't always like this. As James explains in his latest book 'A Gift From Bob', it isn't all that long since he was sleeping on a Covent Garden street, being moved on by unsympathetic shopkeepers and looked at by passers-by as though he was 'a piece of trash'. Until Bob came into his life back in 2007, Christmas meant very little to James. He had a troubled family background and a lonely, rootless childhood, eventually spiralling into homelessness and drug addiction. The sort of Christmas we all dream about just didn't happen for him. Not until Bob's arrival changed his life.

"I can't believe the impact we have made," James says proudly. "It's not often that someone like me gets to write their life story — the story of someone who had slipped through the cracks in society — and has a chance to open people's eyes and ears to what life is like on the margins. There's so much pressure for people to have a good time and a happy Christmas. I want to make sure, now, that all the people who are not having a good time get noticed too."

This year James will be spending

Christmas in his North London flat, with his best friend Belle, and of course Bob.

Without his furry companion, James says that none of this would ever have been possible. When he talks about Christmases on the breadline, it's hard for most of us to imagine what it must have been like: "Having Bob in my life, writing the books and becoming well-known, has taken the worry and anxiety out of Christmas," he says. "I remember a very snowy winter a few years ago when the temperature in my little flat was icy

"HAVING BOB IN MY LIFE HAS TAKEN THE WORRY OUT OF CHRISTMAS."

cold. Both the gas and electricity were on a meter, which made a bleeping noise when my credit was running out. I was desperately trying to work out if I could sell enough copies of 'The Big Issue' in one or two days to make enough money to pay for the meter. If I couldn't, the food I had put in the fridge might have to be thrown away and I wouldn't be able to cook or have a hot shower, let alone have the heating on. Bob and I would just have to wrap ourselves in blankets."

Times were so tough for James and Bob that they went out into the snow, hoping that the Christmas shoppers would be generous enough to buy the magazines or throw a few spare coins James's way in return for a song.

"It was about survival, that was all,"

James remembers. "Although there are people out there who just look straight through you, there are warm-hearted and generous people too. When I was busking at Angel tube station, some of my regulars would give me Christmas cards and slip money or vouchers in, and I found myself dreaming about sticky toffee pudding!"

All that has changed now, of course, and this year James and Bob are looking forward to a comfortable Christmas.

"Ever since Bob came to live with me I have begun to understand that Christmas feeling," James says. "Partly, it's because he enjoys it and always manages to make me laugh. He is always absolutely mesmerised by Christmas tree lights and loves to watch Belle and I decorate our tree. Bob and I will enjoy our Christmas dinner but I don't forget — and I never will — that there are people and animals out there for whom the most basic Christmas meal is a feast. No one should have to feel like that and we are happy to support anyone who helps them turn their lives around, the way this little man has helped me. Without him, I wouldn't have anything." ■



'A Gift From Bob' is published by Hodder & Stoughton, priced at £12.99 (hardback) and £4.68 (Kindle). We have five hardback copies up for grabs — turn to page 90!



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Adult has been
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Best Specialist
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Maine Coons are unique cats so deserve a unique food. Our Kitten Maine Coon 36 is specifically formulated for kittens up to 15 months and gestating or nursing queens. The adapted nutritional profile contributes to healthy development of the kitten's powerful bone structure and helps maintain healthy joints during their prolonged growth phase. It also helps promote digestive tolerance and support healthy natural defences.

Adult Maine Coon 31 helps maintain a healthy heart through adapted mineral content and a formula rich in nutrients with antioxidant properties. The larger kibble promotes optimal oral hygiene and is perfectly suited to the Maine Coon's large jaw.



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WORKING CAT

Legz the landlord

Barman, best buddy, petty thief — three-legged Legz is certainly in charge at a London pub, and his hard work has even earned him a national award!

The Charlotte Despard pub in Kentish Town, North London, is frequented by punters from far and wide, not only to sample the ales and soak up the atmosphere, but to make friends with a very special three-legged employee — or should that be ‘landlord’?

Five-year-old ginger moggy Legz was put forward for the Outstanding Rescue Cat category in Cats Protection’s National Cat Awards in 2014, and was chosen as the worthy winner by Saffron Sprackling, lead singer of popular 90s band Republica.

Legz came to live at the pub after owners Chris Sparks and Amber Knight spotted a video of him online. He had been hit by a car and taken in by Cats Protection’s North London adoption

centre in nearby Archway. Sadly, he lost his leg in the accident, but that hasn’t slowed him down!

“After reading his story and watching the video, we went to see him,” Chris explains. “We told the charity staff that we had a pub and asked if they thought he would be ok for that environment, and they said yes! He is very chatty, fun-loving and inquisitive — they profile their cats extremely well!”

Part of the furniture

Legz moved into the pub in February 2014, and since day one there has been an endless stream of new friends coming through the pub doors to give him plenty of fuss, and Chris and Amber say that even non-cat lovers can’t resist his charm!

“He has too many friends to mention in the pub; he’s a constant talking point and acts as our TV as he is constantly skidding round corners or falling off barstools!” says Chris. “He knows who the cat people are and he even has treats left for him by people! He’s got friends all over the area and people come from miles away to see him — not to see me or Amber, but Legz!”

“He waits by the door as we enter the pub every day with a different toy. He wants food really, but he is prepared

to work for his pay with 10 minutes of running around and cuddling first. He’s very inquisitive; you can’t even go to the toilet on your own! If I don’t keep the door open he miaows like mad until I open the door again!”

“A lot of the time he sits on the bar stool and dig his claws in so he can’t be shifted! He’s a bit naughty though as he sharpens his claws on the table and chair legs!”

Legz with Amber.

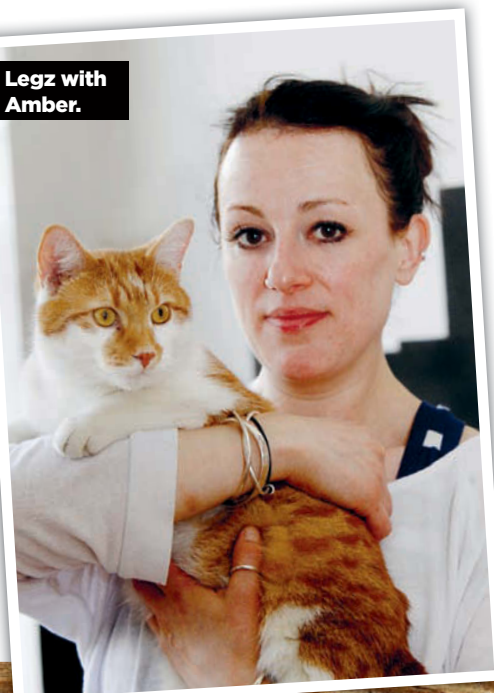


Photo: courtesy of Anna Branthwaite



A helping paw

Immediately asserting himself as king of the castle, Chris says that Legz likes to be involved in every aspect of the day-to-day running of the pub: "Legz has learned our daily timetable and helps wherever he can — usually by being directly under your feet or desperately trying to get through the door at the same time, or maybe he is in the box you are emptying or has a paw in the bin you are emptying! But he is no good at decorating — we end up with paint everywhere!"

Sometimes the moggy's curious nature

gets the better of him as Chris laughs that once the nosy feline followed him into the gents toilet without him realising and ended up being in there for two hours!

As well as being a helpful but demanding landlord, it seems that Legz has developed kleptomaniac tendencies: "If something goes missing in the pub — headphones, receipts, clips, lighters, £10 notes — all we have to do is run back CCTV and find out where Legz has hidden them!" Chris laughs.

Legz has proved such a force to be reckoned with in the pub that every Tuesday, he has his own feature called 'Legz Selects' where he chooses a beer with his nose and the pub offers the chosen tipple with 40p off! When the pub is busy, Legz will wander behind the bar and lie in everyone's way so he can enjoy the warm air coming from the back of the fridges!

Award-winning puss

Due to his incredible zest for life, Chris and Amber entered Legz into Cats Protection's National Cat Awards Outstanding Rescue Cat category, beating off stiff competition to take the title, and Chris says that he has inspired many locals to adopt rescue cats of their own and even one to start volunteering for a cat charity.

At the August awards ceremony, singer Saffron Sprackling said: "Though Legz has lost one leg, it hasn't stopped him from befriending people and bringing together the community in his local pub with his personality and charm. He has also inspired people to rescue other cats

as they can see he is a shining example of a rescue cat bringing happiness into people's lives! He is a true ambassador for rescue cats and Cats Protection!"

As part of his prize Legz was given a year's supply of cat food, which Chris and Amber donated to the charity's North London adoption centre as a thank you for their support. ■



"HE HAS
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A RESCUE
CAT BRINGING
HAPPINESS INTO
PEOPLE'S LIVES!"



REAL LIFE

I don't let my disability stop me showing

Becky Woods doesn't let her debilitating medical condition stand in the way of her doing the thing she loves — showing her seven cats! Here she tells her inspirational story.

I was born with osteogenesis imperfecta type 3, or brittle bones, which was picked up when I was born as I came out with a broken leg and broken arm. I was the first baby to be born with the condition at Stafford Hospital and my parents were told that I wouldn't live past a few days old. Then I lived past a few days, then a few months, and now 27 years later I'm still here!

I've broken over 250 bones in my body over the years — the last one was in January last year after I broke my leg jumping in my sleep. It took around a year and a half to heal but I know my own body and my limits.

EXTENDING THE FAMILY

I used to live with my best friend and

we had a moggy called Kitty, then when my friend moved out I decided to get another cat as a companion for Kitty. I did some research and the breed that kept coming back to me was the British Shorthair. I'd always wanted a Maine Coon, but I thought they might be too big for me, and I wanted something a bit easier to handle for my first cat.

I found a breeder with six-month-old British Shorthair kittens and I had to choose between a big chunky one or a lilac tabby. The chunky one had a longer nose so he couldn't be a show cat but I fell in love with him anyway — I brought him home and that's how I got Jaxsen! He's as good as gold and he's always been a lap cat. I felt so bad for not choosing the lilac tabby, but I thought

Becky with Jaxsen.





Jaxsen.



Harlem.



Finn.

I wouldn't be able to manage two cats yet. Two months later I entered my first cat show in Coventry and Jaxsen won first place in the kitten class and Best in Show as a household pet! I was so, so pleased!

At the show I met his breeder again and she said that she was still trying to find a home for the other lilac kitten, so I said I'd

have her! That's how Maddy came to be with me. Sadly, I've had to rehome her recently as she just didn't get on very well in a multi-cat household.

Then I found Ellis at the same breeder. I had to wait until he was three months old to bring him home and while I was waiting, I went to a Maine Coon Cat Club show. I'd previously been put off by all the grooming preparation for shows, but then I got talking to a chap with a Maine Coon and it turns out they just need a good brush with some talcum powder and a bath, and you're done!

One day I was just having a look online at Maine Coons and I found Hudson. I snapped him up and he's the most child-like cat I've ever met — he goes around the house shouting at me if he wants something!

Four weeks later Ellis arrived, and then

Hudson's breeder advertised a boy kitten who was suitable for the pet section as he has a fault with his tail, so that's how Finn came home with me!

My mum worries about me with Finn

"I'VE GOT NOTHING TO MOAN ABOUT — I'M HERE AND I'M STILL ALIVE! THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO ARE WORSE OFF THAN ME."

because he's so big — he's just over 6.5kg — and he looks like he'd be a handful, but he's not naughty at all, none of them are. They are such calm cats — I couldn't ask for a better bunch.

Now with six cats at home, I wasn't going to have another cat, but a friend of mine breeds Chinchillas and I either wanted Harlem, a golden Persian boy, or Lyberty, a female silver Chinchilla. But I couldn't choose so ended up with both!

Not all of my cats are show cats — Kitty doesn't show because she doesn't have the right temperament and Harlem hates being shown so I don't make him.

DON'T LET IT HOLD YOU BACK

Lots of people on Facebook ask me how I manage to care for so many cats, and when they visit my house they are shocked to see the house isn't what you

would think; you can't tell that there are seven cats living here at all! I could never imagine not having them — because I can't work they keep me busy.

I'm hoping to go out with the

Governing Council of the Cat Fancy and be a steward. Most people in the cat world are quite supportive — I've met a lot of people and if they haven't heard of my condition, it gives

them knowledge too. You don't see many people with disabilities at shows and sometimes I feel like I'm in the way in my wheelchair, but it's a fantastic hobby.

A lot of people say 'you don't moan', but I've got nothing to moan about — I'm here and I'm still alive! There are a lot of people who are worse off than me. I do a lot of charity work too — I'm an ambassador for Variety (a charity supporting disabled children) and someone even messaged me to say how inspirational I am! I hear that all the time and I always think 'I'm just me!'.

A lot of my disabled friends are scared to leave the house and it's sad — I'd encourage people to go out and do what you want as you only live once. Just because you're disabled doesn't mean you can't do something you enjoy — and don't let anyone put you off! ■



Ellis.



Hudson.



Lyberty.



The cubs at two months old.



The cubs at six weeks old.



Saving the world's most endangered cats

Amur leopards are in real danger of becoming extinct — but now a Warwickshire zoo is playing a part in keeping the species going.



About the Amur leopard

Lives: China and south-east Russia.

Habitat: coniferous and broadleaf forests, mountains.

Diet: animals, insects and small mammals.

Height: 1.5 metres.

Weight: 43-48 kg.

Life Span: 15-20 years.

Amur leopards are the world's most endangered big cats with less than 40 left in the wild in their natural habitat in Amur, between China and Russia. And the wider picture is also bleak, with just 200 Amur leopards in zoos across the world, 20 of which are in the UK. But in a huge step forward for the species, Twycross Zoo announced the

birth of two Amur leopard cubs right here in the UK — a female named Arina and male Alexei — to mum Kristen and dad Davidoff in June 2014.

Twycross is part of the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP), which acts like modern online dating with experts analysing data from captive Amur leopards from zoos across Europe, looking for suitable breeding matches. Kristen and Davidoff's cubs are a product of this scheme, and the pair were matched back in January 2013 when Kristen arrived from the Czech Republic.

Dr Charlotte Macdonald, head of life sciences at Twycross Zoo, says: "The introduction between Kristen and Davidoff went incredibly well; we initially gave them visual access to each other through mesh, then once they were being friendly with each other we opened the door. Amazingly, they went straight to each other and settled down together in the same bed! It was love at first sight!"

To make the leopards' environment as close as possible to their natural habitat, Twycross keepers set



The cubs with their mum at six weeks old.

Did you know?

An Amur leopard's coat can grow up to 7cm in length during winter!

"Without zoos this species won't exist in 10 years time — people should support their local zoo or we'll lose them forever."



Arina plays with mum's tail!

up a birthing den for Kristen as soon as she became pregnant so she could go in there whenever she was ready to have her cubs.

"Amur leopards, like most big cats, are very shy and secretive so we try to mimic that for them," Charlotte explains. "It's important to have no disturbances; even Kristen's keepers don't disturb her or her cubs! At feeding time they leave her food in the area next to her pen so she can eat when she's ready. We've also set up CCTV in there to keep an eye on her."

Kristen and her cubs were left to bond for their first eight weeks and then the cubs were given their first vaccinations and a quick health check. "They've been little chunks since day one! I could see their fat little tummies on the CCTV!" laughs Charlotte. "Kristen is a first-time mum and she's taken to it really well

which makes it all the more amazing — it

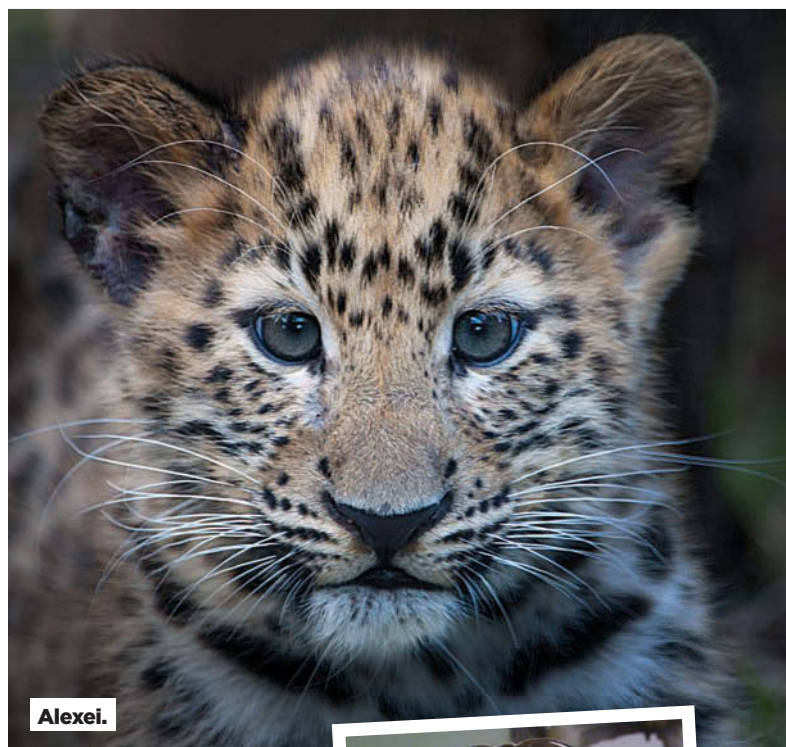
just shows that she's a natural."

Dad has not been introduced to the cubs yet as in the wild the mother would rear her cubs alone.

Back to the wild

In the wild, the main threats to the species are hunting and diseases such as canine distemper, as Charlotte explains: "The trouble is, a lot of the native villages in the area have feral dogs which carry diseases. There are programmes in place to raise awareness in the Amur area and with its villagers."

As well as participating in the EEP, Twycross Zoo is also funding research by Wildlife Vets International, who work to save endangered species using veterinary expertise, and are currently studying the population in the wild in Russia. The team is currently working to set up a reproduction programme with a breeding centre where



Alexei.

the leopards won't have any human contact, so they will be able to be released back in the wild.

It is hoped that Arina and Alexei and their future cubs will be a part of that programme. "Within the next decade Amur leopards could be extinct, but with these captive leopards we may help to prevent that," Charlotte explains.

Dr John Lewis, veterinary director of Wildlife Vets International, explains: "We don't know how many of the Amur leopards remaining in the wild are young or old, male or female. So if the population has too many males, or too many older individuals, this can impact on the species' chances of breeding successfully. Zoo breeding programmes are fundamental to protecting and saving species that are close to extinction in the wild."

Charlotte adds: "Modern zoos have a massive role to play in the conservation of endangered species. Without zoos this species won't exist in 10 years time — all the more reason why people should support their local zoo or we'll lose them forever."



Dr Charlotte Macdonald.

Help the leopards

If you want to help Twycross Zoo keep these beautiful big cats alive, one of the simplest ways is to 'adopt' an animal for a year. For just a £25 adoption fee, you will receive a soft toy of your adopted species, an adoption certificate, photograph and fact sheet, plus tickets to visit the zoo.

You can also become a member of Twycross for just £45 a year, giving you unlimited entry to the zoo. Your contribution will help to support the conservation, education and research of endangered species. To find out more visit www.twycrosszoo.org or tel. 0844 474 1777. ■

Did you know?

Amur leopard males and females interact for just a few days during breeding season, when they mate up to 30 times a day!



Arina at two months old.

Photo: courtesy of Gillian Day

On the road with Blue Cross

Rachel Grafton heads out with the Blue Cross mobile clinic to help London's pets in need.

Offering veterinary services to London-based owners, Blue Cross's mobile clinic travels to four city locations — Hackney Town Hall car park, Walthamstow Town Square, Islington Green and Southwark Park — every week, providing free or discounted treatments to pets from low-income families.

Established in 2004, the mobile vet service provides health checks, treatments for straightforward problems, worm and flea treatments, vaccinations, microchipping, and shares advice on responsible pet ownership, in exchange for a small donation to the charity. For more serious conditions, or if an animal needs further testing, the owner will be referred to the charity's hospital in Victoria, London.

Offering advice

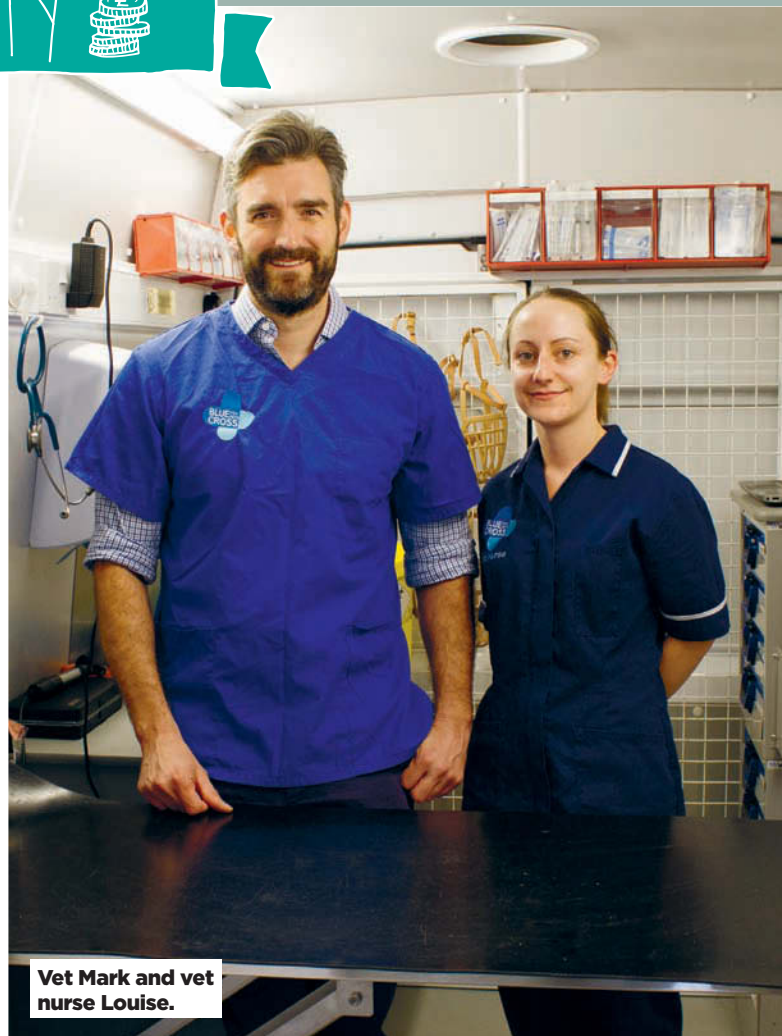
I headed to the Blue Cross mobile van parked at Islington Green — coincidentally the same van used by James Bowen and Street Cat Bob when they first found each other living on the streets — where I was greeted by chief vet Mark Bossley and vet nurse Louise Newman. The waiting area — the surrounding park — is already chock-a-block with patients and their owners.

"We offer lots of treatments in exchange for a small donation, but it's whatever people can afford," Mark explains. "We can also do weight checks and post operation checks if an animal has recently had surgery — it saves owners having to make the trip back to the Blue Cross Victoria hospital with their pets.

"The more animals that come to us as a preventative appointment the better, as they don't become an emergency appointment for the Victoria hospital."

The clinic's self-confessed 'admin man' Jamie Wood then speaks to each owner waiting to be seen to register their pets and check their benefit eligibility, of which they are required to bring proof.

The first patient of the day is five-month-old kitten Mooshie, who has visited the mobile clinic for her second vaccinations. Mark gives Mooshie a treat before she has her jabs and gives her a thorough health check.



Vet Mark and vet nurse Louise.

Mooshie's owner is told to bring her back in a year for a check-up, and Mark advises him to make sure he gets Mooshie neutered.

A relaxed environment

"The nice thing about the mobile clinic is that it's not like going to the vet," says Louise. "It doesn't look like a hospital with lots of scary noises and smells. We try to provide as much hands-off care as we can, and try not to restrain pets as it will stress them out."

Our next patient is four-year-old moggy Princess who comes in with owner Sandra Harrison after developing an abscess on her neck after she was attacked by another cat. Mark gives the wound a good clean which Princess bravely endures.

The next patient is adorable 13-week-old kitten Mya who is also in for her second round of vaccinations with her owner Amanda Joidan. "I'm bringing her in for her vaccinations so she can go outside if she



Did you know?

James and Street Cat Bob have raised over £21,000 for Blue Cross to thank them for Bob's care in the early days!

wants to; she's driving me mad being cooped up inside at the moment!" Amanda laughs. Mya is a brave little soul who receives her jab without too much fuss and is also given a worming tablet by Louise before they go on their way.

Up next is Kato, who was



Milo came in to be microchipped.



Mya has a check-up.



Kevin with Milly and Shady.

rehomed from the RSPCA by his new owners Clare Lewis and Steve Holder. He is petrified as he has never been outside before, but Clare and Steve have brought him in today as he has some blood in his stools and itchy ears. Mark says it is likely that Kato has an inflamed bowel, so he advises his owners to feed him a bland food diet, and he is also given a wormer and medicine to settle his stomach.

Allergies and emergencies

After lunch, a slightly more unusual duo comes in as Kevin Casey has brought in his 12-year-old moggy Shady the Lady and six-year-old Rottweiler Milly. They are both in for treatment for skin allergies. "They are the best of friends; they will lie down together in my lap and cuddle each other. They get along great!" he says.

They both receive a steroid injection from Mark, and Milly charms us by rolling on her back for tummy rubs while she waits!

A very stylish cat who comes in for microchipping is three-year-old Persian-cross Milo, who owner Krystal Payne brings to the park in a very fetching green cat buggy.

"He's an indoor cat so he's a bit nervous," Krystal explains.

The final feline of the day is black and white moggy Rocco, who was rescued by her owner Ashleigh Hughes after she came across a group of men making two cats fight.

Poor Rocco has been off her food and has pus coming out of her back end. Mark quickly finds that she has a high temperature, racing heartbeat and her womb feels full. She is diagnosed with pyometra, an infection of the uterus, and Mark tells Ashleigh to take her straight to the Victoria hospital. At the hospital,

Rocco underwent emergency surgery to remove her womb. Luckily, the operation went smoothly and she was allowed home the following day. Only unneutered females are at risk from pyometra, which can be very serious — if the infection gets into the bloodstream it can be fatal. The only prevention against it is neutering, which is just one reason why Blue Cross strongly encourages all owners to neuter their pets.

A worrying case to end the day, but several other pets received either free or discounted care for their pets thanks to the Blue Cross's hard-working mobile team. ■



The mobile clinic team.

Find a clinic

Blue Cross's mobile clinics are open from 10am to 12pm and 1.30pm to 3.30pm at Southwark Park (Mondays), Hackney Town Hall car park (Wednesdays), Islington Green (Thursdays) and Walthamstow Town Square (Fridays). The clinics work on a first come first served basis, so arrive as early as you can — and remember to take proof of your benefits. To find out more about the charity's clinics and to see if you qualify, visit www.bluecross.org.uk or tel. 0300 777 1897.

Did you know?

Blue Cross's mobile clinics treats around 1,500 pets every year!

Do you qualify?

To qualify for treatment from the Blue Cross mobile clinics, you need to live within a catchment area which covers the following postcodes: SE1, 5, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, E1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, N1, 4, 5, 7, 15, 16, 19, EC1, 2, 3, 4, NW1, W1 and WC2.

You also need to be on one of the following means tested benefits:

- Pension credit (not the standard state retirement pension)
- Housing benefit
- Income support
- Working tax credit (not child tax credit)
- Council tax benefit (not 25 per cent single person discount)
- Jobseeker's allowance (income based only)
- Employment and support allowance (ESA).

We need you!

The cats of Liverpool have a valuable lifeline, but what happens when that lifeline needs help too?

Based in the Merseyside town of Huyton, Liverpool Cat Welfare is a small, non-profit charity run by dedicated volunteers who rescue, neuter and rehome unwanted cats and kittens in the area, as well as feeding and neutering feral colonies and caring for poorly cats. The charity also runs a shop on Liverpool's High Street to help raise extra funds for the cats in its care.

But the charity's hard work is under threat as the roof of its isolation unit has developed leaks and has now reached the status of being condemned, not to mention the discovery of asbestos in the roof.

Spokesman Colette Basley says: "Replacing the roof is going to be extremely expensive — in excess of £10,000! This is due to the fact that the roof contains asbestos, the removal and disposal of which can only be done by a licensed roofer. But it is imperative if we are to ensure the safety of the cats, volunteers and visitors alike, and provide continuity of our charity's prime objectives."

Volunteer Jacqui Cubbin says: "We want the isolation unit to eventually become a medical centre for the cats who need medical treatment, but we can't do anything until we have the roof fixed. It's such a waste because we have all this space up there that could be put to good use."

"IT IS IMPERATIVE IF WE ARE TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THE CATS..."

Before work can begin, Liverpool Cat Welfare also has to rehome the 70 cats and kittens in its care. Just some of the cats currently looking for homes are five-year-old Rose and her adorable kittens Connor, Lexi, Sky, Belle and Max, who were found in a nearby garden when they were less than two weeks old.

Two of the charity's longest stays were four-year-old brothers Woody and Buzz, who were in the care of Liverpool Cat Welfare for almost two years. The feline

brothers first came into the charity's care as ferals, and Jacqui laughs that staff referred to them as the Kray twins, after the notorious London gangsters, to start with: "They were just so wild and scratched us like mad!" Luckily both have now calmed down and have managed to find loving new homes.

To give their cats plenty of enrichment, the charity has an open garden area created by volunteers who gave up their own time to create it. The garden contains a huge variety of bushes and plants to attract insects, and even an aviary full of rescued pet birds which gives the cats hours of entertainment.

Jacqui says: "What cats want to look out at nothing? By creating such a busy garden, not only do we have wildlife coming in, but we also have our aviary full of rescue birds, which is like live TV for cats!"

However, without your support the charity simply cannot continue to provide a safe home for cats in need. If any of our readers would like to donate to the charity's plight, visit www.liverpoolcatwelfare.com or tel. 0151 488 6157. You can also follow the charity on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LiverpoolCatWelfare ■



YOUR CAT PRODUCT AWARDS

Highly Commended...



Here are just a few of the highly commended products in the Your Cat Product Awards 2014/15 — chosen by our readers!

BEST CAT LITTER CATEGORY

ÖKOPLUS CAT LITTER

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BEST DRY CAT FOOD CATEGORY

JAMES WELLBELOVED COMPLETE CAT FOOD

Produced in the heart of Somerset, James Wellbeloved Complete cat foods use the finest natural ingredients to create wholesome and tasty recipes that your cat will enjoy. With no artificial colours, flavours or preservatives, the food doesn't contain ingredients known to cause many food intolerances. For more information call 0845 603 9095 or visit www.wellbeloved.com



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 Botley, Nr. Southampton SO30 2EZ. Tel: Botley (01489) 781260/781811
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CAT CARE



MEET OUR EXPERTS



GENERAL CARE

CELIA HADDON is a well-known pet columnist and author of numerous cat books. She is a cat lover and owner, with a cat behaviour qualification and broad experience of feline issues.



NUTRITION

LIBBY SHERIDAN MVB MRCVS worked as a vet before joining the pet food industry. She then set up Mojo Consultancy, offering specialist business support to the pet care industry.



VETERINARY

ELISE ROBERTSON BS BVetMed MACVSc(Feline) DipABVP(Feline) MRCVS is a feline specialist who runs a referral and consultancy service for South East England.



BEHAVIOUR

JON BOWEN BVetMed DipAS(CABC) MRCVS is a lecturer in small animal behaviour, with a particular interest in inter-cat aggression and abnormal behaviour.



HOLISTIC

HOLLY MASH BVSc IVAS MRCVS specialises in complementary medicine including herbalism and acupuncture. She also runs online courses for owners.



BEREAVEMENT

DR SUE DAWSON is a pet bereavement counsellor working with grieving owners, veterinary and animal welfare professionals. She lectures internationally about grief and pet loss.



GARDENING

GRAHAM STRONG is an award-winning garden writer, experienced plantsman and garden designer. He's also a cat owner and knows just what they like outdoors!



GROOMING

ANITA KELSEY is an accredited, vet referred cat behaviourist based in Notting Hill. She is also an expert in grooming cats, and specialises in working with timid, aggressive or elderly cats.

GENERAL CARE

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO PICK UP MY CAT?

CELIA SAYS:

A Do not pick up your cat by the scruff of the neck — even though a mother cat holds very young kittens this way, bigger kittens and adult cats are too heavy for this. You may see people on TV or even the occasional vet doing this to a feral cat, but cat experts feel it is unkind and unduly stressful for the animal. Really difficult cats can be picked up with a towel.

Quite a few cats dislike being picked up and many cats dislike being dragged around by children or turned on their backs like a baby. Respect your cat's feelings and give him a treat, pet him gently around the cheeks and chin, then pick him up. Approach him

from the side or the rear, as a direct frontal approach may worry him.

Then put one hand under his chest near the 'armpits' of his front legs, and support his hindquarters with the other hand and arm so that he is not left dangling in the air. Hold him securely and close to your body with both arms as well as hands, so that his weight is fully supported. Give a second treat as soon as you put him down again, being careful to place him on firm ground rather than dropping him from a height. ■



BEHAVIOUR

IS HE STRESSED OUT?

Q Ever since my neighbour got a new cat, their older cat has started losing his coat due to over-grooming. Could this be stress-related?

JON ADVISES:

A Hair loss could be the consequence of a health problem or a parasite infestation, so that is always the first thing to rule out. A trip to the vets is needed, I suggest.

To prevent tension between the cats, they should have been introduced in the right way. If they were just thrown together this could have led to the problems they are having.

One option is to go right back to square one and separate the cats, before reintroducing them from scratch. However, as long as they aren't fighting with each other, it is worth trying to increase the number and range of resources available to them, in the hope that this might reduce stress.

The cats should be fed ad-lib, having free access to food and water at all times. Providing additional feeding areas in different parts of the house will help,

especially if these are placed in each cat's favourite room. Also, give free outdoor access, and plenty of places for the cats to rest, hide and climb. For timid cats, it is particularly important to provide places at floor level for them to hide in. Mental stimulation often helps, so it would be good to give the cats their food using an activity feeder like the Trixie Cat Activity Fun Board. Feliway diffusers can also help, so put one in the favourite room of each cat.

As long as neither cat is unwell, and there are no physical fights, it is worth trialling this for a month. After that, if problems persist then separation and reintroduction is likely to be the best option. ■



Handy product

Plug in a Feliway diffuser to help ease tension in multi-cat households. Buy the diffuser for around £39 from pet shops and online retailers. Visit www.feliway.co.uk



BEHAVIOUR

HELP ME STOP TRAVEL SICKNESS!

Q We are due to move 200 miles away within the next two months.

Our cat is a bad traveller and vomits/soils herself even on the way to the vet, which is just a 10-minute drive away!

Our vet has suggested an anti-sickness injection just before the move and using Feliway to keep her calm. We are hoping to purchase a cage which gives her plenty of space. Do you have any further suggestions to avoid what could be a traumatic time for all of us?

JON ANSWERS:

A It is a good idea for one of you to accompany your cat as she travels, preferably in a vehicle that

rides smoothly (rather than a van or lorry, which can have a bumpy ride). Your plans seem very sensible, and the only thing I would add is that you should get your cat used to the cage before she has to travel in it. Leave it open in the house so that your cat can explore it. Putting a comfy bed inside, covering it with a blanket so that it is dark and cosy, and leaving treats in the cage will make it more attractive to her. Spraying Feliway in the cage daily will help to mark it out as somewhere safe and secure. Once your cat is used to going in and out of the cage at will, she will be much happier to be put in it to travel. ■

VETERINARY

IS SUN CREAM SAFE?

Q A few years ago I used sun cream on my semi-longhaired white female, Marie, which worked well and we had no problems all summer. Despite applying it several times a day last year, it didn't work at all. What do you suggest?

ELISE ANSWERS:

A There is considerable debate surrounding the safety of sunscreen use in animals, more due to the potential of ingestion from grooming practices rather than the accumulation of breakdown products from repeated use over the lifetime of the pet compared to humans.

Cats with fair skin/white coats appear to be more susceptible to sunburn compared to cats with more pigment in their skin. Cats with white or ginger hair coats (or patches of white) will have light/fair skin beneath the fur with less skin pigment and so are more susceptible to sunburn. In addition, if the fur is sparse — for instance along the bridge and tip of the nose, eyelids and ear tips — the cat is especially vulnerable and therefore should be protected from prolonged direct UV light exposure. While sun cream should not be applied directly to the eyelids, it can be applied to the other vulnerable areas on your cat

such as the bridge of nose and ear tips. Cats are very adept at licking off sun cream so care needs to be taken to ensure that the product you have used is not toxic if ingested, so it is advisable only to use sun cream specifically for pets. Care must be exercised in choosing protection for your cat because even some sun creams that are considered safe for dogs and horses may not be safe for cats!

To protect white areas of cat's ear tips, it is best to use products containing titanium dioxide as their active ingredient, as it works by physically blocking the sun's harmful UVB rays and short UVA rays, but does not block the longer UVA rays.

It appears that a perfectly safe sun cream for cats does not yet exist and therefore it may be best to use a combination of strategies, such as keeping your cat indoors during the times of day when the sun is at its highest intensity, along with the use of sun creams. ■

Did you know?

Chemicals used in human sunscreens which are poisonous to cats if ingested include cinnamates, PABA esters, salicylates, propylene glycol and zinc oxide.



BEREAVEMENT

STRUGGLING TO COPE

Q My partner and I recently lost our cat Alice after she became ill. She was 16 years old and we are struggling to cope with her loss. Can you help?

SUE ADVISES:

A I am sorry to learn of the death of your elderly cat Alice. It feels that on one level the loss was anticipated because of Alice's age, but that the intensity of emotion now felt is perhaps

something of a shock. It is normal to experience a grief reaction when we lose someone we love, whether this is a human or our beloved cat. If talking to each other feels uncomfortable or difficult right now, you could contact the Blue Cross Pet Bereavement Support Service (tel. **0800 096 6606**) to speak to a trained support volunteer who also has personal experience of pet bereavement. The service

offers confidential emotional support between 8.30am and 8.30pm seven days a week.

Memorialising Alice in some way could also be helpful. You might consider making a memory box or creating a book from photographs and written memories of your time together. Some people find planting forget-me-not seeds in their cat's favourite spot in the garden creates a living memorial. Alternatively you may gain comfort from



making a donation to a cat welfare charity in Alice's memory. Blue Cross and Your Cat offer online facilities for pet memorials — visit www.bluecross.org.uk and www.yourcat.co.uk ■

GENERAL CARE

IS HE SAFE TO ROAM?

Q My six-month-old neutered cat is allowed in the garden but not completely outside. Recently he has started climbing a tree in our garden and jumping over the fence, but I've read that he should only be allowed to roam after 10 months. What should I do?

CELIA SAYS:

A Some people keep their cat indoors only and in the USA the veterinary

authorities recommend this. Generally, cats live longer, healthier lives indoors but usually have far less to do, unless their owners make great efforts to keep them from being bored, which can result in behavioural problems. In the UK most people give their cats the freedom to roam. These free-roaming cats have a great time and lead very fulfilling lives but are at a higher risk of being hit by a car, being

bullied by neighbouring cats, or picking up an infection. Whether you decide to keep your cat in or out is completely up to you. Always keep a litter tray in the house for your cat, so he doesn't have to roam too far in order to find a suitable latrine area.

The half-way decision is to fence your garden with cat-proof fencing, so he has to stay within it. You will find information on how to do this at www.yourcat.co.uk ■



WHAT'S NEW?



Beaphar Kidney Support Easy Treats have been specifically developed for cats prone to kidney disease, and are enriched with additional B vitamins. Buy a 35g bag for £1.50 from pet shops and online retailers. Visit www.beaphar.co.uk or tel. **01440 715700**.



Alamo is a natural spot-on repellent for ticks, fleas, mosquitos and sandflies. Containing no chemical preservatives, it's made using two active ingredients: geraniol and lavender. Buy five pipettes for £16.99 from www.amazon.co.uk



Vet IQ Flea Guard is a natural deterrent for ticks and fleas, containing a blend of B vitamins, yeast, zinc and garlic, all of which are said to help make your pets' blood less palatable to parasites. Buy 90 tablets for £9.99. Visit www.markandchappell.com or tel. **01582 583888**.



Keep your cat calm with the MediPet Natural Calming Spray. The 100 per cent natural spray releases valerian and lavender essential oils to help your cat keep calm, even in stressful environments. Ideal for using over busy periods, car journeys or any time your cat might feel anxious. It costs £12.49. Find stockists at www.medi-pet.co.uk or tel. **01594 827755**.

On the attack

Mel Thorogood called on behaviourist Peter Neville for advice when her kitten got the taste for ankle biting.



OUR BEHAVIOUR EXPERT



PETER NEVILLE is an expert in feline behaviour and works both in the UK and abroad. To find out more about Peter, go to www.coape.org

MEL SAYS: “Help! My 10-week-old kitten Buttons is adorable, but also a terror. She is an ankle biter! How can I teach her not to do this? I have scars and my mother is getting scared to walk around the house. I am worried that this behaviour is going to end up with me having to rehome my adorable Buttons.”

People often forget that kittens, like their puppy counterparts, also need a little help and training in how to react socially with their owners, and with other people too. Otherwise, an unsocialised cat will find her own ways to entertain herself with people, as Mel was discovering.

When I met Buttons at Mel and her mum Janice’s house, she was lying fast asleep in a patch of sunlight and promptly started purring as she bunted my fingertips. “She’s very friendly and loves attention, but we just don’t know how to cope with her ankle biting any more...” said a plaintiff voice behind me, anxious that I wasn’t taken in by all that cuteness. I could hear the distress in Mel’s voice, especially when her mum added that this kitten’s behaviour was fast becoming unacceptable.

Mel had adopted Buttons from a friend whose cats had kittens. The mother and father both lived at the house and their two kittens seemed to be very friendly.

The friend gave the seven-week-old kitten to Mel and since they didn’t have any other pets, she didn’t have any trouble adjusting to her new home.

Buttons loved people, and since their household was quite busy — with loads of visitors and friends coming and going all day long — Buttons quickly became the centre of attention. She would play tirelessly with anyone who would offer a finger or wriggling toe to pounce on. Everyone loved these games, but when Buttons started ambushing ankles every time someone walked by, people started to complain.

AN IRRESISTIBLE GAME

Unfortunately, Buttons seemed to really enjoy the response she got when she dug her claws into a bare ankle. Janice was a favourite target, because she would yell and start running every time. For Buttons, this was an irresistible game and it soon became an all-day activity for her. Mel and Janice actually started experiencing strain in their relationship, with Janice insisting that the kitten had to go, and Mel begging her mum to give her one more chance on a daily basis.

Unfortunately, out of sheer desperation, Mel resorted to punishing Buttons by swatting her away, but this only made the kitten fiercer in her attacks. Mel also started noticing that Buttons seemed agitated even when they played normally, which led to less play and attention.

INNER INSTINCTS

I explained to the family why Buttons was biting them. She wasn’t being mean or spiteful; she was simply practising her developing predatory patterns on the wrong targets, and getting a fantastic response to that behaviour. The decrease

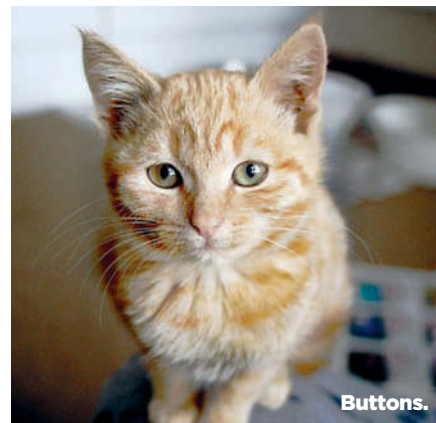
in ‘other’ attention led to her enjoying the response that she did get even more. Punishment doesn’t teach a cat what to do, it simply makes them unsure and suspicious of their owners. It also makes them more aroused when they do approach, so Buttons just doubled her efforts to wrestle with this difficult ‘prey’.

Since she had no bite or claw inhibition, Buttons was actually starting to hurt

“SHE WAS SIMPLY PRACTISING HER DEVELOPING PREDATORY PATTERNS ON THE WRONG TARGETS.”

people. The good news was that the problem had only been going on for three weeks. As ever, the sooner a problem is addressed, the easier it is to fix.

To teach a cat bite and claw inhibition, you need to play with her without her getting too excited. Mel was happy to comply, as long as she had guidance on what to do. I asked her to have a small toy handy to teach Buttons this skill. During play sessions (as long as



she was being gentle) Mel had to praise Buttons and give her the odd treat. If play started getting a bit rough, Mel had to stop playing immediately. This included folding her arms and standing perfectly still. Cats are very movement orientated, so any movement could easily cause her to get overexcited again. I emphasised to Mel that she should never physically punish Buttons or shout at her, as this was only making the behaviour worse. Another absolute must was to not play any finger or toe games with Buttons. If anyone wanted to play with her, they could do so using the appropriate toys.

ALTERNATIVE PLAY

I then asked Mel to get a fishing rod-style toy and to keep that handy when walking through the house. Her mum had to keep one on hand too and whenever they saw Buttons creeping up or focusing on an ankle, they should use the toy to distract her, or keep a ball of rolled-up paper in their pockets to throw past her. Buttons was pouncing on them because it was fun, and as long as they directed her desire to play into a more appropriate channel, they could save their ankles and help Buttons learn the most successful type and size of 'prey substitute' to chase and grab.

Another important factor when Buttons was focusing on ankles would be to stop walking. As mentioned before, movement triggers the stalk-chase-bite part of a cat's predatory patterns. Standing still would help to minimise the escalation of this behaviour.

Buttons clearly thought her behaviour was great fun, so we had to look at other ways to channel that desire. Toys and play would go a long way towards that goal, as long as the family and friends all stuck to the same rules. I asked Mel to keep Buttons' toy box stocked with scrunched-up balls of paper that could be flicked around, catnip toy mice, cardboard boxes throughout the house with surprise treats hidden inside them, and of course flicking kibble around the kitchen floor for Buttons to chase and pounce on before eating.

By introducing these elements to her life, we could teach Buttons how to play appropriately with her owners. Janice asked how long it would take before Buttons stopped biting her, and I realised that she was actually starting to become frightened of the kitten. As an additional measure, I asked Janice to wear her boots indoors for a while until Buttons stopped targeting her.

A CHANGED CAT

With all of this in place, I bid my farewells to Mel and Janice. A week later I received this email from Mel: "I'm so relieved; I can't thank you enough. Buttons stopped going for our ankles within just three days of us implementing everything you suggested. And the wand toy works brilliantly; she now comes and bunts us when she wants to play. I've even seen my mum stroking her again, which is such a relief. Thank you, Peter, you saved our household and helped Buttons grow up!" ■



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Photos: Warren Photographic



VETERINARY

WHY DID BOTH MY CATS DIE?

Q I have just lost my one-year-old pedigree kitten to the same disease I lost my three-year-old cat to not long ago. They were both panting with their mouths open, and the vet diagnosed them with a heart condition and gave them each just a year to live. The kittens came from different breeders so why has this happened?

ELISE ANSWERS:

A I'm sorry to hear about your experience with both of your cats. Because of their ages and symptoms, I suspect they both may have had a condition called Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM). This is a disease in which the muscle walls of the heart thicken. In time, this condition leads to heart failure and/or other complications such as increased risk of fluid accumulation within and around the lungs, and blockage of major blood vessels. It is thought this condition is inherited in a small number of pedigree cats. Affected individuals can be identified using ultrasound scanning of the heart. It is thought that the prevalence of the disease could be decreased by not breeding from affected cats identified in this manner.

Currently there are no genetic tests available for HCM. If this is an autosomal dominant condition then any animal that inherits one copy of the mutant gene from its parents will develop the condition and can therefore pass it on to its offspring; however, any unaffected animals will not as they will not have a mutant copy of the gene. Saying that, it has been suggested that there may be what we call 'incomplete penetrance', in which case it may be possible for some animals to pass on the abnormal gene without necessarily showing signs of the disease themselves. The parents should be screened for HCM using ultrasonography. This should be done prior to mating and breeders are encouraged to keep a record of heart scans for inspection by purchasers. ■



LEGAL ADVICE

WILL SHE EVER BE OURS?

Q About three years ago a stray turned up in our garden. She looks like a Bengal and we assumed her family would be missing her so did all we could to find them without result. Our vet scanned her microchip and contacted the company, who informed us that they can't change the registered owner details without permission from the current owners. Our vet contacted them without result. Our vet has agreed to treat her even though she is not legally our cat, but it will be a different matter with the insurance company. How can we get the 'chip details changed?

LAW EXPERT NOËL SWEENEY SAYS:

A Unfortunately, as a cat is deemed 'property' by law, it can be possessed and owned like a car. This means that legally, the cat belongs to its original owner, which is further established by the fact that the original owner 'staked his claim' on the cat by getting her microchipped, which is a permanent form of identification and ownership.

When the cat went missing originally, do you know if she was abandoned, lost or stolen? If she was abandoned by the original owner then they have committed a criminal offence — however, if she was lost or stolen she still remains the property of the original owner.

The choice whether to treat her or not is a matter of contract between yourself and your vet, but it still does not give you any right of ownership to the cat. You are right in saying that the insurance company will not insure the cat as it could not legitimately register yourself as the cat's owner, as this simply would not be true. Unfortunately, as you do not know whether the original owner is still looking for his cat, or is perhaps abroad, in hospital, or could have even died, it is impossible to claim ownership. However, you could persevere in attempting to get in touch with the original owner. If the owner agrees you could then take ownership of the cat. However, it is also possible that the original owner could legally reclaim their cat back. ■



BEREAVEMENT

WE MISS HER!

Q I had to suddenly make the decision to put my cat to sleep recently. I also have her mum and her brother, and since her death her brother won't come in from the garden as he's waiting for her to appear. What can I do?

SUE ADVISES:

A I am so sorry to hear that you made the difficult decision to have your cat put to sleep. You do not provide many details as to why you made this decision for her, which I assume is because it is simply too painful for you

BEHAVIOUR

HOW CAN I STOP MY CAT BITING ME?



JON SAYS:

A This sort of problem almost always starts with owners using hands and feet to get cats excited during play. For example, wiggling fingers to get the cat to pounce or chase, tickling the cat etc. Anything that directs play onto hands or feet will ultimately lead to problems.

To solve this, first you must stop all play that involves hands and feet, and substitute this with things like fishing rod-style toys that direct play away from you.

If your cat is also starting to use this to get you out of bed, the problem is that being a crepuscular species, cats are often active at times that are out of sync with their owners. Your cat may wake up several hours ahead of you and then get bored and frustrated because there is nothing to do. This tends to indicate that you have become the main source of entertainment for your cat, which is a concern because not only will you be asleep when your cat is awake, but also you cannot be at home all of the time.

Your cat needs to have other sources of entertainment and stimulation so that you are not the sole focus of his attention. There are several solutions to this; give your cat free access outdoors, provide food only through free-access activity feeding, introduce electronic interactive toys and don't let your cat in the bedroom at night. ■

to describe. Making the decision to end our beloved cat's life by euthanasia is the most difficult of all of our caring responsibilities. It is very important that you remember why you made this decision for your cat and are clear that you did this from love. Your vet will have advised you about any medical difficulties and again it is important to be clear about this.

If you feel you are struggling and need some additional support such as counselling, please go to your GP and ask for a referral. Pet bereavement can sometimes generate more intense and complex grief reactions than human bereavement, because of the non-judgemental nature of our relationship

with our pets. It is also possible that feelings about other past losses may now have re-surfaced, deepening the grief you are experiencing in relation to your present loss.

Other cats in the family also experience grief reactions, which can appear relatively mild or be more severe. Searching is a shared grief reaction cats have with humans. You should seek advice from your vet if you are worried about other reactions that may seem more severe, such as not eating or seeming unwell.

Make sure you make time to self-care as you are going through a tough time and need to give yourself permission to grieve. You are in my thoughts. ■

HEALTH NEWS



KEEP OUT OF REACH

In the last year, 78 per cent of vets have treated pets that have ingested human medication, according to research by Direct Line Pet Insurance. As a result, the insurer is urging owners to be much more vigilant about where they keep their medication, ensuring that it is kept out of their pets' reach. Always consult your vet if you think your pet may have digested your medication by accident — and never give your cat human medication as it can be fatal.



FELINE FOOD HABITS

A nutritional report by SureFlap has revealed that almost 90 per cent of cat owners have experienced their cats regularly eating each other's food, despite almost a quarter (24 per cent) of multi-cat households feeding their cats different diets. Of these, 39 per cent were eating lifestage diets and 27 per cent were on weight management programmes. Two-fifths of those questioned from cat and dog-owning households also admitted that their dog often stole their cat's food!



ONLINE REFERRAL VIDEOS LAUNCHED

A small animal referral hospital has launched a series of videos on its YouTube channel to help guide pet owners through the veterinary referral process. The Davies Veterinary Specialists' videos explain why pets may need to be referred and what to expect during the process. Search for 'daviesvetspecialists' on YouTube.

A VET'S VIEW

DEALING WITH DEAFNESS

From old age to an inherited gene, vet Dr Bradley Viner explains the causes of deafness in cats — and how to manage the condition.

To you Beyoncé may be a singer, but to Janet Beyoncé is her cat. A gorgeous pure white little bundle of Persian fluff with the cutest face and piercing blue eyes.

Janet had purchased Beyoncé from a breeder about four weeks previously, and had brought her in for a check-up. Although Janet was totally enamoured with the cute little creature, she was a bit concerned about her behaviour: "She's so stubborn and runs around the house like crazy. Her favourite trick is running up the curtains, which she is tearing to shreds, but even when I really shout at her, she just seems to ignore me."

While I accepted this could just be normal 'naughty' kitten behaviour, my alarm bells were ringing. Cute as she was, I knew that there is a strong association between a white coat colour and blue eyes and inherited deafness. This is congenital, meaning it is present from the time of birth. I questioned Janet further about her kitten's behaviour: "She's very good at anticipating my movements, so for example if she sees me going to the cupboard where I keep her food, she runs to her bowl to get fed, but if I do it when she's not looking, she does not seem to respond. And she never, ever comes when I call her name!"

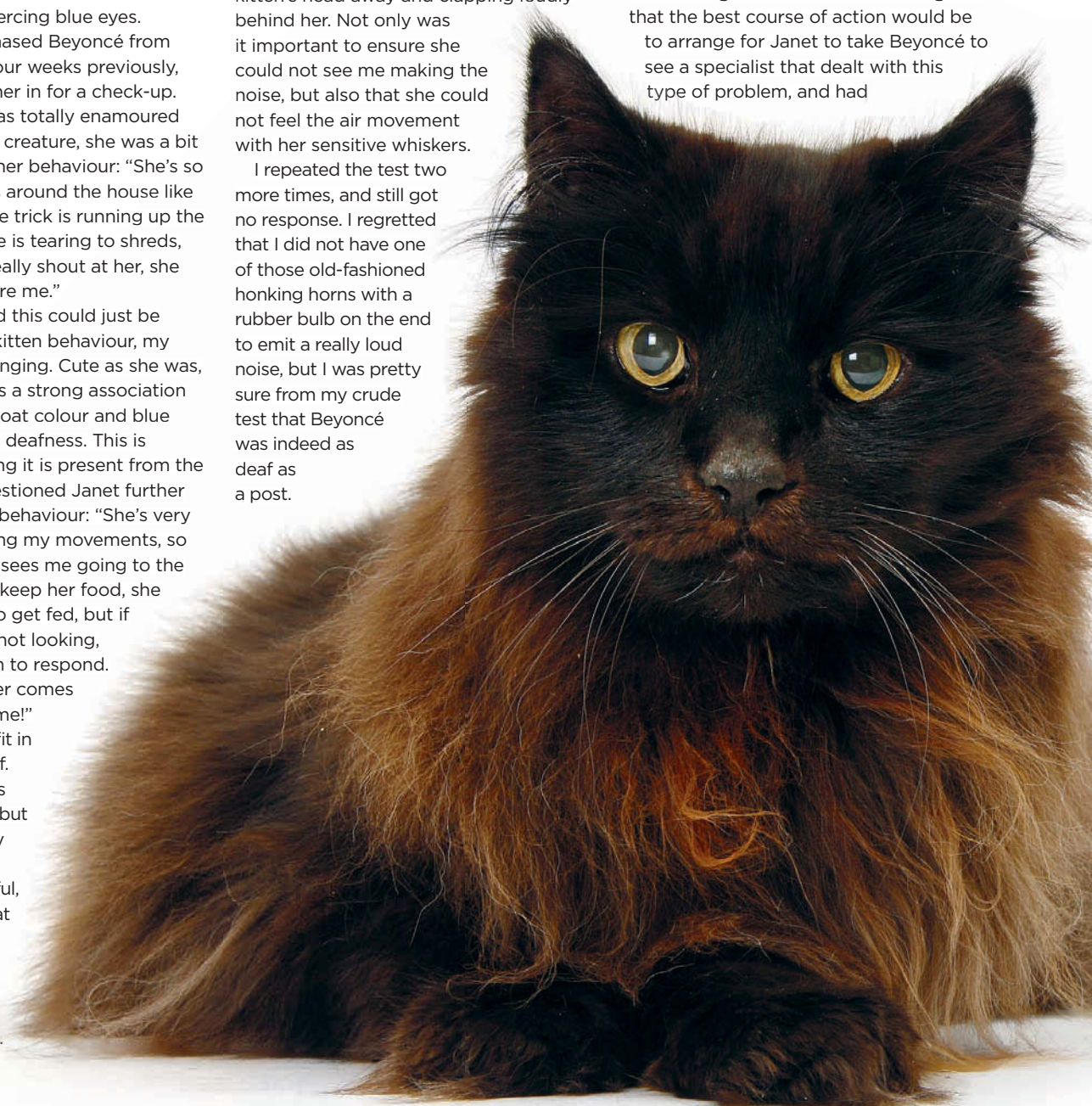
It all seemed to fit in with her being deaf. I examined her ears with an otoscope, but more as a formality than expecting to find anything helpful, because I knew that with congenital deafness the external ear is almost always completely normal.

TESTING FOR DEAFNESS

I decided to use a crude test to check her hearing, by asking Janet to turn her kitten's head away and clapping loudly behind her. Not only was it important to ensure she could not see me making the noise, but also that she could not feel the air movement with her sensitive whiskers.

I repeated the test two more times, and still got no response. I regretted that I did not have one of those old-fashioned honking horns with a rubber bulb on the end to emit a really loud noise, but I was pretty sure from my crude test that Beyoncé was indeed as deaf as a post.

Janet seemed surprised at my conclusion, and very upset because she had bought the kitten with the possibility of breeding from her in mind. We agreed that the best course of action would be to arrange for Janet to take Beyoncé to see a specialist that dealt with this type of problem, and had



the necessary equipment to achieve a definitive diagnosis. This involves testing the brainstem auditory evoked response, more commonly known as the BAER test. Under sedation or light anaesthesia, clicking noises are played directly into one ear at a time, and electrodes attached to the skin are used to measure any electrical response in the nerve that carries impulses from the inner part of the ear to the brain.

While it is reassuring as a vet to know that one's initial diagnosis is spot on, I was disappointed that Janet's hopes of breeding from her kitten had been dashed. She had checked out online resources for white persians and had been disappointed that she had not been able to find any information about the risks of deafness in white cats described there. BAER testing should always be used before blue-eyed white cats are used for breeding. There was no doubt that she was entitled to return the kitten and have her money back, but as is so often the case, she was now closely bonded to Beyoncé and had no intention of parting with her, whether she was deaf or not.

Even if hearing aids were available for cats, they would be of no use in this

Deafness in cats is a temporary or permanent loss of hearing that can be caused by infection, certain drugs, ear mites, congenital defects, old age or injury.

condition. What would be required would be a cochlear implant, a highly sophisticated electronic device that is used in children to directly stimulate the hearing nerves to the brain. However, cats are able to adapt very well to a loss of hearing, and I was able to give Janet some tips to help her cope (see below).

IS MY CAT LIKELY TO BE DEAF?

Inherited deafness in cats is due to a single gene called the W gene, which produces a white coat colour but may also result in blue eyes and a degeneration of the auditory apparatus — the sensitive structures buried within the bones of the skull that detect sounds and pass them onto the brain. It can affect one or both ears, and obviously the latter will cause total deafness.

All cats that carry the W gene have a white coat colour, but not all have blue eyes and not all are deaf. About five per cent of the cat population carry the W gene and so have a white coat.

Inherited deafness is very uncommon in cats other than those with a white coat colour. There are other causes of

deafness, but other than in very elderly cats, they are also uncommon.

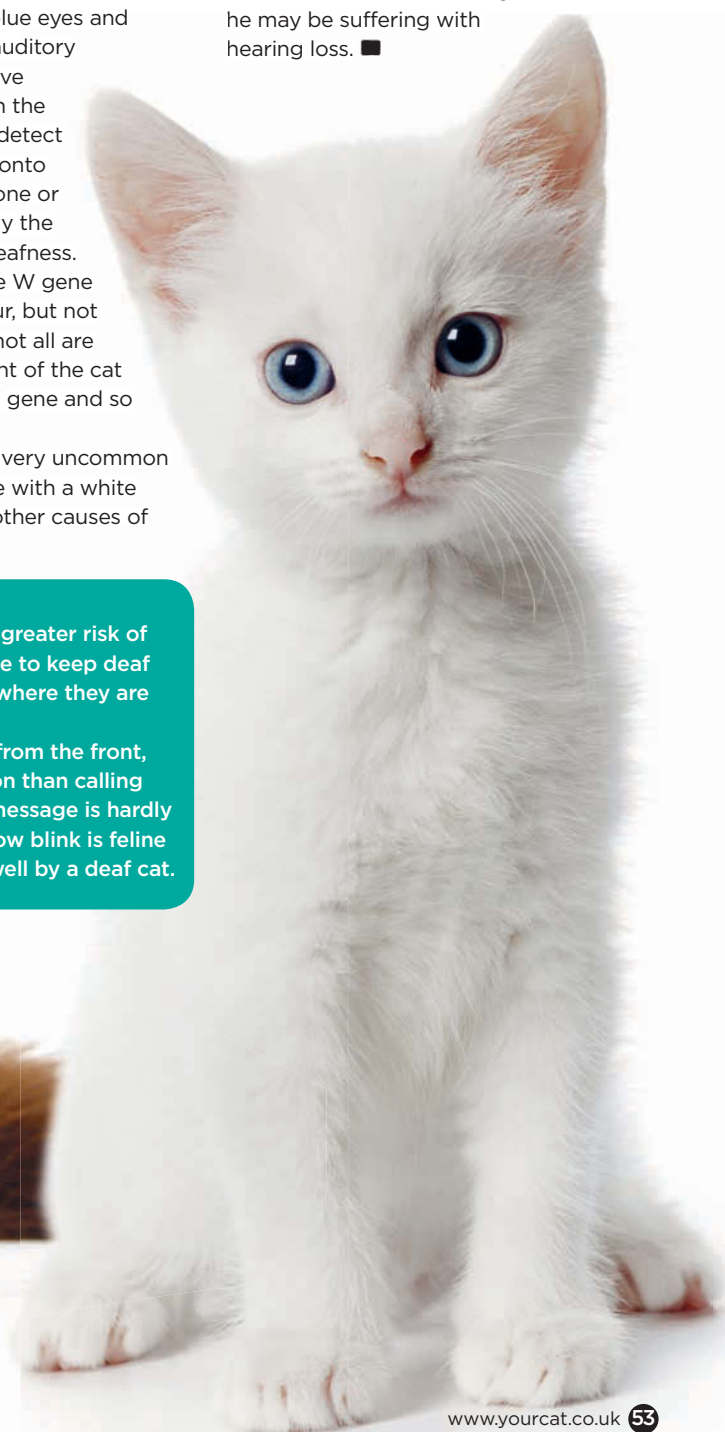
About two thirds of white cats have eyes that are not blue and 80 to 90 per cent of those cats have normal hearing. The remaining third of white cats have either one or two blue eyes. A white cat with two blue eyes is roughly four times more likely to be deaf than a white cat with just one, meaning that around two thirds of white cats with two blue eyes are affected.

If your cat shows no response to loud noises, seems disorientated, doesn't know you're in the room until you physically touch him, is difficult to wake up and walks with an unbalanced gait, he may be suffering with hearing loss. ■

HOW TO COPE WITH A DEAF CAT

Deaf cats are unable to hear approaching traffic, so are at a much greater risk of being run over on the roads. For this reason, it is strongly advisable to keep deaf cats indoors, or better still, allow them access to an outdoor area where they are safe from harm.

Be careful not to startle your cat. Always try and approach him from the front, and waving your arms will be a better means of attracting attention than calling out. You may well find talking to your deaf cat calming, but your message is hardly likely to get across. Looking a cat in the eyes and giving a long, slow blink is feline language for saying 'I love you' and will be understood perfectly well by a deaf cat.



ARE YOU A 'CYBERCHONDRIAC'?

Sarah Deadman explores the usefulness of online symptom checkers — and the dangers of self diagnosing.

I think my dog has rabies, my cat probably has feline panleukopenia and my goldfish looks like he has trichodina. Who needs vets anymore? We've got the web.

There are dozens of pet symptom checkers out there, and they all promise to help you interpret your animal's symptoms. Of course, they all feature prominent disclaimers emphasising that they should be used for information purposes only and you should seek veterinary advice for any real diagnoses. But why bother? Because in theory, it's much easier (and cheaper) to type in a few search terms or answer a few questions and obtain a list of potential causes of your pet's symptoms. And, pet owners being pet owners, we will probably focus on the worst-sounding ailment and convince ourselves that is what our pet has. This condition is called 'cyberchondria' by a couple of Microsoft researchers who have studied health-related search behaviour in the field of human medicine. In their research paper, they declared: 'The web has the potential to increase the anxieties of people who have little or no medical training, especially when web search is employed as a diagnostic procedure.' If that statement is true for human ailments, then it is a pretty sure bet that our anxieties will be amplified where our animals are concerned.

"I think online symptom checkers have the clear potential to generate high levels of anxiety because pet owners inevitably fixate on the worst-case scenario," says vet Jonathan Nurse. "This has the potential to cause them to bury their head in the sand through fear rather than address the problem at an early stage. Some pet symptom checkers appear useful, but they sometimes leave out some of the questions that a vet may ask. There is no quicker or better way of

"THIS HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE THEM TO BURY THEIR HEAD IN THE SAND THROUGH FEAR RATHER THAN ADDRESS THE PROBLEM AT AN EARLY STAGE."

obtaining expert veterinary advice than simply picking up the phone and talking to your vet."

Adrian Caunter, resident vet surgeon at the Good Vet Guide, adds: "Patients sometimes come in with print-outs from online research about what their animal's condition could be and ask 'Why aren't we ruling out this?', when it's something which is very obvious to an experienced vet. One example of this which springs to mind is the owner who was convinced that his dog had rabies despite the last reported case having occurred at the beginning of the last century. I am not attributing that to online symptom checkers but it does illustrate the problems of self-diagnosis.

"Symptom checkers also have the potential to escalate an owner's fears, sometimes to the extent that the owner is so worried about the likely prognosis that they do nothing. This can result in unnecessary delays which can mean that

illnesses which otherwise could have been treated simply can become much more serious because of the owner not seeking earlier assistance."

Adrian adds: "A phone call to your vet can actually be faster than scrolling through the symptom checkers, because we know what to look for, what questions to ask and what the real concerns are. Any responsible vet surgeon will be delighted to take a call from an existing or prospective patient."

Sarah Deadman is the founder of The Good Vet Guide — an online resource where pet owners can champion exceptional veterinary care and let others know about the good vets in their area. Visit www.goodvetguide.co.uk





A Bengal's brave journey



Dougal has used up a fair few of his nine lives this year. Owner Lisa Ashbury tells his story...

Back in June 2014, we noticed that our 10-year-old Bengal, Dougal, was starting to drink a lot and his toilet visits were three times bigger than normal.

After a couple of weeks we decided to get him checked out at our vets and his urine tested positive for high sugar levels. It was looking like our baby had diabetes. We were going to have to start injecting him with insulin twice a day. Over the following couple of weeks we took him into the vets several times for glucose level tests, but every time his readings were high. Gradually, we found ourselves injecting him with six units of insulin twice a day.



Dougal and Hamish.

"IT WAS A RACE AGAINST TIME TO GET DOUGAL WELL ENOUGH TO GET THROUGH THE SURGERY."

The vets became convinced that something was blocking the insulin and after various tests we discovered that Dougal unfortunately had a brain tumour. The next step was to get him down to the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) Hospital near Potters Bar in Hertfordshire for tests. Dougal was found to be suffering from acromegaly, a tumour in the pituitary gland that causes the gland to over-produce growth hormones and his pancreas to go into overdrive, which was now starting to fail.

The vets gave us a choice — we could try to control his insulin, he could have radiotherapy or he could go for pioneering surgery to remove the tumour and pituitary gland. The surgery had a 75 per cent chance of Dougal being completely cured, but a 25 per cent risk of him dying during the operation. After an agonising day thinking about it we

decided to go ahead with the surgery and it was booked for four weeks' time.

A week later, Dougal and his brother Hamish came down with gastroenteritis and it was a race against time to get Dougal well enough to get through the surgery. The boys stayed at the vets for a week, and four days before he was due to go into hospital, Dougal was given the all clear.

Dougal went into RVC's Queen Mother Hospital on a Friday morning to acclimatise, and the following Tuesday he went into surgery. The procedure took the whole day and we had the most horrendous wait of our lives. Thankfully, Dougal got through the surgery and was eating solid food almost as soon as he woke up! Dougal stayed in intensive care for seven days, after which he stayed on the ward for another four days.

Only two weeks after dropping him off at the RVC we got the call to say that he was ready to come home. We were absolutely thrilled.

We now check his sugar levels at home and manage his insulin ourselves. Dougal is also on a hormone tablet, a steroid tablet, eye drops to regulate his fluid levels and he eats a special diet. Since then Dougal has also had liver failure as he had an infection after the operation, so he has been on a huge amount of tablets. He also suffered from pancreatitis so he has been put on antibiotics, liver supplements and tablets to help his bile duct. We would like to thank the vets and nurses at the RVC Queen Mother Hospital and Boness Vets for everything they have done for us and Dougal. ■

TELL US YOUR STORY!

Is your cat living with a health condition or disability?



catchat@yourcat.co.uk

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Have a stress-free Christmas...

Follow our tips to ensure both you and your cat have a merry moggy Christmas!

DECORATIONS

As pretty as they might be, decorations make very tempting toys for playful kitties, and they can also prove very dangerous. While tinsel isn't toxic for cats, if ingested it can cause choking or intestinal blockages, and it's best to steer clear of glass baubles as they're likely to shatter which can cause injury. Ensure you supervise your cat when near the tree and other Christmas decorations to avoid accidents.

WRAPPING PAPER

Ribbons, wrapping paper and gift tags can all become a choking or blockage-causing hazard for cats. As well as this, curious cats might be prone to helping themselves to any edible treats stowed beneath the tree, so make sure you keep them out of reach too.

FOOD

While we enjoy indulging over the Christmas period, it's important to remember that cats have very different diets to us, and so some foods are unsuitable for them. Many of the ingredients found in festive treats like mince pies and Christmas cake contain raisins and grapes, which are toxic to cats. Chocolate, nuts, turkey bones and even the onions and garlic in gravy can be fatal to cats too, so it's advised to keep your cat on his usual diet.

THE TREE

Although most Christmas tree species have a low level of toxicity, needles can cause intestinal perforation or gastrointestinal upset if consumed — neither of which make a pleasant Christmas present. Make sure you use a 'non-drop' species of tree and be sure to vacuum regularly, as well as keeping your tree hydrated to avoid excess needle drop.

STRESS

Although Christmas is a time of festive joy for us, it can cause stress for our feline friends, particularly when you take into account the loud noises from family members and Christmas crackers, as well as new people entering the household. Make sure your cat is kept calm by providing him with lots of visitor-free hiding places and calming diffusers such as Feliway.

WINTRY WEATHER

As temperatures plummet, make sure your cat has plenty of warm beds and cosy hidey-holes to curl up in that are located in quiet, draught-free areas. As well as this, consider how you store things like anti-freeze, as this tastes very sweet to pets, but can result in serious kidney damage or death.

Handy products:

Keep kitty away from the tree decorations by entertaining him with this festive-themed teaser toy. Buy it for £3.50 from www.petsathome.com or tel. 0800 328 4204.



Keep your cat calm and collected this Christmas by introducing a Feliway diffuser. It's around £39 from pet shops and online retailers. Visit www.feliway.co.uk

Give your cat somewhere cosy to relax with this Herringbone Corner Bed, which has a soft removable cushion. It costs £24 from www.petsathome.com or tel. 0800 328 4204.



Treat your cat to these Webbox Festive Cat Sticks. Buy six sticks for £1 from pet shops and supermarkets — find stockists at www.webboxpetfood.com or tel. 01254 54545.



Need help and advice for your cat?

Visit the cat advice section on our website for tips on general cat care, kittens, indoor cats, outdoor cats, nutrition, behaviour, and much more!



www.yourcat.co.uk/advice

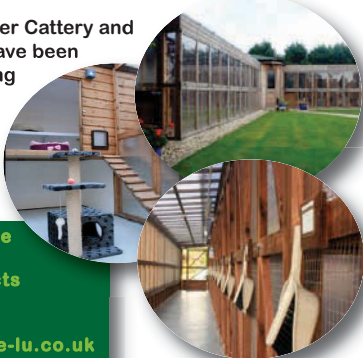
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As you would expect from Canada's Pet Food Experts, Nutram believe in giving customers choice - in fact we've made an art of it. And now you have the freedom to choose our two grain-free diets that reflect a more 'natural' cat diet from times gone by. They still provide the balanced nutrition that today's domestic cat requires - but for a change instead of cereal grains - they can now tuck into something new - turkey with chicken or salmon with trout. What's more these two simple, carefully crafted diets are ideal for rotating so they can enjoy a change every day!

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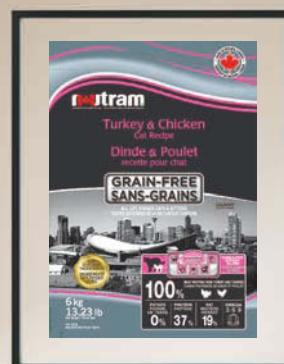
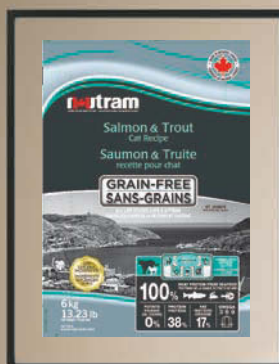
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Tale of an Intruder

When psychotherapist AJ Waines welcomed a nervous client into her home, her cat certainly didn't help matters!

When I'm not writing psychological suspense thrillers, I'm a psychotherapist. Having a consulting room in my own home means I don't have to pay room rent, but it also has its downside: unwelcome visitors — and I don't mean the ones who turn up ringing the doorbell, trying to sell me alarm systems (I've had a lot of those recently).

Let me set the scene. My consulting room is quiet; the phones are switched off, there are long silences and the conversation is difficult. My client is upset — she has post-traumatic stress syndrome and she's talking about panic attacks. She had one only yesterday when the postman suddenly appeared behind her when she was watering her front garden. She's shaking throughout the session, her eyes are bright and on full-alert and her voice quivers.

I hear a noise behind my chair — a kind of scratching sound, like a piece of paper slowly sliding down the wall. It stops. I'm listening to my client, my eyes are on her, but my mind is trying to figure out what's behind my chair. Then I hear another sound — a scrabbling. It's under my seat this time and my heart jolts, racing at twice its normal speed.

We have a cat called Tigsey. Occasionally he brings in 'gifts', but from time to time these gifts — a mouse, a frog, a bird — are still alive. Tigsey is a rascal; he plays with his toy for a while and then gets bored and walks away. My

husband and I have found mice behind bookcases before, wings and body parts on the front mat under the mail.

Then it hits me. I had a brief conversation with my neighbour yesterday and had thought no more about it. It was about poison. She's put pellets down in her back garden after discovering rats in her raised flower beds. My brain darts through the likely course of events. I'm still trying to empathise and console my client. Poison means rats who are on their last legs; it makes them easy prey and Tigsey isn't one to let an opportunity like that pass him by.

A fresh worry occurs to me. The neighbour has a dog, so I'm not too worried about Tigsey picking up the poison himself, but it hadn't occurred to me until now that he is at risk from secondary poisoning if he's got hold of a rat. But I'm not in a position to act on anything, just now. We have 20 minutes left of the session and my heart and

brain are doing overtime. The last thing my client wants to see is a rat idly padding across the room. She would no doubt erupt into some kind of

manic seizure. It could seriously damage her, psychologically, and would ruin our therapeutic relationship — this is one of the few places where she feels safe, right now. Besides — there's health and safety — I could get struck off.

"Occasionally he brings in 'gifts', but from time to time these gifts — a mouse, a frog, a bird — are still alive."

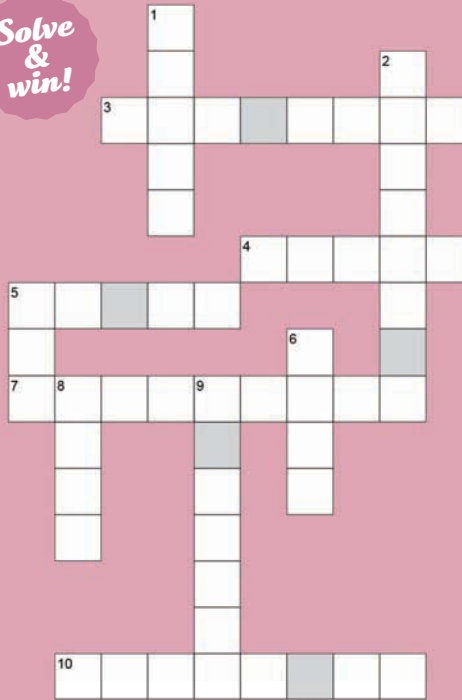
I can tell you, it was the longest, most strained 20 minutes of my life. I was begging the rat to stay put under my seat. I didn't know whether to sit perfectly still (would it venture out, thinking the coast was clear?) or to shuffle around a little in my seat (would it feel disturbed by the noise and scuttle across the room?). What would happen when the session ended and we both left our seats? Would the rat sense movement and make a dash for it? Should I warn my client now, before she saw it — or suggest we continue the session in another room? Had she already heard the strange scraping sounds herself?

All the while, I was trying to stay engaged with her; offering suggestions, talking her through hyperventilation techniques — ones she might need to



KITTYWORD

**Solve
&
win!**



ACROSS

3. The winner of the 'Product I can't live without' category in our Product Awards (8)
4. Find out more about this large fluffy breed in this issue, _____ Coon (5)
5. This month's sweet little Kitten of the Month (5)
7. The charity offering a mobile clinic to London pets (9)
10. The skill required for this month's craft feature (8)

DOWN

1. The author of this month's short story, Kirsty _____ (5)
2. Vet Bradley Viner explores which health condition? (8)
5. James Bowen's famous ginger sidekick (3)
6. The TV Supervet we meet this month, _____ Fitzpatrick (4)
8. The name of the three-legged pub cat in Kentish Town (4)
9. The section of the mag where you can have your say (7)

**CLUE: FIND OUT MORE
ABOUT THIS BREED
GROUP THIS MONTH (5)**

Write your answer on the competition coupon or enter online (see page 90) and the first to be drawn will win a notebook from Sophie Allport's Cat collection, worth £10! Five runners-up will each win an oilcloth purse, worth £7! Visit www.sophieallport.com



Spot the difference

Can you spot the five differences between these two pics? Find the answers on page 81.



AJ Waines is a psychotherapist turned crime writer. Her debut novel 'The Evil Beneath', is available in paperback and Kindle from www.yourcat.co.uk/books

Illustration: Nancy Trott

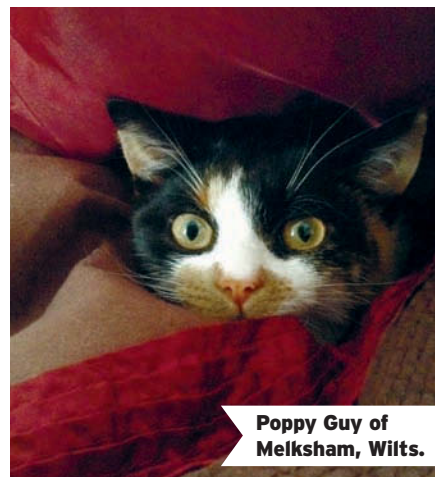
call upon
sooner than she
expected. I was serene
and terrified all at once.

Talk about a split personality!

My inner pleas were answered and the hour was over. My client left, oblivious to the situation. I pulled out my chair and sure enough a large rat darted across the room. I shut the door and rang for humane pest-control to come as soon as possible. My next client was due in an hour. I went to the bathroom to splash cold water on my face. On my way, I passed Tigsey curled up on the bed. He opened one eye as if to say, 'You found it, then?' ■



**Charley Jones of
Southampton, Hants.**

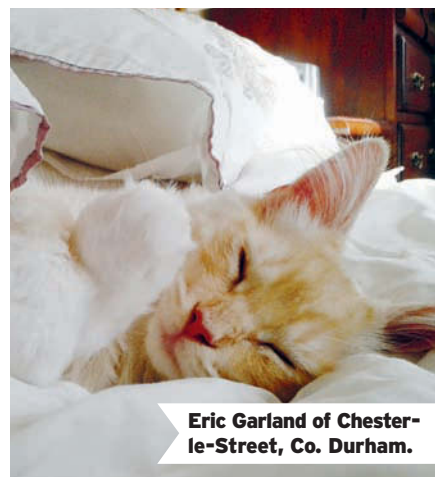


**Poppy Guy of
Melksham, Wilts.**



Pawtraits

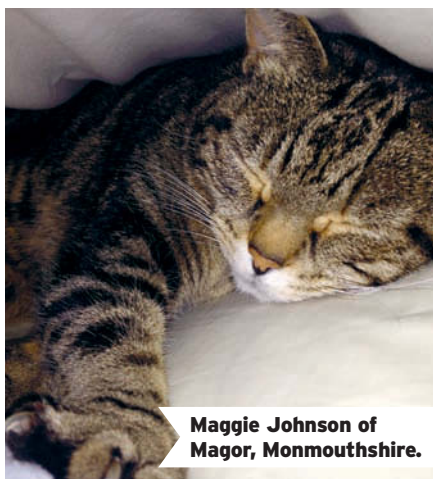
Baby, it's cold outside!



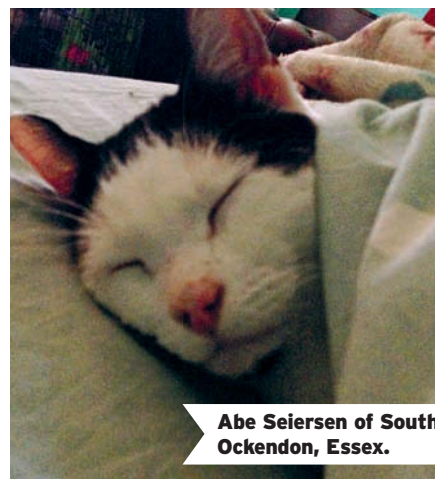
**Eric Garland of Chester-
le-Street, Co. Durham.**



**Nero Henderson of
Gretna, Dumfriesshire.**



**Maggie Johnson of
Magor, Monmouthshire.**



**Abe Seiersen of South
Ockendon, Essex.**

Squeak wins an Ancol playground, British Cancer Campaign cat collar and cat wand, while the others will receive a collar and wand courtesy of Ancol Pet Products. For more information tel. 01922 402428.

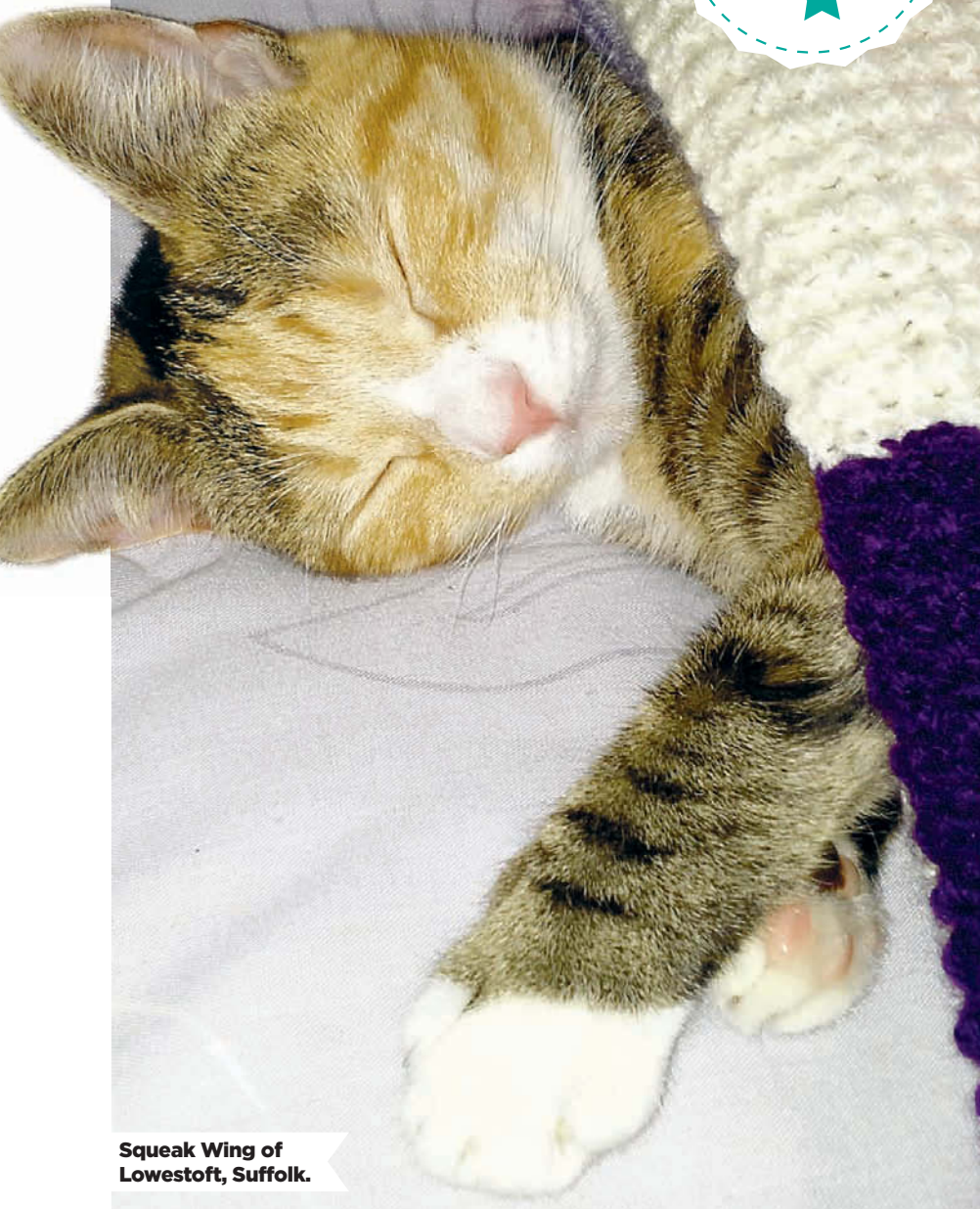
*UK only.



**Archie Pendleton of
Loughton, Essex.**



Star
Photo



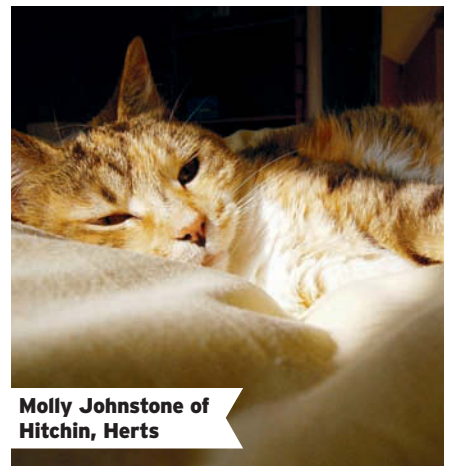
**Squeak Wing of
Lowestoft, Suffolk.**



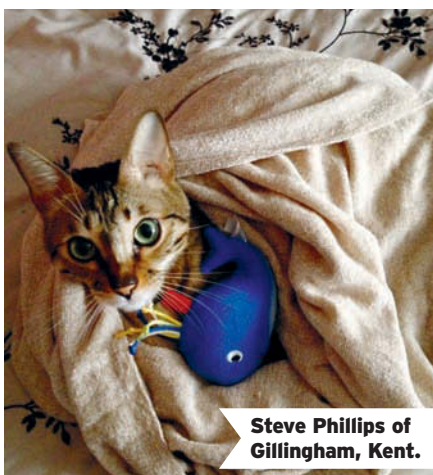
**Casper Curwen
of Roby, Merseyside.**

See your cat here!

Email a clear (not blurred) digital image that is of a useable size (around 300dpi and 1MB) to pawtraits@yourcat.co.uk Please include your full name and address, as well as your cat's name.



**Molly Johnstone of
Hitchin, Herts**



**Steve Phillips of
Gillingham, Kent.**



**Sammy Soar
of London.**



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A kitty's New Year

Fiona Steinkamp ponders on the resolutions a cat might make at the start of each year.

Yet another New Year is on the horizon; it's a time for reflection and aspiration. As a result, many of us will be making resolutions to improve our lives in some way. But have you ever considered what your feline companion may be thinking as they watch you discuss and try to decide how to change yourself for the better? Naturally, cats have no reason to better themselves in the coming year, because they deem themselves to be perfect. So, if you were a cat, what would you do as New Year approaches?

My guess is that cats simply relax in the knowledge that they have no need for such agonising over how to rectify their shortcomings. Instead, cats merely contemplate how brilliant they are. From a cat's point of view, the facts are as follows:

1 They are in charge and are not beholden to anyone. What better a status can there be? Humans are pretty irrelevant.

2 As the supreme species, their life is pretty secure, so they can afford to spend a lot of time sleeping. Humans are even scared of mice (which are mere playthings, as far as cats are concerned).

Cats must feel sorry for us not being able to have a nap whenever we so wish.

3 Cats do not fear old age. They have nine lives and can afford to take risks.

4 Cats neither require make-up nor fear the ageing process. The feline race already possesses the most divine beauty. Moreover, a cat's coat is renewed each year to keep him or her looking forever young. Moulting is the opposite of revolting!

5 In terms of flexibility, no other animal can contort its body in such a variety of positions as cats do. For a cat, it's a daily feature of play; felines surely interpret our laughter when we watch them as insecure hysteria due to our inability to do the same.

So, with youth guaranteed and death thwarted, with beauty on their side and no need to work, how can a cat ever

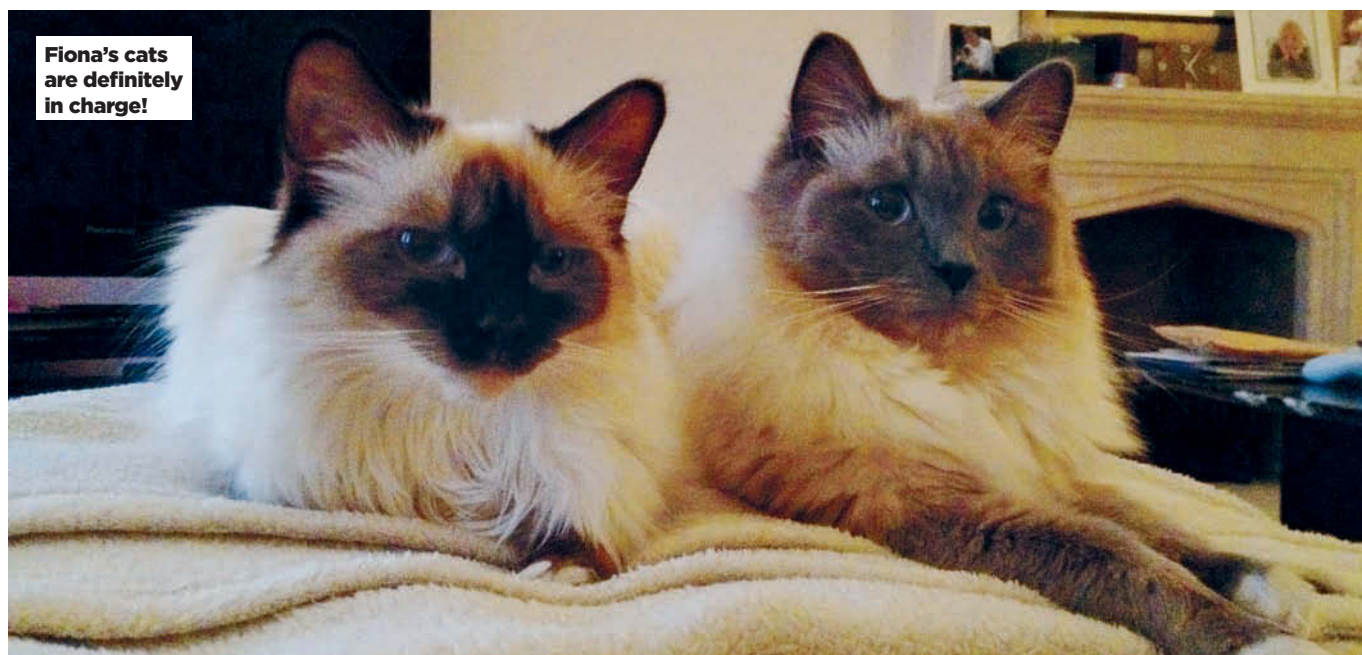
desire anything more? I'm sure that our cats look on in complete disdain as we make our New Year's resolutions. Moreover, no feline worth their salt would follow the masses or merely do what was expected of them at any given time. No, a cat is a creature imbued with individuality and independence and these two facets of their personalities must be upheld at all costs. Should you suggest that they should do something, they will merely walk away with a look of disgust on their face. New Year's resolutions? Pah!

A feline's sole difficulty in life lies with the occasional troublesome canine that dares to challenge their authority. However, cats are well equipped to fend off any opponent with their sharp claws and fearsome hissing. A dog has no chance against the feline species, however loudly a dog may bark to the contrary.

Taking all this into account, we humans should, therefore, feel privileged that these amazing creatures at times will agree to share our homes. It is a blessing bestowed upon us and perhaps, instead of making New Year's resolutions, we should instead be counting our felines' many blessings. ■

"NATURALLY, CATS HAVE NO REASON TO BETTER THEMSELVES IN THE COMING YEAR, BECAUSE THEY DEEM THEMSELVES TO BE PERFECT."

Fiona's cats are definitely in charge!





MY CAT

Laura Wright, from Lincoln, will never be 'on her own' with gorgeous black moggy Eponine!

I DIDN'T LIKE CATS BEFORE...

I had a cat called Ginny when I was younger, but I never seemed to like her and would always avoid walking near her in the house! I have no idea why though, as she was a lovely ginger cat and I was so upset when she died!

Now I have Epi, I couldn't imagine being without her. She's like my best friend and brilliant company while my boyfriend Jamie is working away from home.

INSTANT LOVE

A friend of Jamie's was advertising kittens free to a good home on Facebook. We'd never discussed even having a pet, but we knew we couldn't miss out on this opportunity! And it's one of the best decisions we've ever made. We'd only been given a description of her, but when we went to pick her up I saw her tiny little face and her gorgeous black fur, and instantly fell in love with her.

MUSICAL MOGGY

Jamie is very into theatre so we just had to call her something from a musical. We went through a few names but decided on Eponine, Epi for short, from Les Miserables.

I've not met anyone yet who's pet has the same name as her!

I LOVE THAT SHE'S A BLACK CAT

I know some people are superstitious or just don't like black cats, but I think Epi's coat is beautiful. She's just so soft — perfect for cuddling up to on a cold night. I love how she sits on my knee and lays on me when I'm asleep. It's like she loves me almost as much as I love her!

HAPPY HOMECOMING

She usually comes and greets me at the door, or is sitting in the window waiting for me when I get back from work. I step through the door and she immediately makes me smile. The amount of silly things she does is endless! She flops down onto the floor and rolls around until you rub her belly, and always goes to fetch her toys when you throw them for her. She's also very clever, and she's interested in just about everything. She's recently figured out how to open doors (obviously not with the handle, but by pushing/pulling!).



IT COULD BE YOU!

Would you and your cat like to appear as our next My Cat stars? Simply send a clear, bright, high resolution photo (take it on your camera's largest setting) of you with your cat to rachel@yourcat.co.uk and tell us all about them.

SHORT STORY

Kittens



Becky always thought that the best thing about working out of Jon's photographic studio in Whitby was the fact that you definitely met some interesting characters.

Tourists flocked through the door to have their pictures taken, and, by the very Gothic, Dracula-like nature of the place, they arrived clad in black, lacy Victorian finery, posed stiffly in front of the old camera and smiled delightedly at the resulting vintage-style image. As a freelance journalist, Becky's domain was the flat upstairs — but being up there was not half as interesting as being downstairs. Especially when customers like Zara walked in.

"You have to come downstairs. Right now," Jon had said that day, bursting through the flat door and startling Becky out of her latest commission. "I mean it. Hurry up."

Becky frowned and indicated the mess of papers on her desk.

"But I'm busy. Look."

"I'll look later. Now. Please. You'll love it. Honestly." He looked so beseeching that Becky relented.

She sighed. "All right, but it had better be worth it," she complained, following him downstairs.

It was definitely worth it. The customer was a girl of about 25 years old, clad from head to toe in black. Her face was white, her eyes lined thickly with black and her lips a bright cherry-red. In her arms she

held a sleek, black cat. The animal yawned, looked lazily at Becky and waved the tip of its tail languidly.

"Ohhhhh! A cat!" cried Becky. She hurried over and smiled at the girl. "Is it a he or a she?" she asked. "And can I stroke it?"

"It's a she. And yes, you can stroke her," said the girl. "She's Mittens. I'm Zara."

"Hello Zara. And hey, Mittens!" cried Becky. "How are you?" She stroked the cat and Mittens lifted her head up, butting Becky's hand with the soft, flat spot between her perfectly triangular black ears.

"She's very friendly," said Zara. Then she fixed Becky with a penetrating kohl-lined stare. "She's a witch's cat."

Becky's hand faltered in the stroking and the cat miaowed a complaint.

"A witch's cat?"

"Yes. I'm a witch."

"Ohhhh," said Becky again, nodding as if it was the most normal thing in the world to hear. She chanced a glance at Jon who was mouthing 'Witch! Witch!' and pointing at the girl from the safety of his darkroom. Becky ignored him and turned back to Zara. "That's nice," she said.

"I think so. And I want our photograph taken together." Zara hugged the cat tighter. "You know, it's so unfair for black cats nowadays. Nobody wants them; they say they are too... well... witchy."

"That's awful!" cried Becky. She looked at Mittens and frowned. "How could anyone reject a cat, just because it's black? She's gorgeous."

With mittens

Journalist Becky meets some rather interesting characters — including a witch and her feline sidekick — in this fictional short story by novelist Kirsty Ferry.

"I know," said Zara with a sigh. "But we've got a bit of a problem. We need a forgiving camera angle. You see," she leaned forwards, closing the gap between her and Becky and whispered: "Mittens isn't really all black. That's why people don't think she's a true witch's cat. I think, for her to feel truly valued, we need to ensure she looks the part, you know?"

"Oh yes. I understand completely," said Becky, hoping she sounded as convincing as she thought she did.

The cat purred again and squirmed into a more comfortable angle. Mittens lifted one of her paws out of Zara's embrace and stretched it towards Becky, displaying all of her sharp, neat little claws. The paw was pure white, which made a rather startling contrast to the ocean of black she was surrounded by. Then her other front paw came out, as if she was showing Becky the true extent of the problem — and that one too was white. The

cat looked at Becky and blinked. Becky blinked slowly back, something in her mind reminding her that was a good way of engaging with a cat on a friendly basis.

"Well, I'm sure Jon can sort something out for you," she said. "He's pretty good with things like that —"

"Excuse me," Becky looked up as a man peeled away

from the shadows and spoke to them. She reasoned that he must have come in while they were talking and been hovering around, waiting for his turn in the studio.

Again, he was a person who favoured black clothing. He was tall and rangy, with long black hair, vicious looking biker boots, hands shoved into the pockets of a long black coat and kind blue eyes.

The man looked at Zara

and at Mittens and then back to Zara. "I think I can help," he said. "I'm sorry. I followed you in here because I couldn't quite believe you had a cat with you. I'm a proper cat person." He laughed, embarrassed. "Not something I can freely admit with this image, I know, but I couldn't help it."

"Nothing wrong with

being a cat person!" said Zara, looking surprised at the fact anyone could ever not be a cat person.

"Nothing at all," said the man.

"I'm Ben."

"Hello Ben," said Zara. She

held the cat up. "I'm Zara. This is Mittens." She sighed. "You can see why. She has a terrible complex about it all."

The cat mewed pitifully and looked up at Ben. Again, the little wave of the tip of her tail; the slow blink of those yellow eyes. The stretching out of the accursed paws.

"Yes. And I can probably help you there," said Ben.

He grinned and took his hands out of his pockets. Becky noticed he was

wearing soft, black fingerless gloves. Still looking at the cat, Ben proceeded to ease them off his hands. "May I?" he asked. Becky wasn't sure whether he was addressing Zara or Mittens, but Zara nodded.

"Yes, you may," she said, staring at Ben in wonderment.

"Thank you," he said, and ever so gently lifted Mittens' right paw up. He eased one glove onto it, hiding the white, then proceeded to do the same with the other paw. "It won't be for long," he told the cat. "Just until you have your photograph taken, ok?"

The cat stretched her paws out again, as if she were admiring a manicure, and cuddled into Zara. This time, her paws were resting on the top of Zara's forearms, crossed neatly and proudly displaying her black gloves.

"You're a real Mittens now," said Ben, fondling her ears.

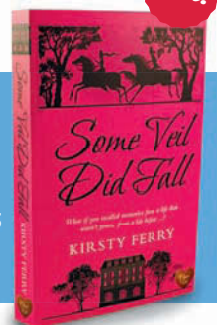
Mittens agreed with a purr and Becky smiled. "Jon," she called, looking up to see him still lurking in the darkroom. "I believe your customers are ready now."

"Yes," said Zara, looking up adoringly at Ben, with much the same expression that Mittens was displaying. "I believe we are." ■

"The paw was pure white, which made rather a startling contrast to the ocean of black she was surrounded by."



Find out more about Jon and Becky's story in Kirsty's new book 'Some Veil Did Fall', published by Choc Lit, priced at £7.99 (paperback) or £2.63 (Kindle). We have five paperback copies up for grabs — turn to page 90!



TREATS

Whether your cat has special dietary requirements or simply deserves something special, there's a treat for every cat.



Available in six varieties — chicken, white fish, shrimp, chicken liver, tuna and beef — Thrive treats are made with 100 per cent real meat and fish. The hypo-allergenic freeze-dried treats cost £2.99 for 25g or £19.70 for 110g — visit www.thrivepetfoods.com

Whiskas DentaBites are scientifically proven to reduce the build-up of tartar when fed daily, and are the first treats to be approved by the British Veterinary Dental Association. Whiskas Healthy Joints treats contain a blend of active ingredients proven to help support joints to keep your cat active and healthy. Both treats cost £1.38 each and are available from supermarkets and pet shops. Visit www.whiskas.co.uk



With more than 50 per cent real meat or fish, Vet's Kitchen's Little Hearts cost £1.39 for a 60g bag from Asda, Tesco and online at www.vetskitchen.co.uk or tel. 01793 887555.

Your Cat product award winner

Available in five flavours plus anti-hairball, skin and coat, and vitamin varieties, a 55g bag of Dreamies costs around £1.49 (or buy a six-pack Super Mix for £3) from pet shops and supermarkets.



Created using 100 per cent chicken or duck breast, Hi-Life Indulge Me Treats are gently freeze-dried to preserve their flavour and contain no artificial additives. Available from all good supermarkets and independent pet shops, a 10g bag costs £1.49. Visit www.hilifepet.co.uk

New!



Win!



Handmade goodies!

Mrs Bishop's Doggy Deli's homemade Chicken Gems (100 per cent chicken biscuits), Kitty Nibbles (tuna and catnip bites), Purr-fiterolas (soft cheese balls) and crunchy dried sprats cost £1 to £1.50, available from www.mrsbishops-doggydeli.co.uk/kitty-corner *We have one Mrs Bishop's hamper to win — turn to page 90!

Made with 95 per cent real meat, Natures Menu Seriously Meaty Snacks are freeze-dried to seal in nutrients and flavour, available in two varieties.

They cost £3.25 for a 40g bag from www.naturesmenu.co.uk or tel. 0800 018 3770.



Webbox Lick-e-Lix treats — available in salmon with omega 3 and 6 or chicken with zinc varieties — are ideal for hiding medication. Webbox treats can be found in all major supermarkets and pet shops, and cost from £1 per pack. Find stockists at www.webboxpetfood.com or tel. 01254 54545. *We've got 25 Lick-e-Lix packs to win — remember to tell us which flavour your cat would prefer!



Win!

Available in tuna and chicken flavours, Coachies are packed with natural antioxidants and minerals for improved digestion and taurine to support heart and eye health. They cost £1.99 from www.companyofanimals.co.uk



Mark & Chappell Healthy Bites contain no wheat or soya, available in Urinary Care, Breath & Dental and Hairball Remedy varieties. They cost £1.99 — find stockists at www.markandchappell.com or tel. 01582 583888.



For health-conscious kitties, Waggy KitNips contain MOS, a prebiotic to help support a healthy digestive system, along with omega 3 and 6 to promote healthy skin and a shiny coat. Available in salmon or chicken varieties, the treats cost from £1 per bag, and stockists can be found at www.waggyfoods.com or tel. 01845 578111.

PUZZLE FEEDERS

Make your cat work for his treats with this selection of fun feeders.



②

Kong's Cat Treat Ball

① (£3.48) is easy to fill and works by being rolled around to release the treats inside. The Wobbler ② (£15.45) has a translucent top and a weighted base that responds to rocking, pawing and rolling to release the treats inside. It also has a catnip-stuffed fluffy tail. Find stockists at www.kongcompany.com/en-uk or tel. 01308 869000.

①



Turn mealtimes into a hunting game with the Catch Cat Feeder.

The feeder replicates foraging for food, while the purple spikes provide the ultimate challenge. It costs £20 from www.petsathome.com or tel. 0800 328 4204.



Trixie's Tunnel Feeder ① provides physical exercise and mental stimulation as food falls from the container into six different tubes, while the Fantasy Board ② trains your cat's skills with four different modules presenting a different task. The Solitaire Strategy Game ③ has seven ball-shaped covers that your cat has to move to retrieve the treats below. Prices start at £10.99. Find stockists at www.trixie.de or tel. 0207 154 2940.

①



②



③



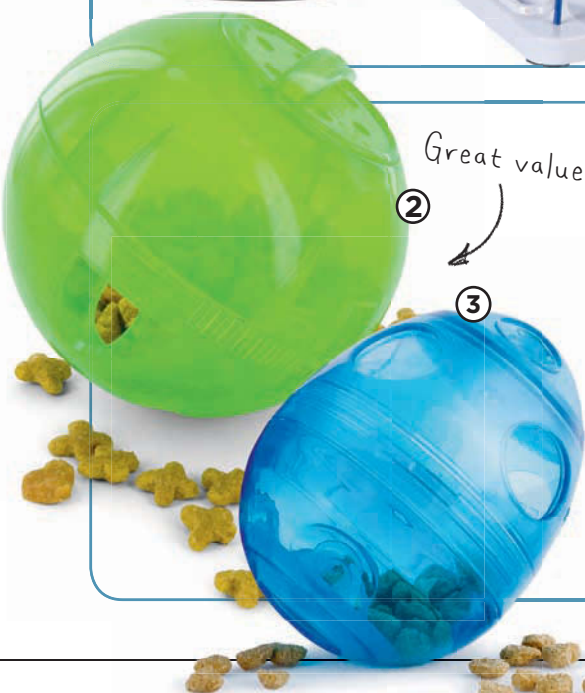
The Catit Design Senses Food Maze is ideal for working your cat both mentally and physically by placing treats in the top of the maze and trying to catch them as they fall to the bottom. It costs £17 from www.petshopbowl.co.uk or tel. 01789 205095.



Great value!

②

③



PetSafe's Twist 'n' Treat ① is designed to randomly dispense treats and easily adjusts to your cat's level of play. The SlimCat treat dispenser ② is ideal for improving digestion as it releases small amounts of food regularly, while providing exercise through play. Finally, the Egg-Cersizer ③ randomly dispenses food and can be adjusted by opening up to three holes to enhance play. Visit www.petsafe.net to find a stockist. Prices start from £2.99.

①



HANNAH HEARTS

We can all be guilty of leaving things until the very last minute when it comes to buying Christmas presents, so we've come to the rescue with our last-minute gift guide — ideal for cats and cat lovers alike. I love everything in the guide but a personal favourite has got to be the 'Cute or What' cat-themed gift sets from Boots (www.boots.com or tel. 0345 609 0055). With prices starting at just £5, there's a wash duo set, a cosmetic purse and a bath fizz trio (left to right), all of which are perfect for cat lovers needing a pamper session!



Animal gift wrap, £9.95 from www.prezzybox.com or tel. 0844 2495 007.



Snuggle cat hottie, £20 from www.debenhams.com or tel. 0844 800 8877.



Win!

Cat paper clips, £1.95 (set of four) from www.sassandbelle.co.uk or tel. 0207 346 0117. *We have three packs of paperclips up for grabs — turn to page 90!

LAST-MINUTE GIFT GUIDE



Merryfield Pottery Cat Sewing Companion, £8.99 each from www.merryfieldpottery.co.uk or tel. 01803 314236. *We have 10 up for grabs — turn to page 90 for your chance to win!

Win!



Cat '#Elfie' print purse, £3.99 from www.newlook.com or tel. 0344 499 6690.



Cat tunnel, £17.50 from www.marksandspencer.com or tel. 0333 014 8000.



Polka cat insulated cup, £7 from www.paperchase.co.uk



Armitage cat stocking, £3.69 from selected pet shops and supermarkets. Visit www.armitages.co.uk or tel. 0115 938 1200 to find stockists.



Christmas cat teaser, £4 from www.bhs.co.uk or tel. 0344 411 6000.

CORRECTION: The prices of the Best in Show hamper and treat bag featured in December's gift guide were unfortunately incorrect. The correct prices are £45 for the hamper and £15 for the treat bag, both available from www.yourcatshop.co.uk



Red star print cat house, £22 from www.bhs.co.uk or tel. 0344 411 6000.



Christmas cat bed, £140 from www.cat-beds.co.uk



Black wheat cat, £9.99 from www.newlook.com or tel. 0344 499 6690.



Cat trinket box, £3.99 from www.newlook.com or tel. 0344 499 6690.



Paul & Joe foundation primer and mini cleanser with cat bag, £23 from www.asos.com



Cat eye mask, £6 from www.riverisland.com or tel. 0344 576 6444.



Egyptian cat mirror and magnet, £2 each from www.nixiiart.com



Wu & Wu kitten make-up bag, £15.28 from www.flamingogifts.co.uk *We have two £30 vouchers for Flamingo Gifts up for grabs — turn to page 90!



Max & Mabel plaid pet blanket, £19.99 from www.dunelm-mill.com or tel. 0345 165 6565.



Cat print hot water bottle, £19.95 from www.rawxclusive.co.uk or tel. 01305 534003.



Floral cat doorstop, £12.45 from www.sassandbelle.co.uk or tel. 0207 346 0117. *We have one doorstop to win — turn to page 90!

GET ORGANISED!



1 My Sad Cat calendar, £9.99 from www.graffeg.com or tel. 01554 824 000.



2 Grumpy Cats calendar, £9.99 from www.whsmith.co.uk



3 Cats Protection pocket cat diary, £2.95 from www.cpchristmasshop.co.uk or tel. 01268 888215.



4 Cute Cat photographic calendar, £6 from www.marksandspencer.com or tel. 0333 014 8000.



5 Cats Protection kitten calendar, £3.95 from www.cpchristmasshop.co.uk or tel. 01268 888215.



6 Cute Cat week-to-view diary, £5 from www.marksandspencer.com or tel. 0333 014 8000.



7 Kitten calendar and shopping memo board, £1.49 from www.dunelm-mill.com or tel. 0345 165 6565.

WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?



FURminator has recently launched a limited edition floral deShedding tool for cats, which comes complete with a fashion bag for storage. The deShedding tool reduces the level of moulting in cats by up to 90 per cent. It's available in a variety of sizes for long or shorthaired cats, with prices starting from £27.50. Visit www.furminator.net/en



Meowing Heads has introduced a brand-new range of complete wet foods. Made using 100 per cent British meat, there are four flavours available, which contain 90 per cent meat while being both grain and veg free. Each 85g tray costs 99p — visit www.barkingheads.co.uk or tel. 0808 100 8885 for stockists.



Trixie's Wings Airline Carrier (below, £49.99) is suitable as carry-on luggage during flights, and allows pets and owners to travel together in the cabin (check your airline's regulations beforehand). The Trolley Neo (above, £59.99) allows animals weighing up to 25kg to be transported with ease. For stockists visit www.trixie.de or tel. 0207 154 2940.



The new CatSelect Living Quarters by Trixie offers 51 individual elements available for cats of any size. It can be personalized completely by colour, size, number of scratch posts/hideaways etc. Prices vary due to customisability. For more information, and to find stockists, visit www.trixie.de or tel. 0207 154 2940.



Intersand City Classic is a new range of litter that can absorb up to 400 per cent of its own weight in liquid. The fine clay absorbs and neutralises odours while being soft on cats' paws and 99.9 per cent dust-free. It is available in three different scents; lavender, baby powder and unscented, and costs £7.99 for a 7kg bag or £12.99 for 15kg. Tel. 01737 767679 for stockists. *We have five 15kg bags up for grabs — turn to page 90!



Myfussycat's new Apollo bowl is ideal for cats who prefer eating from shallow, wide bowls. It also uses Scrunch'n'Seal disposable liners to keep your bowl squeaky clean. An Apollo Starter Kit costs £39.90 from www.myfussycat.com *We have two Apollo bowl and liner kits up for grabs — turn to page 90!



If your cat is a fan of catnip, these Cat Nip Duo toys from Danish Design are the perfect treat. Available in a range of cute and cuddly designs, these will provide hours of fun for your feline friend. They cost £4.75 and stockists can be found at www.danishdesign.co.uk or tel. 0113 391 9828.

Said to control and neutralise odours for up to 30 days, Simple Solution 30 Day Cat Litter is non-clumping, lightweight and super absorbent. The 4kg pack has dual-grip handles and an easy-to-pour spout. It costs £12.99. For stockist details visit www.30daycatlitter.com



Give your cat the perfect place to curl up and relax with this new FleeceLock Kitty Bed. With supersoft microsuede on the outside and Orvis-exclusive FleeceLock on the inside, this bed is a must-have for the winter months. It costs £59 from www.orvis.co.uk or tel. 0333 400 4177.



Perfect for chilly nights, these Woodland-themed Deluxe Slumber Beds come in a range of colours, shapes and sizes, including hare, owl and stag patterns. Prices start at £22.50 for a small bed and stockists can be found at www.danishdesign.co.uk or tel. 0113 3919 828.



Hop Inn's wipe-clean cubes and tunnels are tear-resistant, water-resistant, and they easily attach to one another to create the ultimate play station. Available in four colours — blue, stone, purple or pink — prices start at £14.95 from www.hopinn-info.co.uk/shop or tel. 01664 464851.



If your cat struggles with stress or anxiety, try the new Pet Remedy Atomiser. Containing low dosage valerian essential oil blended with vetiver, sweet basil and sage, Pet Remedy helps to calm stressed pets. The battery-operated atomiser costs £36 and includes a 250ml bottle, with refills costing £20. It is available at www.petremedy.co.uk or tel. 01803 612772.



This oat garden kit sprouts oat grass in just a few days — simply add water! Providing your cat with access to chemical-free and organic fresh oat grass can help to reduce hairballs and maintain a healthy digestive system. It costs £4.04. Find stockists at www.kennelpak.co.uk or tel. 0115 939 9077. *We have six kits up for grabs — turn to page 90!



Keep your cat's coat in tip-top condition with the new Aloe Veterinary Formula wound and skin care spray. The specially formulated spray can be used on a variety of irritations, including bumps, scrapes and grazes. It helps to soothe and calm wounds, as well as achieving a glossy and conditioned coat after bathing. It costs £14.81 and is available from www.foreverliving.com or tel. 01926 626629.

CATWALK

FESTIVE FINDS



❶ Faux fur cat backpack, £45 from www.aldoshoes.com or tel. 0808 101 5659.

❸



❷ Purrfect Christmas cat T-shirt, £5 from Primark. Find stockists at www.primark.com

❷



❸ Kitten Elfie Selfie T-shirt, £7.99 from www.newlook.com or tel. 0344 499 6690.

❹



❹ Cat print waffle pyjama set, £16 from www.matalan.co.uk or tel. 0333 004 4444.

❺



❺ Cat fleece onesie, £34 from www.topshop.com or tel. 0844 984 0264.

❷



❻ Cat shift dress, £65 from www.asos.com

❹



❼ Cat and pug print headscarf, £6 from www.asos.com

❻



❽ Louche Kat jumper, £45 from www.johnlewis.com or tel. 0345 604 9049.

❽



❾ Guess ladies Vixen watch, £189 from www.watchshop.com or tel. 0800 024 8794.

❿



❿ Cat scarf, £42 from www.peopletree.co.uk or tel. 0845 450 4595.

KIDDYCAT CORNER



◀ Cat tunic, £28 from Uttam Kids at www.debenhams.com or tel. 0844 800 8877.

▶ Cat face beanie, £4 from www.matalan.co.uk or tel. 0333 004 4444.



▼ Glitter cat bag, £10 from www.marksandspencer.com or tel. 0333 014 8000.

▼ Navy cat gilet (3-16 years), from £24 at www.next.co.uk or tel. 0333 777 8000.



▶ Christmas cupcake T-shirt, £6.99 from www.newlook.com or tel. 0344 499 6690.



◀ Charcoal cat knit boots, from £26 at www.next.co.uk or tel. 0333 777 8000.



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Did you know?

Maine Coons evolved as working domesticated cats in a rural environment, and this role is reflected in a rugged appearance with a characteristic 'weather-proof' coat and the demeanour of an alert, capable hunter. Read the full feature on the next page!



MAINE COON BREED SOCIETY
(affiliated to GCCF)

Promoting the responsible ownership of Maine Coons, whether for breeding, showing or as pets.

For further information on joining, current kitten availability, or for breeders in your area visit www.mainecoonbreedsociety.com or call the Secretary, Lynnette Cannell, on 01327 844069

THE MAINE COON CAT CLUB Established 1985
Affiliated to the GCCF - Catering for Maine Coon Cat Lovers everywhere

The club offers a wide variety of information and events including:

- Newsletters • Annual Calendar • Championship Show • Breeders' List • Seminars
- Kitten List (updated weekly) • Rosettes to Maine Coons Gaining GCCF Titles

For further information contact:

Steve Butters, Secretary/Membership Secretary on 0114 2692306 or butters@keverstone.co.uk

Available Kitten Enquiries contact Val Kaye on 01484 666728 or cocoon@btinternet.com

Visit the club web site at: www.maine-coon-cat-club.com



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In brief

Breed number: MCO.

Average lifespan: around 14 to 15 years.

Temperament: friendly, loyal, lively and affectionate.

Weight: males: 6kg to 8kg; females: 4kg to 5kg.

Availability: easy.

Colours: over 60 colour combinations.

PURRFECT PEDIGREE

The Maine event

Big boned, big furred and big hearted, Maine Coons are a large presence in the life of anyone who has been owned by one!

As one of the largest breeds in the cat fancy, anyone who has ever owned Maine Coons raves about their gorgeous good looks and their big personalities.

Jacky Edwards, chairman of the Maine Coon Cat Club, says: "They are very friendly cats and very into people. They're loving and attentive, but also very easy-going and laid-back so they won't give you any hassle. They are like big gentle giants."

One of the most common compliments owners and breeders will say of the Maine Coon is their ability to get on with everyone — either two-legged or four-legged — and how adaptable they

are: "They can live in any home and get on well with other cats and dogs, so it doesn't have to be another Maine Coon — I have a kitten at the moment who thinks that my miniature Schnauzer is her mum!" laughs Jacky.

Breeders of majestic Maine Coons are very proud that they are a 'natural' breed and not cross-bred with other breeds to achieve different colour patterns or a different look. Sue Deane, chairman of the Maine Coon Breed Society, agrees: "That's one of the things I love about them; they are natural and they're like an ordinary cat — but much more because they are so big!"

"They are people cats and love to be

with you so will follow you and chirrup at you. They are also very prone to getting themselves into small spaces and like to sit up high! They aren't necessarily lap cats as they're so big, especially the boys, but they will lie next to you or place their head in your lap.

"Sometimes I'll wander around a cat show and wonder which breed I'd have if I didn't have a Maine Coon, but I can't think of one — I wouldn't be without them!"

They've got the look...

Maine Coons have large, muscular bodies with a long, silky and shaggy coat — it's short over the head, becoming longer on the back, stomach, legs and ruff.

Their legs are long, thick and powerful with large rounded feet, big feathered ears and large eyes. Let's not forget the large, fluffy, magnificent tail which wild Maine Coons would use as extra warmth during the cold winters.

There are 64 colour combinations recognised by the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF), with colours including red, cream, black, silver, blue, tortie and white in solids, and the same colours in tabbies, tortie-tabbies, smokes and shaded.

Buying a kitten

On average, you should expect to pay around £450 for a Maine Coon kitten, maybe slightly more in London and the south. Sue says: "We always tell people to go to a GCCF Maine Coon breeders' club where there's a list of reputable breeders and kittens."

When you go to the breeder's house to see your prospective kitten, make sure you meet their mum and possibly the dad if he's there.

"Make sure your kitten has been fully vaccinated, is over 12 weeks old, has had flea and worm treatment, and has been registered with either the GCCF, TICA or FIFE," Sue adds. "Most will also give you four weeks' free insurance."

It's also worth remembering that Maine Coons don't finish growing until they are around four years old!

"THEY ARE
LIKE BIG
GENTLE
GIANTS."

Did you know?

Legend has it that Maine Coons were transported to America during the French Revolution by Marie Antionette when she was trying to flee the country and wanted to bring her feline friends with her.



Rescue me

Maine Coons sometimes find themselves needing to be rehomed through no fault of their own, and this is where the Maine Coon Cat Club's welfare and rescue division comes in. If you feel you could offer a rescue Maine Coon a loving home, call Jacky on 0161 865 8668 or email darktower.mainecons@btinternet.com. Or contact the Maine Coon Breed Society at lynettecannell68@googlemail.com or tel. 01327 844069.

Health & welfare

Maine Coons have a luxurious double coat, but surprisingly they have a very low maintenance grooming regime. Sue says: "Although their coats are drapery as opposed to puffy like a Persian, most of the time they are not hard to groom. Once a week with a steel comb is enough for mine, unless they go outside quite a lot."

As far as health goes, Maine Coons are a generally healthy breed and the only known inherited disease is hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), but with the help of DNA testing breeders are working hard to make sure that HCM-positive cats are not used for breeding.

Breed origins

The origins of the Maine Coon can be traced back to the 1800s where they lived on farms in Maine, USA, earning their keep as rodent catchers. They were originally shown in the 1860s by local farmers at their own annual cat show, competing for the title of 'Maine State Champion Cat'.

Their popularity decreased in the early 1900s but started to make a comeback in the 1950s, achieving full Cat Fanciers Association championship status in 1976. They started to make the transition to the UK in the mid-1980s and achieved GCCF provisional status in 1992.

Did you know?

A Maine Coon ran for Senate in the US state of Virginia in 2012! Ten-year-old Hank came in third place in the campaign behind Tim McKane and George Allen.



Mim.

Living with a Maine Coon

It was their love of 'giant' cats that led Vicky Ross and Huw Thomas to bring home two Maine Coon kittens.

Now eight months old, brown tabby and white Archie and Mim, a tortie and white, bring a lot of love and mischief to their Greater Manchester home!

"Our families have always had cats but these are our first pets as a couple," says Vicky. "We had done our research before we got them — we looked at Bengals but universally the feedback from people was how fantastic and friendly Maine Coons are. Huw was excited about getting a giant cat and we loved the look of them.

"They caused mischief straight away when we got them home. We intended to introduce them to the house gradually, by confining them to one room and so on, but when we let them in they ran around looking at everything and wolfed down their food

within the first half an hour. We didn't need to coop them in one room, they settled in straight away!

"They are very intelligent and inquisitive; they investigate anything new that comes into the house. Archie can now jump onto the counter top and he looks at you as if to say 'what?!'

Mim likes to climb onto Huw's shoulders and drapes herself around his neck, and Archie manages to get himself

into some crazy positions — once he was found curled up in the sink!

"They've decided that 4.30am is playtime! Originally we kept them out of the bedroom, but Archie has worked out how to push the door open with his head and he'll jump on the bed and start nibbling my nose to wake me up! It's like having a small child but you can't get annoyed because they're so cute!

"Maine Coons like your

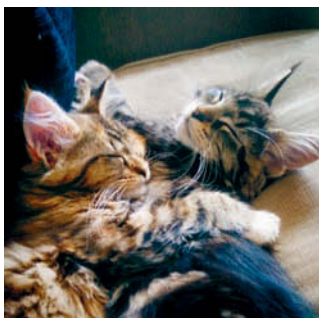
company so will follow you around and don't like to spend time alone, so if you work full time have two for company. And make sure you do your research before you get one."

Fancy a Maine Coon?

Maine Coons get on with most other breeds of cats and dogs, but if you will be out all day, it is very important to have a companion for them as Maine Coons do not cope well being left alone.

"It's so important that they have company — if you are a nine-to-five person, this isn't the cat for you," advises Jacky. They also need plenty of exercise, so it might be wise to give them access to an outdoor run to keep them active. ■

Archie.



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www.yourcat.co.uk/cat-breed-profiles



RESCUE

or pedigree?

You've made the decision to bring a kitten into your home, but do you go to your local rescue centre or find a breeder? We examine the benefits of both...

When you bring a feline friend into your home and your family, you're making a commitment which will last for the cat's entire lifetime — and with cats often living into their twenties, that's quite a commitment. So when you make a decision as big as this, you need to be sure that the kitten is the right one — and that includes choosing where your kitten comes from.

WHY A RESCUE?

There are many positives of adopting a rescue kitten, the first of which is knowing that you are giving a kitten who has been abandoned or feral a loving new home.

Also, there's the good feeling knowing that you are helping out a local charity — Cats Protection cares for between 5,000 and 6,000 unwanted cats at any one time, while the RSPCA has over 1,000 looking for a loving home. Alice Potter, RSPCA's scientific

officer and cat welfare specialist, says: "Some of our cats will have been victims of cruelty or neglect and are the most in need of a loving, stable environment."

Beth Skillings, Cats Protection's clinical veterinary officer, says: "Adopters can be sure they are 'adopting

with confidence'. This means the kitten will have been vet checked, neutered and microchipped if old enough, vaccinated and come with four weeks' free insurance. We

**"THERE'S THE
FEEL GOOD
FACTOR OF GIVING
A RESCUE CAT
THE CHANCE OF A
FOREVER HOME!"**



Did you know?

According to the GCCF, of the 20,000 registered pedigree cats in the UK in 2013, 25.4 per cent (5,107) were British Shorthairs.

provide these benefits to ensure the kitten's welfare and give adopters peace of mind."

Rescue kittens will also have been observed by their charity carers so will be correctly matched to the right homes to suit their personality.

Alice says: "Moggies are also less likely to show the exaggerated physical features and inherited diseases sometimes present in particular breeds. Moggies are not one particular breed but can be made up of a mixture of two or more breeds. This means they come in a variety of different shapes, sizes, colours and markings. Plus, there's the feel good factor of giving a rescue cat the chance of a forever home!"

GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT

There's no doubt that adopting a rescue cat can be extremely rewarding. You and your family gain a loving companion, while at the same time giving a cat a second chance of finding a happy, permanent home. But there is a lot to consider, including his background.

Claire Bessant, chief executive of International Cat Care, says: "The more information you have on the cat and his background and the more you understand his personality and needs, the better. It very much depends on what you want from the cat. Do you want a confident, interactive cat or are you happy to take on a more nervous individual because you want to give a needy cat a home? Everyone is different, but the important thing is to try to match what you want from a cat with the cats that are there — not just to go for the coat colour you like."

HOW ABOUT A PEDIGREE?

Beauty, grace and knowing exactly what you'll get — breeds are called pedigrees for a reason so if you know the look and characteristics of the kitten you'd like, then maybe a pedigree kitten would suit you best.

Although you'll be paying more (some breeds command prices of up to £650 for a pet quality kitten) as breeders will tell you, you'll know all about the kitten's background and parentage. Steve Crow, chairman of the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy, says: "A decision to buy a pedigree kitten means acquiring a pet which has a clearly known and understood ancestry and history. The kitten will grow up to look like its parents — the same size, body type, coat texture and of a pattern and colour which may be the same as its parents or will be easily predicted."

With a pedigree, you can almost be sure of the

kitten's character too, as most breeds have characteristics that are typical of the breed. For example, if you want a laid-back kitten, British or Exotic Shorthairs should fit the bill, and if you'd like a lively, talkative breed then Bengals or Siamese are probably a good fit. (Remember, breed profiles are general and every cat is an individual.)

Make sure you do plenty of research into the breed you'd like to bring into your home however. Steve says: "It is important that you do research the character and temperament of different breeds and speak to breeders and owners. You should always meet the mother and siblings, and

if possible the father, so that you can assess how they behave and interact with you. They may naturally be a little nervous of a stranger, but will give you a sense of what to expect in your new kitten."

DECISION MADE

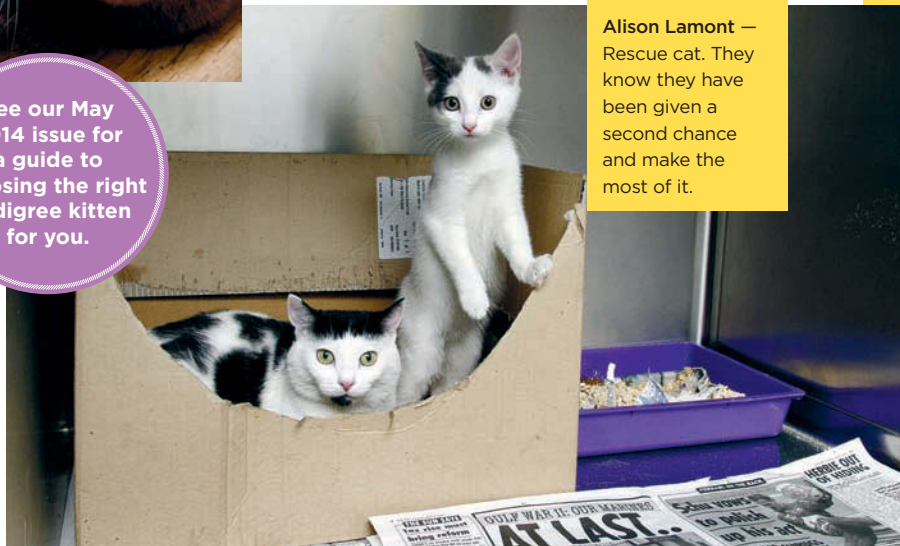
If you've picked a pedigree, make sure you receive his registration papers, which are vital if you wish to show him. Pedigrees are generally old enough to leave home when they're around 13 weeks old, and should have already received at least an enteritis inoculation and a full course of cat 'flu inoculations. These inoculations should be included in the price.

If you've picked a rescue, he may be ready to come home with you when he's around eight weeks old, but this is up to the rescue centre. Remember to ask which vaccinations he will have had by the time you take him home, and when he'll need neutering. In

addition, whether pedigree or rescue, find out what type of litter, food and feeding schedule your new addition is used to — this will come in handy when it's time to settle him into his new home. ■



See our May 2014 issue for a guide to choosing the right pedigree kitten for you.



OVER TO YOU...

Q WOULD YOU HAVE A RESCUE OR PEDIGREE?

Catherine Tew —
There are so many cats who need rehoming but being a breeder of the Korat, I know how people become so incredibly attached to them and very often want another one.

Jae Elisa —
Rescue every time — there are so many beautiful animals desperate for a second chance, and loving homes.

Natalie Williams —
Mine have always, and probably always will be, rescues. They are so in need of homes — there always seem to be homes for pedigrees, but those in shelters are in more need.

Liz Oliver —
Pedigree, but from a reputable breeder that health tests and shows their cats. I am addicted to my shorties.

Alison Lamont —
Rescue cat. They know they have been given a second chance and make the most of it.

Feline Focus

ASIAN

HEALTH & CARE

The Asian is generally a healthy breed, but there have been very occasional instances of Hypokalemic polymyopathy and Flat-chested kitten syndrome. These shorthaired cats need little grooming; a brush once a week will remove loose hair. However, semi-longhair Tiffanies will need a good groom once a week using a comb.

FINDING A KITTEN

Prices vary according to location, individual breeders and whether or not the kitten is microchipped/neutered, so expect to pay anywhere between £400 to £500 for a pet quality kitten. It is also worth remembering that colours can take up to two years to develop.

WANT AN ASIAN?

Asians don't like being left alone all day, so would need a feline companion to keep them company if you are out at work. The breed is full of beans and can be cheeky, so they would need an owner with plenty of energy to keep up with them!

HISTORY

Despite its name, the Asian does not come from Asia. It is a man-made breed, which originated with the Burmilla in 1981 after a Chinchilla and a Burmese mated. The breeder, Miranda von Kirchberg, then embarked on a breeding programme with advice from fellow breeders, and created a whole new group of cats with the name 'Asian'.

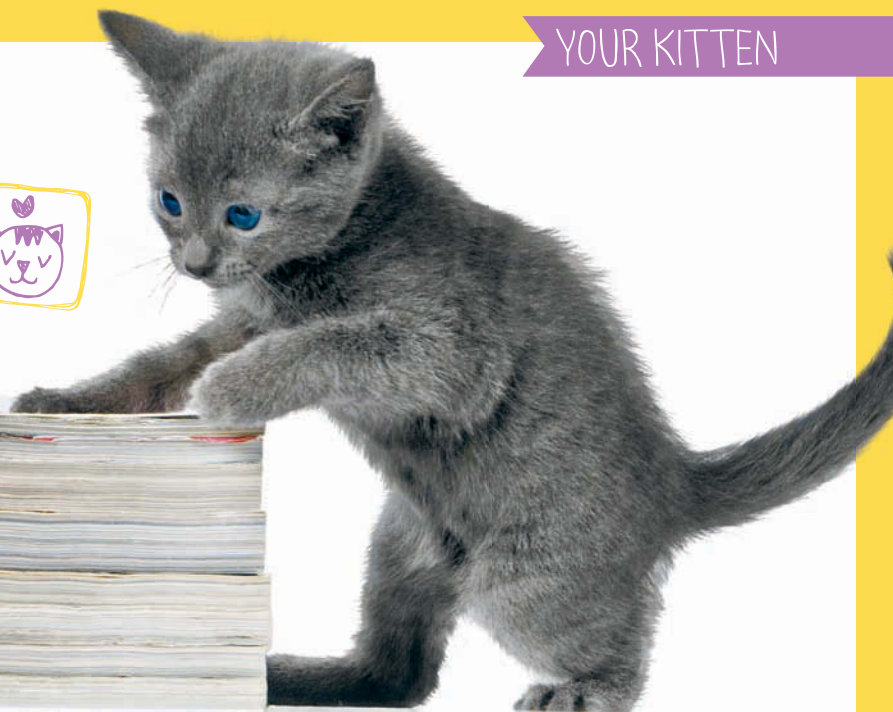
LOOKING GOOD

Burmillas are mostly silver or non-silver with a shaded pattern, while Tiffanies have medium-length fine coats and fluffy tails. Tabbies have either ticked, spotted, classic or 'mackerel' patterns, while Smokes have a silvery undercoat with a contrasting topcoat. Selves come in a range of solid colours — a black self is known as the Bombay (left).

WHAT IS AN ASIAN CAT?

Burmillas (main picture), Asian Selves, Bombays, Tiffanies (above), Smokes and Tabbies are all members of the Asian family. Asians are very confident, inquisitive, lively and energetic cats who enjoy playing with feline or human friends. They are also said to be good with children.



BREEDER TALK 

A guide to paperwork

When adopting a pedigree kitten it might seem like you receive a mountain of paperwork, but what does it all mean?

Any responsible breeder will ensure that you are given all of the relevant paperwork when you take your new fluffy bundle home, but what do all these different bits of paper mean?

As you got your kitten from a reputable breeder (contact the breeder clubs or the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy to ensure this), your kitten will be registered so the most important document is the registration certificate.

Steve Crow, chairman of the

GCCF, says: "This is important as it is the proof and validation that the kitten is a correctly bred pedigree and that his parents, grandparents and ancestors are those permitted in the pedigree of that breed."

"This registration document will give all the important details about the kitten and will specify the breeder's details and the kitten's parentage. It will say whether the kitten is on the Active register (can be used for breeding) or the Non-Active register. The new owner

should always transfer this registration certificate into their name and ownership with the registration body."

The breeder will also give the new owner a pedigree for the kitten, which should give at least three generations of the kitten's ancestors, as well as the vaccination certificate showing that the kitten has been inoculated against feline panleukopenia, cat 'flu and often feline leukemia virus (FeLV).

Steve says: "All responsible breeders will issue a four-week insurance cover note with the kitten, activated on the date of sale. This gives insurance cover against illness, loss or death during the first 28 days and will trigger the insurance company to contact the

new owner to offer details of an annual policy to cover the new kitten."

Many responsible breeders also arrange for their kittens to be microchipped before they are sold, in which case the details of the microchip number will be given, as well as a GCCF leaflet on caring for a new kitten, a diet sheet and what type of litter the kitten is using.

"Many breeders have some kind of sale agreement, and these can sometimes lead to problems," Steve warns. "If the kitten has been sold as a pet the agreement will be pretty straightforward, but may well state that the new owner agrees to have the kitten neutered if the kitten is on the Non-Active register. If the kitten is on the Active register, the agreement may have some details concerning the future mating of the kitten."

"Although these agreements are fairly common, they are generally not enforceable in law. Once a kitten is sold and paid for it is the property of the new owner and under the Sale of Goods Act must be fit for the purpose for which it was sold."

Lastly, you should also receive a receipt for the money paid. ■



The Kitten List on our website is updated on the first of the month, please check to see if any of our Breeder Members have kittens available.

We welcome new members to the Club, please see the website for details.



Photo by Marc Henrie

www.bombayandasiancatsbreedclub.org

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 59



FIND A KITTEN

Welcome to our pedigree kitten directory! The listing includes hundreds of breeders whose entries are colour-coded to help you find kittens local to you.

■ SCOTLAND ■ NORTH EAST ■ YORKSHIRE ■ EAST MIDLANDS ■ EAST ANGLIA
■ LONDON ■ SOUTH EAST ■ SOUTH WEST ■ WEST MIDLANDS ■ WALES ■ NORTH WEST

Abyssinian



ABYSSINIAN CAT ASSOCIATION the Club for Abyssinian Cats. Hon. Sec. Gina Yates 07401 356 765. Kitten list Mrs Pat Carlisle 01773 852931. Welfare Dorothy Harley 01259 750576. Website www.theabysscat.com ■

Bengal



Foreverfriends home of Pantherajedi & Wildthingz UK Bengal's. Specialising in Silver, Silver Snow, All 3 types of Snow & Early Generations. Kittens available to loving homes. Reg. Vacc. Neutered, Microchipped and 4 weeks insurance. Tracy Baker Tel: 020 8391 0134 / 07590467233 <http://www.foreverfriends.co.uk> ■

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Tel: 01527 879530
www.queenannecats.co.uk ■

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See **CHARMODEN** British Shorthair
See **JACOU** Burmese
See **ACORNPAWS** British Shorthair

Birman



SNOWWITCH BIRMANS & SIBERIANS. Specialising in Seal, Blue, Chocolate and Lilac, solids and tabby points. Kittens sometimes available to loving homes. Grand Champion at Stud. Contact Claire 01634 230921 (Kent) E: snowwitchbirmans@hotmail.co.uk www.snowwitchbirmans.co.uk ■

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British Shorthair



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Khancoban
Tel: 01495740367
Anne Cooper
<http://www.khancoban.co.uk>
email@khancoban.co.uk

IDLEBECK British. Chocolates, Lilacs, Blacks & Blues plus related Torties & Bicolours. Carefully home-reared, GCCF registered. Tel: 01483 235748 (Surrey) Email: british@idlebeck.co.uk www.idlebeck.co.uk ■

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GCCF Registered
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ACORNPAWS BRITISH SHORTHAIRES.
Blue, Silver, Cream, Tabbies & Spotties. Bengals - all colours. Kittens usually available. Studs available in both breeds. Tel: 01704 841991 (Lancs) email: acornpawscattery@aol.com www.acornpawscattery.com ■

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www.charmoden.co.uk ■

Burmese



JACOU BURMESE KITTENS.
All colours sometimes available. All kittens brought-up indoors in loving family surroundings. Tel June 0161 980 2383 (Cheshire/Manchester) Email: jacoucats@googlemail.com ■

BURMESE CAT CLUB recommends kittens should be at least 13 weeks old before leaving, registered/fully vaccinated house-trained, in good health and well adjusted. Kitten list 01622 730861
Rescue & Rehoming 01483 828625
Lost & Found 01787 278912
www.burmesecatclub.com ■

Burmilla



BURMILLA KITTENS, all brown shaded silver, males and females, ready early December. Please contact Barbara 01594564071, email gazzellacats@btinternet.com for information and photos, www.gazzellacats.co.uk ■

Chinchilla



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VILLIERS CHINCHILLAS, Golden Persians. Sired By IMP/GR CH CH parents. Working with German, Dutch & English lines. Vac/Reg/Ins, PKD Negative tested & Microchipped. Kittens available. Tel: 01406 259 232 Mob: 07960 883 233 email: janet.r@fsmail.net www.villierschinchillas.co.uk ■

Colourpoint Persian



See **AMORAMIST** Maine Coon

Cornish Rex



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See **BRYNULA** Devon Rex

Devon Rex



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See **EMERISLE** Ragdoll
See **RASTAKESHI** Cornish Rex

Exotic Shorthair



See **PENNYDOWN** British Shorthair
See **EMERISLE** Ragdoll
See **WINDYMEADOW** British Shorthair

Golden Persian



See **VILLIERS** Chinchilla
See **CASZAN** Chinchilla

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www.lunaris.uk.com
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	Welfare: 07954 371243
	Kitten List and Breeders List: 07944 467899
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See **RSTAKESHI** Cornish Rex

Persian



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See **VILLIERS** Chinchilla
See **CASZAN** Chinchilla
See **TAMOSAH** Chinchilla
See **WINDYMEADOW** British Shorthair

Ragdoll



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--	--

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Tel: 01353 675311 (Suffolk).
Mob: 0791 8882740
www.locineragdolls.com ■

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HOW TO... FEED YOUR KITTEN A HEALTHY DIET



ADVICE FROM PDSA SENIOR VET, ELAINE PENDLEBURY.

The New Year is often a time to start a new diet, but I believe that a healthy eating plan from the start prevents the need for dieting later on. This is as true for our cats as it is for us! A suitable healthy food plan for your kitten will help them grow into a strong and healthy adult cat.

As kittens have very small stomachs and cats tend to be 'snackers' in their eating patterns, they need feeding little and often. So it's best to have food available at all times, but don't exceed the amount they need each day. They usually start to eat some solid food from around four weeks, copying what their mother eats, but the whole weaning process should be gradual over the next month and depends on the kitten's development.

Kittens have a high growth rate, so it's important that they have an appropriate, well balanced diet to make sure they get the right food in the right amounts to meet their nutritional needs. Complete kitten food — wet or dry, whichever they prefer — will give them all the nutrients they need. Weigh out their daily allowance in the morning — refer to the packet feeding guidelines for the amount, or ask your

vet if you're unsure. If you use a scoop or do it by eye it's very easy to overfeed.

However, cats do like variation in the food they eat, so if you really can't resist an occasional treat, or perhaps want to give a reward for good behaviour, give a small piece of lean meat and reduce their food that day to compensate. Also, remember that milk isn't essential after weaning, and the kitten's ability to digest the lactose in milk actually decreases.

Other factors can affect a kitten's eating habits — their bowls are particularly important. Ceramic ones are better as they don't become tainted with smells, and shallow bowls will mean they can look around the room for anyone who might be a threat while they eat!

If you have any cats you think might need to go on a diet, why not enter them into PDSA Pet Fit Club? For more information visit www.pdsa.org.uk/petfitclub ■





YOUR KITTEN



in association with



READER'S KITTEN OF THE MONTH

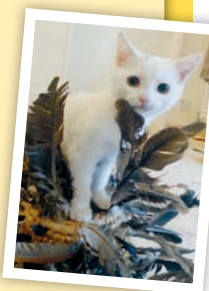
Michelle Morgan tells us how three-legged kitten Bunny 'hopped' into her life.

"Bunny was a little feral kitten. She was around seven weeks old when she was spotted living in a rabbit warren behind a farmhouse, a long way from other properties," explains Michelle from Rugby, Warks. "There was no sign of her mum or siblings so food was put down for her and we decided to take care of her, and eventually brought her home.

"She'd obviously never had anything to do with humans before as she was rather scared by the whole thing! I noticed that she was limping so we went straight to the vets, which was easier said than done — I arrived at the vets covered in plasters with a very unhappy kitten! We found out that she had a broken leg, which may have been why she was abandoned by her feral mum as she couldn't keep up.

"We were given two choices — put her to sleep or amputate the leg. She was a lovely, healthy kitten and the decision to amputate seemed the best thing as I wanted to give her the chance to have a happy life.

"She has recovered brilliantly! She is now a lively kitten, who doesn't even know she used to have four legs. She lets us pick her up and purrs like a motor! She's still a bit skittish but gets braver every day!" ■



www.wellbeloved.com

James Wellbeloved complete dry cat food contains natural ingredients such as succulent turkey, duck, or fish, gently blended with rice, tomato, potato and maize. It has no added artificial colours, flavours or preservatives, and also avoids ingredients known to cause many food intolerances. James Wellbeloved food is available in Kitten, Adult, Senior, Light, No Cereal, Hairball, Housecat and Oral Health varieties. Visit www.wellbeloved.com or tel. 0845 603 9095.



COULD YOUR KITTEN BE OUR KITTEN OF THE MONTH?

If featured here you could win a year's supply of James Wellbeloved complete cat food! Send your entries, including a photo and around 250 words, to editorial@yourcat.co.uk. Don't forget to include your name, your kitten's name and your full address!

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We are also on Facebook

Scottish Fold



See **EMERISLE** Ragdolls

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See **RASTAKESHI** Cornish Rex

Siberian



See **SNOWWITCH** Birmans

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For more advice on cats and kittens, visit the cat advice section on our website.



www.yourcat.co.uk/advice

Let's get crafty!

It's time to get arty and crafty, cat lovers! Send us your cat-themed creations for the chance to win one of three £50 Amazon vouchers to spend on anything you like!

Do you have a talent that you'd like to showcase? Whether you're a pro at knitting, baking, toy making, painting, drawing, jewellery making or designing cat accessories, as long as your craft is cat-themed, simply take a photo of it and send it to us to be in with the chance of winning!



How to enter:

All you have to do is send us up to three photos of your cat-themed creations (one photo per item). Entries must be emailed to l.johnson@bpgmedia.co.uk by **January 31, 2015**. Please include your name and a short description about your cat-themed craft(s). This competition is for UK residents only. The editor's decision is final. T&Cs can be found on our website.

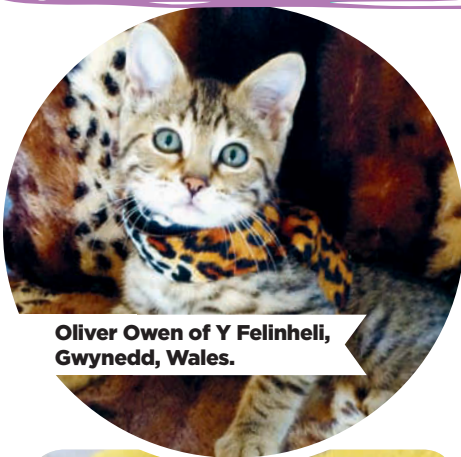
PLUS

If you currently offer your talents to others, you could be featured in our upcoming cat crafts directory online!

KITTEN GALLERY



**Breeze Brookes
of Leeds.**



**Oliver Owen of Y Felinheli,
Gwynedd, Wales.**



**Chloe Taniowskyi
of Middleton, Mancs.**



**Hamish Lockerby of
Annan, Dumfriesshire.**



**Arni Davis of St
John's, Worcs.**

WINNER!



**Pyewacket Fellows,
Wednesbury, West Mids.**



**Lois Dickson of
Glasgow, Scotland.**



**Olly Brierley, Oldham,
Greater Mancs.**



**Dolly and Olly Miller of
Vale of Glamorgan, Wales.**



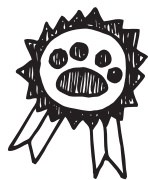
**Bobby Bentley of
Kidderminster, Worcs.**



Send your kitten photos to pawtraits@yourcat.co.uk with your name, address and your kitten's name. The winner each month will receive a hamper worth £30, courtesy of The Company of Animals! Every runner-up will also win a prize! Visit www.companyofanimals.co.uk or tel. 01932 566696.



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Showtime!



A veteran of the pedigree pet section, Imperial Grand Master Cat Fluff, turns 15 this month and is still enjoying a successful show career.

Fluff, owned by Lesley Szwed, began life as Snokrystal Aslan, a Norwegian Forest Cat bred by Mag and Les Wheeler. Lesley showed him in the pedigree section where he was gaining certificates. However, he had a tail fault so his show career came to an end, only to be revived seven years later with the start of the pedigree pets section.

Lesley says: "He totally enjoys his days out and will unashamedly tell the judges how wonderful he is! He has won seven Olympian, four reserve Olympian certificates and many Best in Shows. He's a very special boy and people always ask for a cuddle. I'm so proud of his achievements."

Rexcellent performance

Eight-year old Hollie-Mae Broadway had a brilliant day at the recent colourpoint, Rex-coated and AOV (Any Other Variety) show. Hollie's Devon Rex Sydney, whose pedigree name is Kindaposh Margaret, was entered as a neuter for the first time, winning her first premier certificate and being awarded the Best of Breed as well as two firsts in side classes.

Hollie says: "We thought she did excellently. She won best foreign neuter and to top it off she also won Best in Show Foreign Exhibit. Her number was called twice because it didn't sink in that she had won. I couldn't wait to tell all my friends at school."



SHOW DATES



GCCF

20 December

Maidstone & Medway Cat Club, The Bracknell Leisure Centre, Bagshot Road, Bracknell, Berks. RG12 9SE

3 January

Capital Long Hair Cat Association and Eastern Long Hair & Semi Long Hair Cat Club, Wodson Park Leisure Centre, Wadesmill Road, Ware, Herts. SG12 0UQ

10 January

1) Colourpoint Cat Club, Ettington Community Centre, Rogers Lane, Ettington, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 7SX
2) Exotic Cat Society, Tydd St Giles Community Centre, Broad Drove East, Tydd St Giles, Wisbech, Cambs. PE13 5LN

11 January

Cameo, Pewter & Smoke Society, The Memorial Village Hall, Gnosall, Staffs. ST20 0ET

17 January

West of Scotland Cat Club and Scottish Cat Club, Ravenscraig Regional Sports Facility, O'Donnell Way, Motherwell, Lanarks. ML1 2TZ.

TICA

4 January

TickedTICA, White Oak Leisure Centre, Hilda May Avenue, Swanley, Kent BR8 7BT

15-16 November

NaturallyTICA, Warde Aldam Building, Doncaster Deaf Trust, Leger Way, Doncaster DN2 6AY

Dates and venues correct at the time of going to press. Before setting out it would be wise to check with the organisers.

Success for new exhibitor

Exhibitor Carolyn Gerrard had a successful day at a joint show held by the Rex Cat Club, Rex Cat Association and Sphynx Cat Club. Carolyn, who has been showing for less than a year, shows her Selkirk Rex variant Oliver as a 'pedigree pet' and her black Selkirk Rex kitten, Quizzicurl Cloutie

Dumplin, bred by Christine Weber.

Carolyn took both along to the joint show and tells us: "I knew Oliver and Dumpling had already done well and was delighted. Oliver had been awarded two Grand certificates, making him up to

Grand Master Cat Oliver, while Dumpling had been awarded firsts."

As the Best in Show results were announced Christine was bowled over as Oliver was awarded Best in Show Household Pet in both shows he was entered in. Then Dumpling went on to become overall Best in Show in the Rex Cat Club line up, then Best of the Best from the winners of the three shows. This was Christine's first Best in Show award. She says: "I am still on cloud nine and looking forward to my next day out showing. Dumpling is such a showman; he simply loved all the attention. He's such a loving kitten, but more than anything else he just loves to cuddle up with me and never stops purring!"



Show
lingo

'Vetting in': On arrival at the show hall, all cats have to be checked by a vet before they are allowed to enter. This prevents cats showing signs of diseases from posing a risk of infection to other cats. Owners must produce a current vaccination certificate.

Classified

▼ BEREAVEMENT

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Blue Cross is a charity registered in England and Wales (224392) and in Scotland (SC040154).

▼ BOOKS



Purring Angels

Purring Angels: The book for cat-lovers!

This engaging, humorous memoir describes the author's love for her cats and tells how they helped her at least as much as she helped them, with health, love and life.

Part of the proceeds will go to kittens in distress.

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▼ GIFTS

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The Burmese Cat Club
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Dedicated to the welfare of the Burmese Breed

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www.burmesecatclub.com



We have lots of cats and kittens looking for loving homes. For more information contact:

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Rescue centres in:

- Berkshire • Cornwall • Essex
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MEET THE TEAM

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EDITOR

Chloë Hukin

chloe@yourcat.co.uk

FEATURES WRITER

Rachel Grafton

rachel@yourcat.co.uk

JOURNALIST

Hannah Vickers

hannah@yourcat.co.uk

ADMIN ASSISTANT

Mel Hudson

editorial@yourcat.co.uk

Telephone extension: 400

DESIGNERS

Marisa Bailey, Anthony Hall & Joel Hillyard

HEAD OF BRAND STRATEGY

James Buzzel

DEPUTY WEB EDITOR

Lara Johnson

DIGITAL ASSISTANT

Laura Wright

COMMERCIAL SALES MANAGER

Becky Kane

ADVERTISING

SALES TEAM

Andrea Walters, Emma Hill

& Bethan Watson

ads@yourcat.co.uk

Tel. 01476 859838

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Sally Evans

COLOUR REPRO

Graham Warren

AD PRODUCTION

Nigel Fish & Mark Cowling

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Alison Queenborough

CHAIRMAN

Mike Barnes

PRINTING

Wyndham Group

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES

Tel. 0844 848 8257

(overseas readers tel.

+44 1604 251493 or email

yourcat@bpgmags.com)

BACK ISSUES & BINDERS

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editorial@yourcat.co.uk

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Your Cat giveaways

January 2015

For your chance to win one of this month's giveaways, simply visit www.yourcat.co.uk/giveaways quoting code **JYC15GT**Y and follow the instructions on screen. Alternatively, fill in the form below and send to us before the closing date January 14, 2015. Please note, you can enter online from December 15, 2014.

Book shop (page 13)

- ☐ 'Travels with Cookie' by David Thomas and Helen Krasner
- ☐ 'Alfie: The Doorstep Cat' by Rachel Wells
- ☐ 'The Pawtraits Exhibition' by Maria Slough

Freebies (page 25)

- ☐ Cheshire & Wain limited edition collar
- ☐ Medipet Valerian Cat Spray
- ☐ ACANA Regionals cat food
- ☐ A year's supply of Frontline Spot On and Pets at Home vouchers

Celebrity interview (page 31)

- ☐ 'A Gift From Bob' by James Bowen

Kittyword (page 59)

The five-letter answer is

- ☐

Short story (page 65)

- ☐ 'Some Veil Did Fall' by Kirsty Ferry

Buyer's guide (page 66)

- ☐ Webbox Lick-e-Lix (Choose from ☐ salmon or ☐ chicken)
- ☐ Mrs Bishop's Doggy Deli's kitty hamper

Last-minute gift guide (page 68)

- ☐ Sass & Belle floral cat doorstep
- ☐ Sass & Belle cat paperclips
- ☐ Merryfield Pottery sewing companion
- ☐ Flamingo Gifts £30 voucher

What's new pussycat? (page 70)

- ☐ Myfussycat Apollo Starter Kit
- ☐ Intersand City Classic litter (Choose from ☐ lavender, ☐ baby powder or ☐ unscented)
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