

blueprint

**LOOK AT
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NEW LIFE

**AN END TO
ABANDONMENT**
WHY BRITAIN NEEDS
OUR BIG NEUTERING
CAMPAIGN

GREEN FINGERS
HOW TO CREATE
A PET-FRIENDLY
GARDEN





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welcome



Welcome to the Spring 2013 edition of *Blueprint*. If, like me, you're hoping for good weather this year so you can get out and enjoy the great outdoors, don't forget to turn to page 20 for our guide to transforming your garden into a paradise for your pets, without any dug-up flowerbeds! If you're not the green-fingered type, there are lots of other ways you can get out and about – how about a dog walk, a fundraising challenge or a tea party picnic? Join the fun and check out how you can get involved with Blue Cross around the country on pages 24 and 25.

As always, we've been working towards our vision of every pet enjoying a healthy life in a happy home, and we've had some fabulous success stories. You might remember the tiny stray puppy Bobby, who we rescued from Ireland, from the last edition of *Blueprint*. He's now been rehomed and we paid him a visit to see how he's getting on – read page 10 to find out more. We also caught up with two veteran ponies on page 13: Briony and Brandy, who are flying the flag for charity

animals everywhere by competing against the best and coming out on top. There really is nothing better for us than to find out that a once sick, injured or homeless pet is now living a wonderful, happy life – and that's thanks to your support.

Happy reading,

Natasha

Natasha Kleanthous **Editor**

REGULARS

- 4 NEWS**
Read the latest news from Blue Cross.
- 12 HOMES WANTED**
Could you give a Blue Cross pet a happy home?
- 13 HAPPY ENDING**
Ponies Briony and Brandy are mingling with the stars.
- 18 EXPERT ADVICE**
Our team of experts are here to help with your pet problems.



FEATURES

- 8 LET'S STOP THIS NEEDLESS MISERY**
Find out why we launched our Big Neutering Campaign.
- 10 THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT FOR BOBBY**
Stray puppy Bobby has blossomed into a happy, healthy pooch.
- 11 THUMBS UP FOR MAY**
Was being deaf stopping gorgeous dog May from finding a home?
- 14 'MILLIE BROUGHT HAPPINESS BACK INTO MY LIFE'**
A tragedy left Susan devastated and alone, until gentle dog Millie came to stay.
- 16 WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**
We visit some familiar faces from the past.
- 20 IS YOUR GARDEN PET FRIENDLY?**
Turn your garden into a pet's playground.
- 21 ONE STEP AT A TIME**
Our behaviour team gives a frustrated owner some help with her dog.
- 22 GIVING SOMETHING BACK**
When Kathryn needed us, we helped her. Now she's helping us.

OVER TO YOU

- 23 PET POST**
Your letters.
- 24 TEA PARTY**
One supporter's fundraising story.
- 25 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**
Local Blue Cross events.
- 26 COMPETITION**
Win some fabulous homeware.



Our vision: every pet will enjoy a healthy life in a happy home.
Our mission: we find happy homes for abandoned or unwanted pets, and we keep pets healthy by promoting welfare and providing treatment.

EDITORIAL

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your news update

Rehoming successes and fantastic fundraising activity from our centres, teams and supporters across the UK and abroad

Unwanted shares raise **£10,000** for pets

Blue Cross has received a donation of £10,000 from ShareGift to help sick, injured and homeless pets, thanks to people giving us their unwanted shares.

We can raise money from large quantities of shares either by selling them or by adding them to our stock portfolio, so it's a really simple and effective way to support us. We work with ShareGift, a charity that specialises in aggregating and selling shares, and giving the proceeds to UK charities.

Since 1998, we have received over £84,000 from ShareGift, which has helped us to care for thousands of pets. There is no charge to you or Blue Cross when you donate shares through ShareGift – in fact, you may even benefit from income tax relief.

If you have shares, no matter what their size or value, that you would like to donate to Blue Cross, please contact Selina Williams, Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF, call 0300 777 1897 or email sharegiving@bluecross.org.uk. For more information about ShareGift, visit www.sharegift.org.uk



Your donations help us to care for thousands of pets

Blue Cross ambulances are **star attraction**

Our ambulances have become the latest tourist attraction in London.

The ambulances, which transport poorly pets to our hospitals, were given a makeover last year as part of the new look Blue Cross branding. Since then our drivers have noticed that they constantly get photographed by tourists whenever they stop at traffic lights. One was even filmed on a video camera!



VETERINARY STUDENTS HELP REHOME CATS

We have now teamed up with three colleges to help homeless pets.

As part of our fostering partnership, cats are kept in tailor-made chalets and are looked after by animal care and veterinary students until they find new homes. Not only does it mean that we can help more cats in areas where we don't have centres, but it's also great practice for the students who are preparing for a career with animals.

The scheme is being run at Solihull College in the West Midlands, Hartpury College in Gloucester, and Wiltshire College, Lackham.

Abbie Holmes, a student at Solihull, says: "Practical experience is really important and it makes it extra special to be helping a charity and to know that for many of these cats there simply isn't anywhere else for them to go."

Would you like to foster cats yourself, or do you know a college that might be interested in getting involved? Find out more about our rehoming pet fostering scheme at www.bluecross.org.uk/volunteer or call us on 0300 777 1897.



Fresh start for Lazer and Link

A pair of kittens who came to Blue Cross after their mum fell pregnant for the second time in only a few months have now been rehomed.

Two-month-old moggies Lazer and Link (pictured) were brought to our Hertfordshire rehoming centre with their six-month-old brother, Logan, because their owner couldn't cope with the cost of caring for so many unplanned kittens.

The kittens' mum had become pregnant twice despite having only limited access outside. This shows just how easy it is for a cat to get pregnant – in fact, it's thought that one unneutered female can be responsible for up to 20,000 kittens in just five years. You can find out more about what Blue Cross is doing to tackle the growing number of unwanted puppies and kittens on page eight.



Raffle and Spot the Ball winners

Well done to all the latest winners of our Paw Draw raffles, prize draws and Spot the Ball competition. The top winners were:

Summer Spot the Ball:

S Smetzer from Kent – £5,000

Christmas raffle:

V Morley from Lincolnshire – £12,500

K Blocker from Middlesex – £1,000

V Maynard from Yorkshire – £500

S Shave from Kent – £500 (super seller prize)

Christmas prize draw:

P Mavin from London – £7,500

Left: Lazer and Link were the result of an unplanned pregnancy

Blue Cross announces top dog

Animal lover Carolina Calvete scooped the top spot in our Pap Your Pooch photography competition with this fabulous picture of her dog, Olivia.

We asked supporters to upload photos of their dogs that best captured the sentiment of "a healthy life and a happy home". It was judged by Beverley Cuddy, editor of *Dogs Today* magazine, who picked Olivia as the winner.

As well as having her winning photo published in *Blueprint*, Carolina and Olivia also got the chance to have a professional photoshoot together. Carolina says: "The photo was taken in Cliff Gardens in Southend, where we take her every day for a good run.

"Olivia was found in a box with her brothers and sisters when they were only a month old. We could only take one, and she immediately stole my heart. She is the most happy, gentle and loving dog I have ever had."



PETPLAN'S £1M DONATION

Blue Cross is celebrating a major landmark after receiving over £1m from insurance company Petplan over the past decade.

Petplan provides free insurance for the first four weeks to the dogs, cats and rabbits that we rehome, and, each time the new owner continues their insurance after this time, we receive 10 per cent of the policy premium. We get a further 10 per cent when the policy is renewed.

The money has gone towards helping us to care for poorly and unwanted pets at our 12 rehoming centres and four animal hospitals.

Left: Olivia's prize-winning portrait, taken in Cliff Gardens, Southend

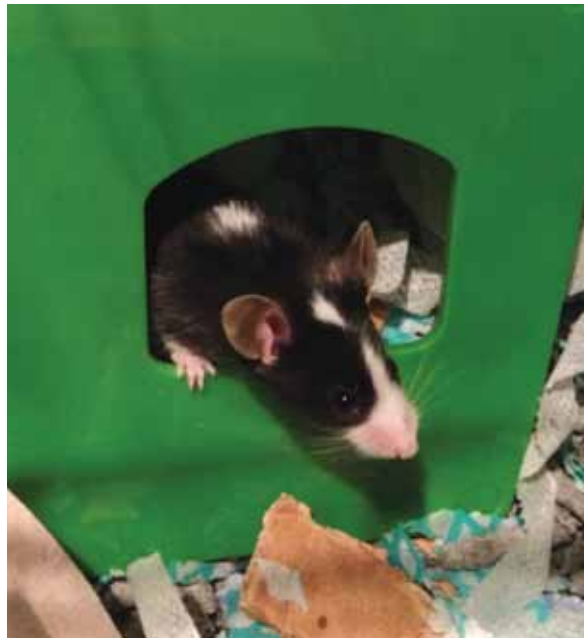
BLUE CROSS TAKES IN 150 ABANDONED MICE

Blue Cross stepped in to rescue 150 mice that were left in an abandoned pet shop.

They were discovered in their cages by a kind-hearted builder who went into the shop to start work. He rescued them and took them home, but, as mice are known for their speedy breeding habits, he soon found himself with many more to care for and contacted us for help.

Alyson Jones, manager of the Blue Cross Burford rehoming centre that took the mice in, says: "The first thing we had to do was to 'sex' all the mice, so we could separate the males from females to make sure we didn't end up with even more."

We then began the process of finding loving homes for all the mice. Alyson adds: "People who look after mice often say how rewarding it is – they make lovely pets. They are friendly and social, and they love to play."



VOLUNTEER MANAGER WINS AWARD

A Blue Cross employee has been awarded for her work with volunteers at our Felixstowe rehoming centre.

Pauline Ivatt won the volunteer manager of the year award from local action group the Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations. It's the first time this group has issued the award, which is to recognise people who have shown skill in their management of volunteers. Blue Cross has more than 2,000 volunteers, who do amazing work helping us run our services and care for pets.



LEFT AND BELOW:

Emmett is settling into his new life as a fieldmate and has made a lot of progress



New home for Emmett

Do you remember Emmett, the pony we told you about in the Autumn 2012 edition of *Blueprint*? He was rescued as part of a large welfare operation by the RSPCA, and he was very ill and malnourished when he arrived at Blue Cross. He had a lice problem and a condition called strangles.

Emmett was put on a special feeding regime and needed intensive handling to prepare him for his future. He was given a tailor-made training

programme to help him bond with people and build his confidence.

With lots of patience, Emmett turned a corner and became bolder and more content, and he has now been rehomed as a fieldmate to another pony. He is progressing well and has settled happily into his new home.

When Emmett is four years old, he will be assessed to see if he is suitable for training as a riding pony. Kerry

"He has settled happily into his new home"

Alexander, who has rehomed him on our loan agreement, says: "It strikes me how serious he is and it makes me so sad that he has been made like this by someone.

"My two-year-old pony is an obnoxious adolescent and wants to play, learn and challenge! Emmett has to learn that he can now become a proper youngster. He is totally fine and a dear little chap – hard not to love and very good at snuggles."

BLUE CROSS HELPS TO REFORM ONLINE PET SALES

Blue Cross has been working alongside other charities and organisations to help tackle the irresponsible sale of pets online.

As part of the Pet Advertising Advisory Group we have drafted minimum standards for online advertisements and have advised market leaders, such as Gumtree and Preloved, on how to improve their pet sections. We hope this will help to promote good animal welfare by ensuring that any ads failing to meet these standards are removed.

The growing popularity of online pet sales is a huge challenge and our research has shown that there can be up to 50,000 pets for sale on just one popular website at any time. The overwhelming majority are puppies and kittens, and there are continuing problems with puppy farmers masquerading as private sellers and illegal breeds being advertised and sold to unwitting buyers.

You can get an update on what Blue Cross has been doing to tackle the growing crisis of pets being treated as disposable items on pages eight and nine.



ABANDONED CAT IS ON THE MEND AFTER SURGERY

A young cat who was abandoned at our Victoria animal hospital is recovering after surgery to repair a fractured leg.

Whiskas was in a lot of pain when she arrived at Blue Cross with the injury, which was thought to have been caused by her getting caught in a door. We operated on her and attached an external fixator, known as an ex fix, to her leg to help it heal.

Whiskas needed ongoing veterinary treatment for a couple of months while she recovered. Sadly, Whiskas' owners never came back to the hospital to get her and, after trying to contact them several times, we arranged for her to go into foster care while she recovered. Once she was better, we found her a loving home.

Whiskas is one of the 11,197 sick and injured pets that we operated on and one of the 7,677 animals that we rehomed last year thanks to your support.



Try Your Dog or Your Cat magazine for just £1

Your Dog and *Your Cat* are the perfect magazines for cat and dog owners and lovers, providing expert advice every month. Blue Cross supporters can now subscribe to either title at a special rate, paying just £1* for the first three issues.

To subscribe to *Your Dog*, visit www.bpgmags.com/YD/YDBX2 and for *Your Cat* visit www.bpgmags.com/YC/YCBX2. Or, to order over the phone, call 0844 848 8257 quoting codes YDBX2 or YCBX2.

*UK subscribers only, paying by direct debit. Offer price is £1 for first three issues/three months followed by £7.50 every three months. For overseas prices call +44 1604 251493.



Blueprint competition winners

Congratulations to the winners of our *Blueprint* Autumn 2012 competition to win a Miele vacuum cleaner and Mikki dog grooming hampers. The winners are:

- 1) S Lockett, Stourbridge
- 2) A Pickering, Matlock
- 3) Douglas Millard, Northants

LET'S STOP THIS NEEDLESS MISERY

With the number of dumped, abandoned and unwanted puppies and kittens at an all-time high, we launched the Blue Cross Big Neutering Campaign to change the lives of Britain's pets for the better



A puppy abandoned on a quiet track and left to die, kittens zipped up in a bag and dumped in a park – these may sound like extreme cases to you, but the sad truth is that it's something Blue Cross is seeing much more often.

The number of unwanted kittens, puppies and pregnant pets has reached epidemic levels. In 2012 we saw a

70 per cent increase in kittens born at our rehoming centres compared to the same period the year before, and we took in nearly 50 per cent more stray and abandoned pets than we did four years ago.

A YouGov poll, commissioned by Blue Cross, revealed that 31 per cent of responses from owners of unneutered pets said their animals

**"The number
of unwanted
pets has reached
epidemic levels"**

hadn't been neutered because they simply didn't feel it was necessary. Yet 20 per cent of cat owners and 16 per cent of dog owners admitted that their pets had been caught out by an unexpected litter.

In the previous edition of *Blueprint*, we warned of the growing trend towards pets being treated as disposable items, as easy to throw

At least three pets a week undergo emergency surgery at Blue Cross hospitals for conditions avoided by neutering

away as they are to obtain. We pledged to do something to reverse this worrying trend and make sure that the nation's pets got the future they deserved, so that's why we launched the Blue Cross Big Neutering Campaign. We'd like to thank all of you who have supported our campaign so far because, without you, we wouldn't be able to make such a difference.

ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

The Blue Cross Big Neutering Campaign aims to stamp out irresponsible breeding and raise awareness among millions of animal lovers of the huge benefits of neutering their pets, so we can reduce the number of unwanted litters. With thousands of homeless animals out there, the supply of pets far outweighs the demand for them, and we believe neutering is the key to tackling this problem.

We'll also be promoting the benefits of rehoming a rescue animal and encouraging people to contact a charity like us if they are looking for a new pet, rather than buying one online or from a casual breeder.

Kim Hamilton, Blue Cross chief executive, says: "The tragedy is that somewhere along the line pets have become the latest throwaway commodity. While charities like Blue Cross will always be there to give needy pets a healthy, happy future, we must reverse this trend so pets are not disposed of like rubbish and neutering your pet is the norm."

MAKING AN IMPACT

We've been spreading the campaign message through posters, leaflets, advertisements, emails to supporters and online promotion. It's received lots of coverage in newspapers, on

television and on radio, with celebrities such as Twiggy, Miranda Richardson, Graham Norton and Amanda Holden also supporting the cause. We've had thousands of visitors to our campaign website, and the number of people joining Blue Cross on Facebook and Twitter has more than doubled.

The money raised so far has gone towards neutering pets and preventing unwanted litters being abandoned, running our 12 Blue Cross centres, and helping our vets and animal welfare teams to care for unwanted pets.

Our education team has been promoting responsible pet welfare through talks and workshops to young people across the country, and we are also calling on the government to play its part by changing legislation to discourage irresponsible breeders.

Kim says: "We want decision-makers to change laws so that everyone who owns more than one dog capable of breeding should be identified as a breeder and visible to authorities. We believe this would discourage casual breeders who are producing pups in an already saturated market."

ABOVE: The mum of these kittens arrived at Blue Cross when she was heavily pregnant

BELOW: These pups were found abandoned, but have now been rehomed



REAL LIVES

✦ Kittens Jet, Leigh and Cous Cous were all born at Blue Cross after their mum, Misty, came to us when she was heavily pregnant. Misty was only a year old herself, yet it was the second time she'd given birth in less than six months.

Misty and her offspring were looked after by a Blue Cross foster carer near our Northiam rehoming centre and, with the right care, attention and lots of TLC, the kittens all grew up happy and healthy. When they were all old enough they were rehomed, and Misty has now been neutered so she'll never have to go through the ordeal of having another unwanted litter again.

✦ Wilfred and his three sisters, Celia, Enid and Martha, were dumped in a holdall bag outside a vet surgery in the middle of the night. The terrified puppies were discovered the next morning and brought to the Blue Cross rehoming centre in Lewknor.

The puppies settled in well and we gave them a full health MOT and cared for them until they were ready to find homes of their own. Jess Hollis, Blue Cross animal welfare assistant, says: "Despite this terrifying ordeal they are loving puppies and have proven to be very intelligent, all doing well in their training. The three girls quickly found their forever homes and it wasn't long until Wilfred was rehomed, too."



GET INVOLVED

You can help the Blue Cross Big Neutering Campaign by letting as many people know about it as possible. Tell your friends and family about it, and encourage them to visit our campaign website at www.bluecross.org.uk/neuter, and join our Facebook or Twitter pages for news and updates.

If you'd like to make a donation, you can do so using the tear-off form at the back of your copy of *Blueprint* magazine. However you choose to support us, we really appreciate it, so thank you once again from all of us at Blue Cross.

Almost
50% more
stray and
abandoned pets
rescued by Blue Cross
compared to four years ago



THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT FOR BOBBY

Bobby was a tiny puppy when he became homeless and was forced to fend for himself, but just look at him now...

When we first met Bobby he was a bewildered little puppy who had been found living on the streets of Ireland when he was only a few weeks old.

You might remember him from the previous edition of *Blueprint*, when we told you that instead of being where he belonged – in a warm, safe and loving home – he was picked up as a stray and transferred to the Blue Cross rehoming centre in Lewknor so he could start afresh.

The first few weeks of Bobby's life had been traumatic and we did everything we could to make his stay at the centre as happy as possible until we could find him a family of his own. We also gave him essential vaccinations, worming and flea treatments.

We're delighted to report that Bobby has now left Blue Cross to begin his new life. These days he's called Ollie and, despite his tiny size, he's established himself as the boss of his home, where he lives with Vanessa Jones, her partner Matt and their dog Harvey.

NEW FRIENDS

Vanessa, from Chinnor, Oxfordshire, fell in love with Ollie as soon as she went to see him at the centre, where she found him peeking out from a pile of toys almost the same size as him. She says: "I felt so sorry for him – he was such a young puppy and he'd had an insecure start to life. He was shaking and generally feeling quite sorry for himself."

Vanessa adds: "Ollie was lonely and he had been given hundreds of toys to keep him entertained, so I practically had to dig him out from under them. I said to the Blue Cross lady who was with me: 'I can't possibly leave him here.' She couldn't get me out of the room."

Vanessa went home that evening to talk things over with Matt, but her mind had been made up the moment she saw Ollie's woeful eyes looking out at her from his kennel.

She says: "I thought about him all night and then I took Harvey up to the



centre so he could meet Ollie. Harvey is a rather boisterous dog, but he was very gentle – he instantly knew that Ollie was just a puppy and needed to be handled with care."

LOOKING AHEAD

With Harvey's seal of approval, Vanessa took Ollie home and he fitted into life with his new family straight away. He had to grow up far too quickly, but now he can simply enjoy being a young dog and having fun with everyone he meets, from people to dogs.

Vanessa says: "Despite his past, Ollie is a confident and happy little chap, and he's got a really quirky nature. He must have been so confused when he found himself without his mum at such a young age. I'm just so pleased that we were able to give him a proper start and I'm looking forward to the years ahead."

"Now he can enjoy having fun with everyone he meets"

ABOVE: Although Bobby's early days were bleak, he now has a loving family of his own

Thumbs up for May

Deaf dogs can often end up unwanted because they're seen as damaged goods, but they are just as trainable – and lovable – as any other dog

Little lurcher puppy May was found tied to a tree outside a Blue Cross rehoming centre one Sunday afternoon. It didn't take us long to realise that she was almost deaf, which may be why she was abandoned.

Sadly, she's not the only pet to find herself at Blue Cross because she's seen as less than perfect. May was one of six deaf dogs to end up at our Thirsk rehoming centre last year, compared to an average of only one or two a year.

Many things can cause a dog to be born, or become, deaf, including a genetic defect, trauma, an ear infection or age. There is a link between white dogs and deafness, although research is ongoing.

SIGN LANGUAGE FOR DOGS

May is an affectionate, friendly young dog who loves to play and keep busy. She's very bright, too, so it didn't take long for her to pick up basic commands with the help of sign language, a method we use to train dogs with hearing problems.

Lyn Henderson, Blue Cross animal behaviour assistant, says: "May hadn't



received much training and she was very boisterous and mischievous. We let her settle in and then we got down to work, teaching her hand signals so that we and her new owners could communicate with her.

"There are a lot of myths surrounding deaf dogs, but they can be trained to the same level as a hearing dog – they just need to be trained in a different way. We teach them hand signals instead of verbal commands and we use food as a reward, just as you would do with a dog who can hear.

"First we taught May that a thumbs up meant 'good girl'. Then we taught her basic commands like sit, watch me, wait and a recall cue. As a team we had to be consistent and make sure we were all using exactly the same signals."

Lyn adds: "May came on in leaps and bounds, but she was overlooked by potential owners for a few months because of her hearing impairment. We all knew she was just like any other dog – she just needed to be trained in a visual, not verbal, way."

MAY JUST NEEDED TO BE TRAINED IN A VISUAL, NOT VERBAL, WAY

ABOVE: May follows commands with the help of sign language

BELOW LEFT: Florin might be deaf, but she doesn't let that hold her back

NEW HOME FOR MAY

The team were delighted when May was finally rehomed and her family, who weren't fazed by her hearing problem, have continued her training. It's a happy ending for May, who has a bright future ahead of her, but other deaf dogs may not be so lucky.

Lyn says: "Not only are some pets abandoned or given up because they're deaf, but sometimes owners don't even realise their dogs are deaf and think they are just being defiant and naughty. They try to train them, but, because the dog can't hear them, they become frustrated. Not only does the dog suffer, but they can ultimately become homeless if their owner gives up on them."

Last year Blue Cross took in around 3,000 homeless dogs. Thanks to your support, we can make sure these unwanted pets have a happy, healthy future.



take me home

Can you offer any of these Blue Cross animals the companionship and attention they deserve?



KIZZY

Surrey and Kent fostering scheme
07785 456642

Kizzy is a beautiful two-year-old who has been bred from in the past; now it's her turn to find a home. She's shy at first so she'd like somewhere quiet, but once settled in she'll be a great pet.



HUGO

Southampton rehoming centre
0300 777 1530

Hugo is an intelligent and enthusiastic two-year-old dog who is looking for active owners to match his hunger for life. He loves going out walking and is friendly with everyone he meets.



POPPY

Rolleston rehoming centre
0300 777 1520

Poppy would make a great lead rein pony for a family with horse-mad children. She is friendly and good to handle, but would like her new family to have experience of young ponies.



ALADDIN

Burford rehoming centre
0300 777 1575

Poor Aladdin was found living in terrible conditions. He's a little nervous, but we think he'll settle into a lovely lead rein pony, and later an all-round riding pony, in a loving home.



WHISKEY

Cambridge rehoming centre
0300 777 1470

Whiskey is a confident, friendly rabbit looking for a family via our Home Direct scheme. He'd love a companion and a spacious hutch and run, plus owners glad to spend time grooming him.



CHARLIE

Thirsk rehoming centre
0300 777 1540

Charlie was dumped and brought to Blue Cross so we could find him a home. This six-year-old is a true gentleman, but he's missing his home comforts and would love to find a family soon.

OUR ANIMALS ONLINE

To learn about all our pets available for rehoming, visit www.bluecross.org.uk

Making dreams come true

When Briony and Brandy came to Blue Cross, we knew they had bags of potential. Now aged 22 and 18, they're still proving that charity ponies are a great choice

Competing at Hickstead is every young horse rider's dream. And Emma and Rachel Cruickshank got the chance to realise that when they rode proudly into the show ring at one of the most prestigious venues in the world.

What made it even more special was that, as they rubbed shoulders with the equestrian stars of the future, they were riding Blue Cross ponies – and the ponies were aged 18 and 22, proving that it's not just spring chickens who have what it takes.

Briony came to us more than 10 years ago and Brandy arrived in 2009. Both were handed over because their owners could no longer afford to keep them. Blue Cross horses are rehomed on a loan arrangement, which means we still own them and we'll take them back into our care if their borrowers can't keep them. With smaller ponies that are often outgrown, this is important because it means we can make sure they have loving homes for life.

Both ponies were rehomed a few times and, in what many would consider to be their twilight years, they found themselves looking for a new home again.

That's when we heard from Lesley Cruickshank-Robb, who was looking for two ponies for her daughters, 11-year-old twins Rachel and Emma. She says: "The girls had read about Blue Cross in *Pony* magazine and I thought it was worth investigating. I went on to the Blue Cross website and filled in homefinder forms for both the girls and, a couple of days later, I got a call from the Burford rehoming centre to say they might have a suitable pony.

"It was with great excitement that we drove up to meet Briony. In fact, the girls were more excited about this than about any other pony we've had."

Rachel was smitten and, once they'd got to know each other, Briony went to her new home in East Sussex. A few weeks later, we called Lesley with a potential pony for Emma. Lesley says: "When Brandy came out Emma had a big grin on her face and fell in love instantly."

Soon Brandy joined Briony and, within a few weeks, the girls took their new ponies

to Hickstead, where they competed in the Mini Challenge, a jumping competition against the children of famous showjumpers who are destined to be big names in the future. They both did a fabulous job, with Brandy coming fourth overall.

Lesley says: "Here were these little charity ponies rubbing noses with the international showjumpers' children and their lovely ponies, and you couldn't tell the difference."

In fact, Lesley and the family are so impressed, they might soon be welcoming a new addition to the household. Lesley adds: "Blue Cross has some smashing ponies and I would definitely rehome a horse again – in fact, I might get one for myself!"

THE GIRLS WERE MORE EXCITED ABOUT THIS THAN ABOUT ANY OTHER PONY WE'VE HAD

We have many horses looking for homes. Whether you want to compete at Hickstead or find a fieldmate for your pony, please get in touch to see if we can help. Visit www.bluecross.org.uk or call 0300 777 1897.



ABOVE: Briony (left) and Brandy (right) with their young riders Rachel and Emma

'Millie brought happiness back into my life'

A year to the day that Susan Fitzmaurice's husband died in a plane crash, she welcomed a new guest into her home – ten-year-old mongrel Millie. She reveals how the Blue Cross rescue dog transformed her life in a way she never thought possible

It's not every day that a big, hairy mongrel dog pads softly through your front door, lies down in your living room and looks at you as if they've always lived there.

But that's what happened to Susan Fitzmaurice on 20 September 2010, exactly one year after her husband, Peter, was killed in a light-aircraft accident.

If you're not the type of person who believes in coincidences, and Susan isn't, there was more to her new house guest than met the eye. And, over the months that followed, she became

even more sure that Millie was there to bring a joy and happiness back to her life that she didn't think she'd find again.

NEW START

Millie found herself at the Blue Cross rehoming centre in Bromsgrove because her owner was pregnant and didn't feel she had the time to look after her any more. She was a sweet, friendly dog who absolutely loved cuddles and attention, and most of the team at the centre quickly fell in love with her.

As a mature lady, Millie was looking for a quiet home without boisterous young children and dogs who might pester her to play a bit more than she'd rather. But, having grown up with cats, she didn't have any objection to a feline flatmate.

More than 130 miles away, Susan was on her computer having a look at the homeless dogs waiting for loving families at Blue Cross. She says: "It had been an incredibly difficult year and, while I was glad I had the cats for company, the house still felt very empty



without Peter. I had always told him that if I was ever on my own I'd get a dog, but I didn't think that time would come quite so soon."

Millie caught Susan's eye, despite being at a rehoming centre a good couple of hours' drive away from where Susan lived in Hampshire. She explains: "I thought she looked a lovely, friendly, furry dog and I contacted the centre to express an interest in her, but she'd just been reserved by someone else."

"But then, a few weeks later, her profile reappeared on the Blue Cross website and I discovered that the gentleman had changed his mind and no longer wanted Millie. I applied to rehome her but, in the meantime, another lady had reserved her."

It seemed like it simply wasn't meant to be for Susan and Millie, but, soon afterwards, the lady decided not to rehome her after all, and she became available again. Susan says: "A very kind friend of mine drove me to the centre to visit her immediately. I thought: 'After all this bother of trying to get her, and my friend driving me all the way down to Bromsgrove, I do hope that we like each other.'"

MAKING FRIENDS

Susan needn't have worried. Millie was perfect – and she seemed to think Susan wasn't too bad either. Susan says: "She looked quite pathetic, and I bent down and said to her: 'Would you like to come and live with me?'"

Millie had been a bit poorly, so Susan had to wait a few weeks before she got the call to say that she could go and collect her. She says: "The date we went to pick her up was very traumatic for me. But it was also the day I finally got to take Millie home."

"We opened the car door and she just jumped in and sat in the back seat, waiting for us to get going so she could start her new life. Once we got home she walked up to the front door and into the house like she'd always been there."

Millie and Susan had bonded immediately, but she also had to win the affections of the cats, and cats can sometimes be a little harder to please. Susan says: "George was Peter's cat and I was very worried about upsetting him, but he took to Millie very quickly, I couldn't quite believe it."

"The cats weren't the only ones. Everyone fell in love with her and she



A woman's best friend:
Susan and Millie

ONCE WE GOT HOME SHE WALKED UP TO THE FRONT DOOR AND INTO THE HOUSE LIKE SHE'D ALWAYS BEEN THERE

quickly became quite a celebrity. People say they've never seen such a well-behaved dog – complete strangers stop me in the street to say how lovely she is, and my friends think she's an angel."

Now Millie and Susan go everywhere together – from regular bus trips to adventures at the seaside, and even a sightseeing tour of London. She's so gentle that Susan thought she'd be an ideal visitor for elderly people or those in hospitals and hospices, so she enrolled her as a Pets as Therapy dog and she passed her assessment with flying colours.

Susan says: "I do believe that God has been looking after me, and how wonderful that, exactly one year after my husband's death, I was able to have such a wonderful companion as Millie."

"She has made such a difference to my life and brought back happiness again."

Has your Blue Cross pet made a difference to your life? We'd love to hear about it. Email your story and a photo of your pet to editor@bluecross.org.uk or write to Blueprint editor, Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF.



Where are they now?

Blue Cross revisits some familiar faces from the past to see how they're getting on now

Last year Blue Cross found happy homes for more than 7,000 unwanted pets, and treated around 30,000 sick and injured animals. They include Fynn, Boyd and Bertie, who some of you may recognise as we've told you about them in our letters to you.

Poor pony Boyd suffered a lifetime of neglect and his health problems were so severe that we feared he might not survive. Puppy Fynn needed urgent surgery to repair a hip injury that was causing him immense pain. And dog

Bertie was facing a lonely Christmas after his owner sadly had to give him up.

Now, a few months on, we caught up with them so we can let you know how they're doing. After all, it's because of your support that we were able to rescue Boyd, Fynn, Bertie and thousands more sick, injured and homeless pets each year to give them a chance of a happy, healthy future. We hope you enjoy reading their news.

FYNN

Puppy Fynn was in terrible pain when he was brought to our Victoria animal hospital suffering from a swollen leg that made him wince every time he moved. We gave him painkillers to ease his discomfort and a thorough examination.

"Fynn's owners never collected him; he had been abandoned"

Results from his X-rays showed that the young Staffordshire bull terrier type had fractured his hip, which would have been agonising for him. We operated on Fynn as soon as we could and looked after him at the hospital while he recovered from the surgery. Fynn needed anti-inflammatory medication and physiotherapy to help him recover, but, sadly, that wasn't the worst of his ordeal. His owners never collected him from the hospital and, after repeated attempts to contact them, we realised that they were never coming back and that Fynn had been abandoned.

Fynn was looked after by Blue Cross vets and nurses, and later a foster carer, for three months while he recuperated from his injury and waited for a new

family to give him a home. He is now enjoying life with his new owner.

Fynn is one of more than 10,000 sick and injured pets that we operated on last year at our animal hospitals thanks to your support.

BOYD

We've seen many animals in extreme need, but we'll never forget the day that 18-month-old Boyd came to Blue Cross. He was underfed, weak and infested with lice. The terrified pony's muscles were severely wasted and he was riddled with worms. Boyd's condition was so critical that it was going to be a battle to keep him alive.

Boyd had been living in squalor, left to roam in a cement yard without any proper food, shelter or veterinary care. Our Rolleston rehoming centre took him in, along with two other ponies, Spencer and Young. They were in a bad way, too, but Boyd's condition was the most shocking.

We treated Boyd's lice and worms before beginning the long, uphill process of building his strength and teaching him to trust people. After his traumatic past, it took time for him to adapt to life at the centre. He didn't have much confidence, so his training progressed slowly, but surely. Then, towards the end of last year, he had a real breakthrough and his training came on in leaps and bounds.

Blue Cross centre manager Kath Urwin says: "We had to be very patient with Boyd, gradually getting him used to being handled and led out and about

LEFT: Fynn, fully recovered from his hip operation
RIGHT: Bertie loves his new beach-side home
BELOW: It's been a long journey for Boyd, but he has a bright future

"Bertie is a very intelligent dog – he's still got more to teach us"



by the team here at the centre. He's a completely different pony to when he arrived all those months ago, and he's progressed so well that he's now ready to be rehomed."

Kath adds: "Boyd is still quite a nervous pony so he will need a very experienced home with people who can give him further training, but he has a bright future to look forward to."

BERTIE

For the first time in his life, nine-year-old Jack Russell terrier Bertie was facing Christmas without a home to call his own. His owner was no longer able to care for him so, after four years together, he had to ask Blue Cross to find Bertie a new family.

The team at our Tiverton rehoming centre did what they could to settle Bertie in and make sure he was happy and comfortable until he could find a home. We hoped that by the time Christmas came he'd be able to join the celebrations as part of a new family.

We're delighted to reveal that Bertie's wish came true and he's now found a happy new home by the beach, where he's having lots of fun going for walks and exploring his new turf. What's more, Bertie got to spend Christmas with his family.

His owner, Paul Norris, says: "He has settled into our house and taken over; it's like he's always been here. He's a very intelligent dog – he's still got more to teach us!"

Paul adds: "He enjoys sitting and looking out of the window at what's going on and he comes with me in the van and on the train. He gets three walks a day, which also keeps me a bit trim, and he loves the beach. He's having a good old time."

Have you rehomed a Blue Cross pet? We'd love to hear about it. Email your stories and photos to editor@bluecross.org.uk or write to Blueprint editor, Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF.

ask the panel

Our Blue Cross experts answer your questions on horse welfare, cat diet and dog behaviour



SAYING GOODBYE

Q I have recently retired my 19-year-old horse from ridden work and I am conscious he is getting on in years. How will I know when it is the right time to put him to sleep?

Via email

A **Kath says:** It is never easy to make the decision to have your horse put to sleep, but it is all part of the responsibility of owning a horse, and it is great that you are thinking ahead and being prepared. Welfare concerns can occur when people shy away from the difficult decision and can therefore prolong suffering.

You need to work closely with your vet to decide when the time is right, although you will also need to take a holistic approach to the decision as it is not always down to just clinical reasons. Remember: as an owner, it is your decision and responsibility. Other things to consider are the facilities you have – do they meet the needs of an ageing horse? Are they the right facilities for a retired, out-of-work horse? Do you have the finances and the time to continue to care for your horse fully?

You know your horse better than anyone, so you are the best person to judge his quality of life. The main signs to look out for are changes in normal behaviour. Horses should be happy to move around the field with the herd, so if you spot your horse grazing separately or not keeping up with the other horses this may be a sign that he is struggling. Horses need to be able to lie down and get up again easily, so if you notice your horse is lying down less this may be because he is starting to struggle to get back up again.

Being prepared and giving the decision some thought now will make it much easier when the sad time comes. It is a good idea to talk it over with other people and make sure everyone is aware of your plans so they can support you.



FISHY FOOD

Q Is it OK to feed prawns to my cat?

Via email

A **Caroline says:** The occasional prawn isn't harmful as a special treat, but prawns alone won't provide correct nutrition. Let's consider the natural feeding patterns of cats and how tasty foods affect food intake. Cats living in the wild eat little and often. They have an active life of hunting and searching for food. Owners often don't realise that cats who eat a mouthful or two, then go away and return for a few more mouthfuls, are not protesting about what's on offer, they are simply following a natural feeding pattern.

Humans like to see a hearty appetite and look for tastier types of food to encourage eating. As with people, tasty foods are often high in fat and encourage over-eating.

Don't use prawns just to get a healthy cat to eat more or you'll soon make your pet overweight. But they

ABOVE: Knowing when to bid farewell to your horse can be a difficult decision

might be useful to tempt an elderly or convalescent cat to eat properly.

But it's not all bad. Treats such as prawns may provide a new and interesting hobby: watching your pet show off their natural hunting talents. The simplest game is wrapping a prawn in greaseproof paper for the cat to tear open. You can also buy toys with sliding panels, and strong-smelling foods such as prawns are perfect to encourage the natural activity of searching for food. You may have to help your cat at first. Many cats respond well to training, especially clicker training – have a look on YouTube.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Q My one-year-old Labrador is causing chaos when we're out on walks. He's so enthusiastic that as soon as he's off the lead he runs up to other dogs wanting to play and won't leave them alone. His behaviour is coming across as rude and it's getting us both into trouble with other dog owners – and their dogs. What can I do?

Via email

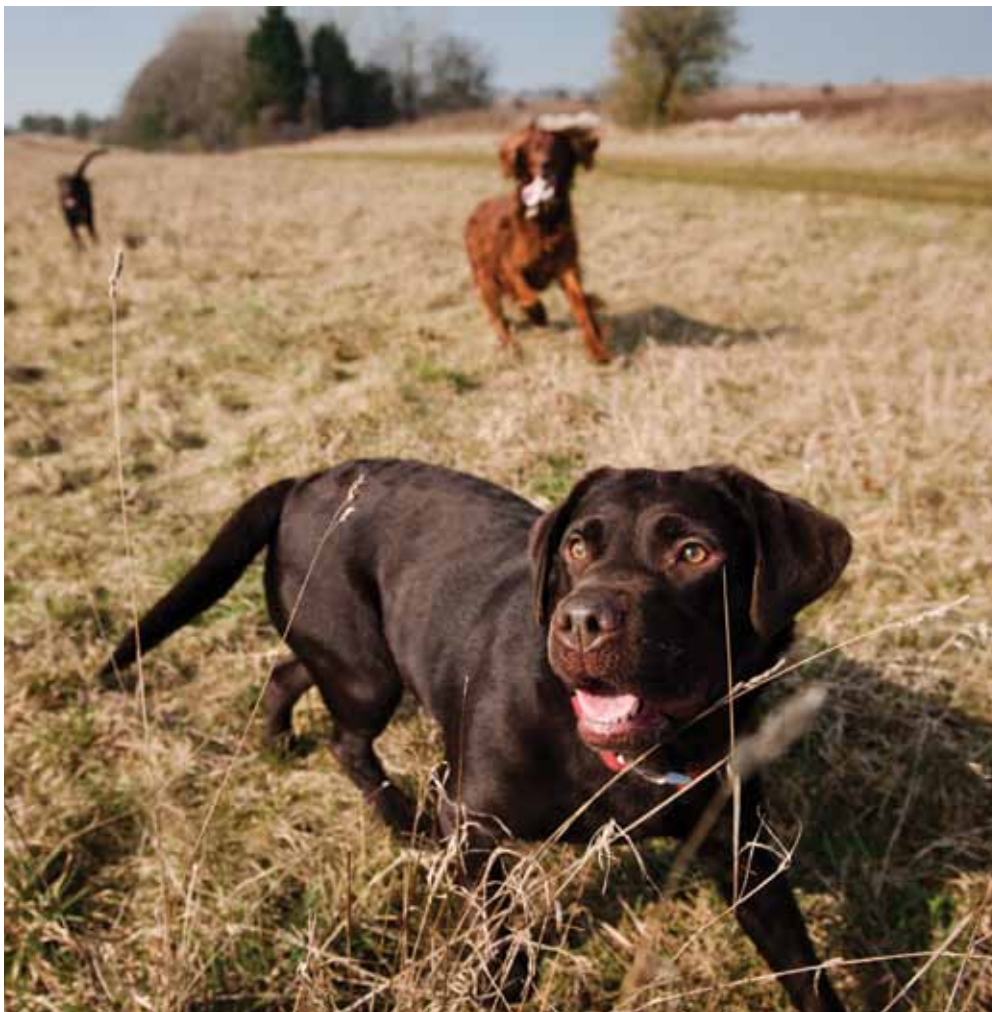
A **Claire says:** This can be typical in young dogs, and their eagerness to play can get out of hand. Fortunately, there is much you can do.

First, you need to stop your dog from rushing up to others in off-lead areas. The best way to do this is by getting a long line from a pet shop, as this will allow your dog to explore while you stay in control.

Your next task is to teach your dog a recall. The best place to do this is at

HAVE A QUESTION?

Do you have a pet or horse question that you would like answered by our experts? Please write to: **Ask the panel, Blueprint, Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF** or email editor@bluecross.org.uk. Due to the volume of mail we receive, we regret we cannot answer every letter. For urgent enquiries, please contact your vet.



home, where there are no distractions. Using treats such as cheese, sausage or ham, call your dog's name, followed by "here" or "come", and reward him for responding by giving him a treat or a play with his favourite toy.

You can then move to the garden and eventually outside. Start in areas that are quiet and move to busier places when your dog is ready. If he becomes distracted, go back a few steps. Once he is coming back reliably, begin to randomise when you reward him. When he least expects it, reward him with a jackpot – a handful of sausages or cheese, or a game. This will keep him motivated to return to you, as he won't be able to predict what you have for him.

Gradually increase the level of distraction, but make sure you do this slowly. If you are consistent and train regularly, you should see that your dog comes back when called, even when there are other dogs around – in other words you have now become the source of fun, not other dogs!

ABOVE: Boisterous young dogs often settle down with a little training

MEET THE PANEL

Claire Stallard

is an animal behaviourist at Blue Cross. She can answer your animal behaviour, training or welfare queries.



Caroline Reay is chief veterinary surgeon at the Blue Cross hospital in Merton, London. Ask her advice on any aspect of pet health.



Kath Urwin is manager of our Rolleston rehoming centre. She can help with your horse concerns.



BIG PAWS TO FILL

When you first bring a puppy home it seems amazing that this tiny little ball of fur might one day be a full-grown dog. Whether you own a mini-breed or a veritable giant, there's sure to be a food that will match their needs perfectly.

It seems sensible that the food that fuels the growth of healthy bones and muscles will be critical in determining how your puppy develops. There's a lot to think about; fast growth, for instance, doesn't necessarily mean healthy growth. The key is to provide food that allows your dog to grow at the right pace to avoid excess weight gain that will put strain on joints – a particular hazard for small dogs – or abnormally developed bones – a potential problem in larger breeds that are encouraged to grow too quickly. Delivering just the right amount of energy from food to produce steady and sustainable growth is something that every new puppy owner needs to work towards.

But how is that done? Choosing a top-quality puppy food suitable for the puppy's phase of growth, and one that fits the breed type – whether small, medium or large – will ensure that it's correctly tailored in terms of the energy it provides and also its calcium content. The old-fashioned view is that big dogs need lots of calcium for bone growth. We now know that the larger breeds in particular are sensitive to too much calcium in their diets, especially alongside high-energy foods that promote fast growth. Don't be tempted to provide extra calcium if you feed a good-quality puppy food such as Hill's Science Plan Puppy Large Breed – it already matches your pet's calcium requirement in each meal.

Be sure to carry out regular weight checks. Many veterinary practices will do this for free and will also let you know if your pet's body condition is right for its height. You might find it useful to use an online growth checker where you can chart your puppy's growth and adjust feeding quantities accordingly. Find the online puppy growth tracker and more information on feeding puppies at www.hillspet.co.uk/puppy



**RECOMMENDED
BY VETERINARIANS
WORLDWIDE**

Is your garden pet friendly?



Pets love gardens and, with a bit of planning, you can create a natural playground for everyone to enjoy, as Caroline Reay, chief vet at our Merton animal hospital, reveals

Pets can be a challenge for keen gardeners, but there are great opportunities to watch your cat climbing or your dog searching for hidden treats with no dug-up flowerbeds.

Safety is obviously paramount. Fences and gates must be secure so dogs can't escape. For rabbits a secure run on the lawn with a shelter is best, so your pet is safe from predators and can't nibble garden plants. Few gardeners welcome slugs and snails, and they can infect pets with lungworm. But slug pellets can be toxic – including some described as “safe” – so stick to using barriers such as soot, sharp sand or beer traps.

CHOOSING PLANTS

Some plants are so dangerous that they are best avoided. Lilies – the leaves, flowers and pollen – are highly poisonous to cats, even in minuscule quantities. Most crocuses are a good

alternative for spring colour to daffodils, which are toxic, but avoid colchicums or autumn crocuses, which can also be poisonous. Bluebells are a risk too, but severe poisoning is rare. Most plants that grow from bulbs and most evergreens are poisonous for rabbits.

Choose robust plants, but beware of thorns, especially at eye level. Many herbs, including rosemary, lavender and sage, are good, safe choices. Other safe plants that are fairly resilient and can recover from damage include African daisy, calendula and nasturtium.

You could create a scented garden, as some animals enjoy honeysuckle



YOU COULD CREATE A SCENTED GARDEN, AS ANIMALS ENJOY HONEYSUCKLE AND LAVENDER

and lavender. Many cats like catnip or catmint. Not all are sensitive to the effects, but the plant is sometimes chosen as a sleeping cushion.

TOILET TIME

You can train your dog to use a designated toilet area and create a place your cat will prefer, too. Cats like to be private when toileting and appreciate a secluded area screened from other cats, with soft earth or sand for digging. Once scents and habits are established they are likely to stick to the same place. Don't forget to clean up regularly to minimise the risk of parasites and infections.

A fenced-off area is easiest for dogs, although at first you'll need to accompany your dogs to praise and reward them so they learn the benefits of the toilet area. Alternatively, you can train them to use a specific place by lead-walking in your chosen spot at times when they are likely to want to toilet, and praising or rewarding performance.

Think carefully when positioning flowerbeds. Excited dogs may run straight through a bed crossing a garden, but flowerbeds round the edge are at less risk. Freshly dug earth can attract cats to a potential toilet area, so use wire netting to protect newly planted seeds.

HAVE FUN!

Don't forget to enjoy your garden! If you don't have trees your cat can still climb a ladder. Put a scratching post or two in a prominent place. Cats like to sit up high, so consider platforms, but if there are lots of cats in the area provide several so a neighbour's cat can't glare down at your pet. How about a sand pit where your dog can dig for treats? Finally, while bird tables are enjoyable, it's perhaps advisable to leave them to families who are pet-free.



One step at a time

Melissa Fletcher loved her Blue Cross dog, Ollie, but going out on walks left them both feeling upset and frustrated

Walking the dog is supposed to be a fun and relaxing way to spend time with your pet, but for Melissa Fletcher it was a nightmare.

Taking her rescue dog, Ollie, a German shepherd cross Labrador, for a stroll in the park became so stressful that she didn't think she could cope much longer. Every time Ollie saw another dog he would bark, pull on his lead and lunge. To others, it looked aggressive and intimidating, and they would hastily retreat in the opposite direction. Soon no one would come anywhere near Melissa and Ollie.

Melissa did her own research and got advice from friends, but she had run out of options, and that's when she asked Blue Cross for help. She was quickly referred to animal behaviourist Ryan Neile.

Ryan says: "I spent time watching Ollie and recognised that his behaviour was a symptom of frustration, not aggression. His lack of self-control was stopping him from staying calm when he approached other dogs while on the lead, but when he was off lead he behaved very appropriately. To other people, Ollie's behaviour

may look aggressive, and, understandably, this would lead them to avoid him at all costs."

Ryan introduced Melissa to Behaviour Adjustment Training (BAT), a technique that helps reactive dogs like Ollie make more appropriate choices to gain the rewards they'd like.

Ryan says: "Ollie was the perfect candidate for BAT. Essentially, we were teaching him how to cope with the situation by helping him to think clearly and learn effectively."

Ryan coached Melissa on what behaviour to reward to decrease the distance between Ollie and other dogs without him becoming excitable and frustrated. Ryan says: "Melissa has a very good relationship with Ollie and, once she understood what was causing the problem and how to help him, things improved very quickly. With all behavioural problems, a committed and motivated owner is vital."

Melissa started using the technique on walks near her home in Oxfordshire. She says: "It wasn't just Ollie who had to be trained, it was me. But, once I understood, it became very natural for me, and Ollie was quick to respond.

"Now Ollie is focused on me rather than other dogs. It's given me so much

WITH ALL BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS, A COMMITTED AND MOTIVATED OWNER IS VITAL

ABOVE: Ollie can now enjoy his walks with owner Melissa

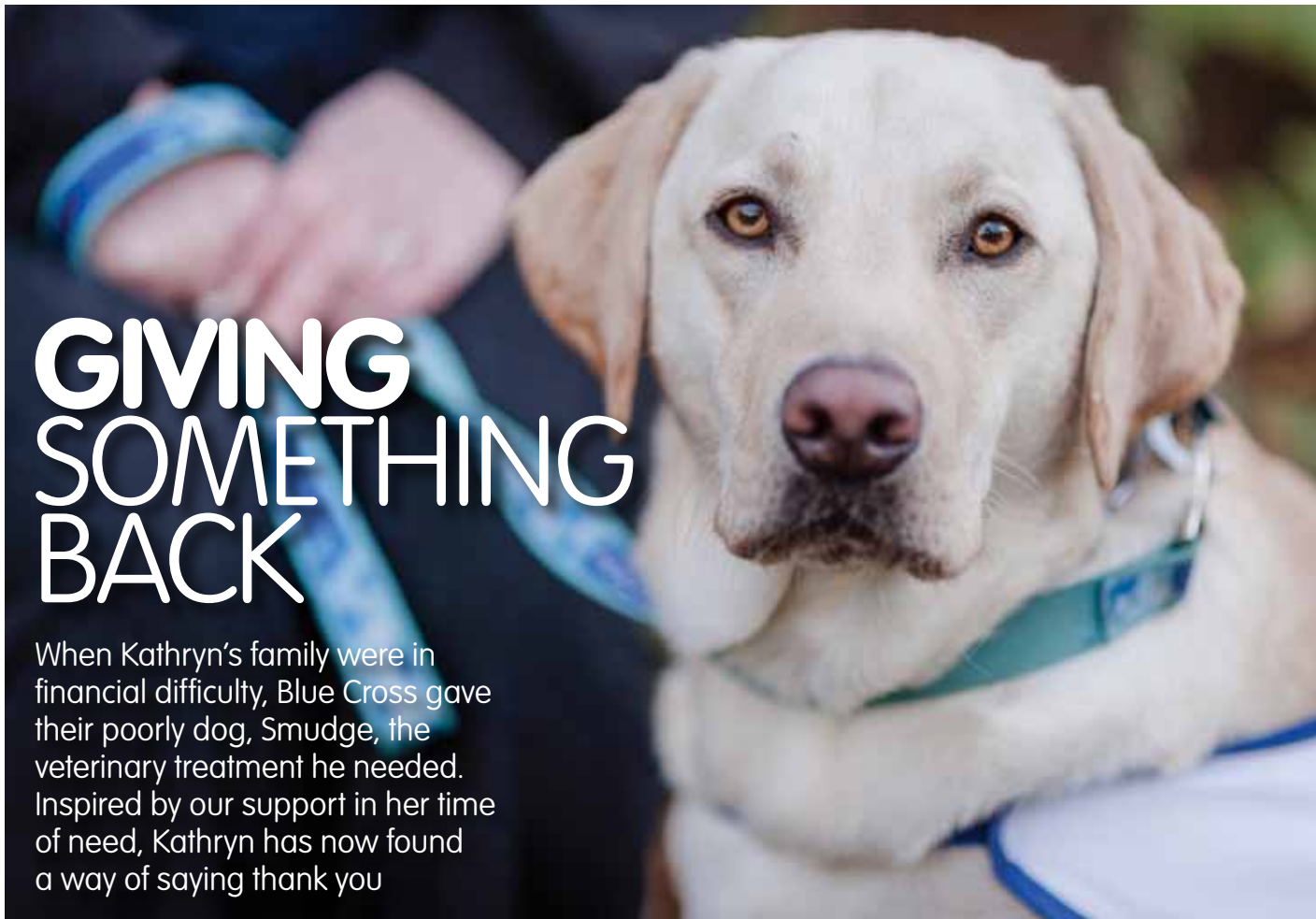
confidence – I'm more relaxed and it means we can go for walks in places where we couldn't go before."

Melissa adds: "It was such a relief to find a solution to a problem which I had tried so hard to crack. I think the after-rehoming support that Blue Cross gave me is amazing. Knowing that I could talk to Ryan and get help which was tailor-made for us was invaluable."

KEEPING AT THE FOREFRONT OF ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR

The Blue Cross behaviour team is at the forefront of modern and up-to-date behaviour and training techniques. We are the first to know about any new developments or methods so that the pets in our care can benefit as much as possible. The team carries out around 1,000 consultations every year, using different training techniques depending on what's right for both the pet and their owner.

For more information about BAT, visit www.functionalrewards.com



GIVING SOMETHING BACK

When Kathryn's family were in financial difficulty, Blue Cross gave their poorly dog, Smudge, the veterinary treatment he needed. Inspired by our support in her time of need, Kathryn has now found a way of saying thank you

Kathryn Saunders had known about Blue Cross for years, but she never thought there would come a time when she needed our help. However, after an awful couple of years when the family company closed down and her husband and daughter became ill, she could no longer afford to take their dog Smudge to the vet.

Kathryn says: "The recession had hit us hard and caused our company to close down. I was working three jobs, but when my daughter fell ill I had to look after her.

"Smudge needed to be neutered and vaccinated, so I got in touch with my local Blue Cross animal hospital, in Merton, to see if they could help us. It was a great support that we were able to take him there for treatment."

Smudge had also been showing signs of health problems, so he was X-rayed at the hospital. Kathryn says: "The results showed that he had dysplasia in both his hips. I took him to Blue Cross for physiotherapy for six months, which really improved

his condition – it would have been impossible to pay for this privately."

Fortunately, her daughter is much better and Kathryn is now back at work, which means she's no longer a Blue Cross client and takes Smudge to a private vet. But, with things back on track, she wanted to thank us for what we did.

She says: "I decided to do some voluntary work in my spare time and I wanted to help someone who had helped me and my family. I looked at the volunteering roles on the Blue Cross website and, when I read about the educational speakers, it was perfect. I've been a youth worker for 30 years and I enjoy working with children."

Blue Cross has a network of trained education volunteers around the country who speak to more than 40,000 young people every year about responsible pet ownership. We also run RespectaBULL workshops, which deal with issues of status dogs and animal welfare, and last year we held around 100 sessions.

"I love volunteering, and Smudge does too – he's a real show-off"

Kathryn says: "Blue Cross provided full training for the role and Smudge was also assessed as an education dog so he could come with me on some of the talks.

"Our first one was at a holiday club for children aged between four and 11, and I really enjoyed it. I gained a lot of confidence from that first session and learned some valuable lessons, and I've found it both easy and fun since.

"I've now started giving RespectaBULL workshops and I'm pretty booked up! I love volunteering, and Smudge does too – he's a real show-off in front of the kids. He loves the attention that he gets and he goes straight over to the children to say hello at the end. I'm glad that we were both able to give something back to Blue Cross."

Would you like to join our team of education volunteers and inspire the pet owners of the future? Visit www.bluecross.org.uk/volunteer or call 0300 777 1897.

have your say

We love to hear from you – please send us your news and pictures of your pets

FIND US ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER – JUST SEARCH FOR BLUE CROSS



STAR LETTER



HAPPY HOUND

Meet Georgie, who we rescued from a local animal sanctuary five years ago. We chose her because she was so polite and well behaved when we were first introduced to her, but as soon as we got her home she turned into a whirling dervish of joy and took the place by storm!

Her mad fits of happy exuberance have continued, though she keeps her speediest moments for chasing hapless squirrels in the park, and she adores shaking her toys to death, especially the ones that squeak. There's absolutely no ignoring her, but why would we ever want to?

Debra Sprague, via email

As the writer of the star letter, Debra Sprague has won £100 of Love2Shop vouchers, provided by Petplan, the UK's largest provider of animal health insurance. For more information on Petplan, visit www.petplan.co.uk



FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

While I was fostering for my local Blue Cross centre I had an emergency call to see if I could take a wee kitten that had been found. "It probably won't last the night," I was told. But this little kitten had other ideas and, after feeding her every two hours, she did survive. As you can see, at six months old she was lovely. Of course I kept her! She spends exciting days chasing anything that moves and snuggling up with two greyhounds and two ginger cats, although the cats aren't so keen! Rosie is now about 13 months old and still looks like a kitten, and her antics keep us constantly amused.

Margaret Davies, Worcestershire

REHOME, DON'T BUY

I was always the type of dog owner who preferred not to rehome and instead buy a puppy, but that all changed when I lost my terrier who I had for 10 very happy years. We took on a beautiful little terrier called Jasmine. She used to have a sad life, but now she is absolutely adored by us. I can't believe how much she loves me; it brings a tear to my eye. I would advise anyone wanting a dog to rehome one – the rewards are immense and beyond compare!

Mrs AM Hyde, Cumbria

BOWLED OVER

Alfie is the most loving cat I have seen. He has only got eight lives left after an accident when he was only a few weeks old. I'm so glad he's got another chance in life. Here he is, fast asleep in our bowl!

Nunu Alice, via email



WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR PET ON THIS PAGE?

Email a photo, along with brief details, to editor@bluecross.org.uk or write to *Blueprint* editor, Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF. We reserve the right to edit any letters as necessary.

'My 10-hour journey to rehome the dog of my dreams'

When Jane Bridge read the story of abandoned dog Tayto, it didn't matter that she lived hundreds of miles away, because she knew she was the one. To thank Blue Cross she held a fundraising tea party for us, and she's urging other pet lovers to do the same

When Jane Bridge saw the endearing little face of homeless dog Tayto looking back at her from the Blue Cross website, it was love at first sight. There was only one problem – Irish terrier crossbreed Tayto was being cared for at our Tiverton rehoming centre in Devon, while Jane lived 350 miles away on the Isle of Man.

But for Jane and her partner, James, distance was no object, and within a week they'd asked for time off work, booked the ferry, found accommodation and planned their 10-hour journey to Blue Cross, all so they could meet Tayto.

Jane says: "It was a long way, but it was worth it. James and I were really excited, yet apprehensive, about meeting her, but she is everything we wanted and more."

It began when Jane saw an episode of the television show *Undercover Boss*, which featured Blue Cross. She went to our website and that's when she found



Tayto's rehoming profile. The young dog had been found on the streets in Ireland and was looking for a home of her own.

Jane says: "I knew she was the dog for me right away, so I filled in an application form. The next day the centre called. They said they could only reserve her for a short time and that James and I would need to come over and meet her, and bring our 16-year-old rescue dog, Lucy, along, as soon as possible."

"We'd got it all organised within a few days and off we went the following week. It took four hours by ferry, where we booked a dog-friendly cabin, and around five hours in the car, but we took it slowly and made lots of stops because we had Lucy with us and didn't want to rush."

"We arranged some fantastic dog-friendly accommodation near to the centre and the following morning we went to meet Tayto. We introduced her to Lucy and it all went well. We returned the following day to see her again and everything was wonderful, so we took her home with us."

Jane adds: "Tayto, who is now called Scout, is an absolute gem. A month after we got her, Lucy had a stroke



ABOVE: Your tea party could help us bring a joyful new life to more pets like Tayto (below left)

and we had to make the heartbreaking decision to put her to sleep. Scout got us through it. She is a wonderful, mischievous dog and we love her."

A few weeks after Jane rehomed Scout, she and her mum, Shirley, held a tea party for Blue Cross. She says: "We invited friends over and my mum did all the baking while I organised a raffle. Everyone had a great time and, of course, Scout was the guest of honour. The tea party raised £225 and it felt really good to be able to give something back to Blue Cross after they helped us to find Scout."

This year's Blue Cross Tea Party is on Friday 10 May and it's easy to get involved. Find out more at www.bluecross.org.uk/teaparty or fill in the form on the back flap of this magazine.



dates for your diary

From tea parties to treks, there's plenty going on at Blue Cross – so get your diary out and schedule some time to join the fun in 2013 as we raise money for sick, injured and homeless pets

TEA PARTY

On Friday 10 May, take some time to press *paws* and help pets by holding a Blue Cross tea party. Last year your amazing efforts raised over £30,000 for the animals in our care and, with your support, we could make 2013 even more successful.

To order your free tea party host pack, please fill in the tear-off form on the back flap of this magazine and send it back to us, or visit www.bluecross.org.uk/teaparty

If you can't hold your own party, but you'd like to get involved, why not go to one of our centre events? Get in touch with your local centre to see what they have planned.

ACTIVE CHALLENGES

NIGHTRIDER

8-9 June. A rare opportunity to take over London for the night on this 100km cycle event, which passes the city's top sights and landmarks.

TREK FEST

8-9 June and 6-7 July. Walk 54 miles in 24 hours in either the Brecon Beacons or Peak District National Park, tackling some of the best trails the UK has to offer.

BEN NEVIS

14-16 June and 4-6 October. Two chances to stand at the top of Britain and enjoy conquering its highest peak in these mountain challenges.

LONDON TREKATHON

31 August. Trek 26 miles through London, passing many of the venues that hosted the 2012 Olympics and enjoying the bustle of the city.



SAHARA DESERT TREK

21-26 November. Cross magnificent sand dunes and meet the local camels on this tough but amazing challenge set in the vast landscape of the Sahara desert.

ABOVE: October 2012's Ben Nevis fundraising team
RIGHT: Join your furry friends for an alfresco tea party



To find out more about any of these events, please fill in the tear-off form on the back flap of this magazine or visit www.bluecross.org.uk/activechallenges

LOCAL CENTRE EVENTS

CAMBRIDGE

Open days, Sunday 28 April and Sunday 1 September.
Cat microchip day, Friday 12 and Saturday 13 April.
Call 0300 777 1470 for more information.

TORBAY

Oddicombe dog day, Sunday 28 April.
Tea party, Saturday 11 May.
Open day, Sunday 18 August.
Call 0300 777 1550 for more information.



ABOVE: Prepare your pooch for Oddicombe dog day

OTHER EVENTS

Visit us at any of these 2013 events to meet some of the Blue Cross team and find out more about our work.

Badminton Horse Trials: 2-6 May

Devon County Show: 16-18 May

Hertfordshire County Show: 25-26 May

Suffolk Show: 29-30 May

Would you like to organise your own fundraising event? Could you give up six hours a year to manage one of our collection boxes? If so, our community and events team would love to hear from you. Give us a ring on 0300 790 9903 or email communityandevents@bluecross.org.uk



ACCESSORISE YOUR KITCHEN

No pet lover's kitchen should be without this gorgeous Dinner Date range of products designed by artist Ann Edwards. Ann has been painting and exhibiting worldwide since 1994 and her work is inspired by her own animals, which helps to give them that special personal touch. You can find out more about Ann and see her range of products at www.annedwardsart.co.uk

We've got lots of fabulous prizes to give away to our lucky *Blueprint* readers, so enter now for your chance to win.



1ST PRIZE

GOODY BAG
CONTAINING A SET OF
PLACEMATS, COASTERS,
TEA TRAYS, WORKTOP
SAVER AND SIX MUGS

Worth
£70+



Worth
£30

2ND PRIZE
TEA SET
OF FOUR MUGS,
COASTERS AND A TRAY

Worth
£20

3RD PRIZE
WORKTOP SAVER
AND PLACEMATS

FIVE RUNNERS-UP
WILL EACH RECEIVE A
SET OF TWO MUGS
FROM THE DINNER
DATE RANGE

HOW TO ENTER

Answer the following question for a chance to win.

On page 10 we told you about a puppy, Bobby, who was picked up as a stray. But where was he found?

- A) Ireland
- B) England
- C) Wales

Answer _____

You can enter online at www.bluecross.org.uk/blueprintcompetition

Alternatively, write your answer on this coupon, along with your name, address and telephone number, and send it to:

Blueprint competition,
Blue Cross, Shilton Road,
Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF

Strictly one entry per household.
Closing date: 30 May 2013

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

From time to time we may wish to communicate with you by phone or email. If you are happy for us to do this, please fill in your details below.

Email: _____

- Tick here to receive emails about Blue Cross.
- Tick here to receive phone calls about Blue Cross.

find us

Locations of Blue Cross services and charities

FIND US
ON FACEBOOK
AND TWITTER –
JUST SEARCH FOR
BLUE CROSS




Blue Cross animal hospitals

-  Blue Cross animal hospital, Victoria
-  Blue Cross animal hospital, Hammersmith
-  Blue Cross animal hospital, Merton
-  Blue Cross animal hospital, Grimsby

Blue Cross shops

Abergavenny, Andover, Banbury, Bridgnorth, Bromsgrove, Cheltenham, Chippenham, Cirencester, Droitwich, Dursley, Fleet, Frome, Henley-on-Thames, Hereford, Hungerford, Kidlington, Leamington Spa, Ledbury, Ludlow, Marlborough, Monmouth, Newbury, Pershore, Stow-upon-Avon, Summertown, Tewkesbury, Trowbridge, Warminster, Warwick, Wells, Witney, Wokingham, Woolton Bassett, Worcester, Yardley

Blue Cross rehoming centres

-  5 Bromsgrove
-  6 Burford
-  7 Cambridge
-  8 Felixstowe
-  9 Hertfordshire
-  10 Lewknor
-  11 Northiam
-  12 Rolleston
-  13 Southampton
-  14 Thirsk
-  15 Tiverton
-  16 Torbay

Pet fostering

-  17 Andover
-  18 Burnham-on-Sea
-  19 Cleveland
-  20 County Durham
-  21 Cumbria
-  22 Hartpury
-  23 Manchester
-  24 Solihull
-  25 South London
-  26 Surrey and Kent
-  27 West Yorkshire
-  28 Wiltshire
-  29 Pet Fostering Service Scotland

Associates

-  30 Mayflower Sanctuary
-  31 Mountains Animal Sanctuary

Partner Charities

-  32 Irish Blue Cross



CUSTOMER CARE 0300 790 9903

MOVING HOUSE?

Please don't forget to let us know if you have moved home recently or are in the process of doing so. Updating us in this way is enormously important because, without your new address, we would be unable to claim Gift Aid on your donations, which is worth 25p for every pound you donate. Giving us your new address also means we avoid the unnecessary cost of contacting you at your old address and ensures you continue to receive your copy of *Blueprint*.

To inform us of a change of address, please call our customer care team on 0300 790 9903, email info@bluecross.org.uk or fill in and return the coupon.

Thank you!



Please write your old address below (including postcode):

(Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms)

Name

Address

Postcode

Please write your new address below (including postcode):

(Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms)

Name

Address

Postcode

Please cut out this coupon and return it to the following FREEPOST address:

**Tracey Nadin, Blue Cross,
FREEPOST OF224, BURFORD OX18 4BR**

Please note that since we select our mailings up to two months in advance, it is possible that you may receive one or two further mailings to your old name or address before this amendment takes effect. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience this may cause you.

SEND US YOUR SHARES AND HELP ANIMALS IN NEED

Many of us don't often consider the different ways we can support our favourite charities. As well as giving money, volunteering or engaging in fundraising activities, Blue Cross can benefit from donations of shares. So you can help even more animals without it affecting your monthly outgoings!

Donating shares can be an extremely tax-efficient way of giving to Blue Cross and we can turn your contributions into much-needed funds. We also work with ShareGift, the charity share donation organisation, which specialises in aggregating shares, selling them and using the proceeds to make donations to charity. Since 1998, Blue Cross has received almost £75,000 from ShareGift. For more information about how you can donate your shares, please contact Selina Williams at Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF, on 01993 822651 or by email at sharegiving@bluecross.org.uk



If animals
have a place
in your heart...

...find a place for them in your Will

We've been dedicated to the health and happiness of pets since 1897. Abandoned or unwanted, ill or injured – we do what's needed to give every pet a healthy life in a happy home. We're a charity, so the more help you give us, the more help we can give pets.

**A gift in your Will can help secure the future for thousands of animals.
If you need us, we can also be there for your special companion.**



www.bluecross.org.uk



Return the coupon or write to the address below to receive our free advice and information pack on Will writing.

Please send me your FREE advice & information pack on making or amending a Will and leaving a gift to Blue Cross.

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms)

Address

Postcode

Telephone No.

Send to: Carole Bankes, Blue Cross, FREEPOST OF224, Room B113, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4BR
Or please call 0300 777 1757 and quote B113

Save even more animals by making your gift worth 25% more with Gift Aid

giftaid it

I want Blue Cross to treat all gifts of money that I have made in the past four years and all future gifts of money that I make from the date of this declaration as Gift Aid donations.

Date / /

You must pay an amount of UK income tax and/or capital gains tax for each year (6 April one year to 5 April the next) that is at least equal to the tax that Blue Cross and any other charities and community amateur sports clubs you support will reclaim on your donations for that tax year (council tax and VAT do not count). Blue Cross will claim back 25p for every £1 gift aided. Please tick the box.

To make a donation by phone or for supporter enquiries, please call
0300 790 9903

You can also give online by going to www.bluecross.org.uk



We don't just look after pets – we look after your donations too

Less than **2p** in every £1 we receive is spent on administration, so we make sure your donation goes exactly where you want it to go – on giving pets a healthy, happy future.

Your support means that **each month** we can take in more than 500 abandoned and unwanted pets and operate on around 900 sick and injured animals.

Thanks to you, we can be there for pets long into the future.

In 2012...

We rehomed **7,677 unwanted and abandoned pets** – that's **4,333 cats, 2,666 dogs, 270 rabbits, 158 horses and 250 other small pets**, including guinea pigs and hamsters.

We cared for **354 puppies and 1,591 kittens, 278 of which were born at Blue Cross.**

We saw **33,126 sick and injured pets** at our animal hospitals and mobile clinics, and we carried out **11,197 operations.**

We need your help

We've been dedicated to the health and happiness of pets since 1897. Abandoned or unwanted, ill or injured – we do what's needed to give every pet a healthy life in a happy home. We're a charity, so the more help you give us, the more help we can give pets.

Please use this form to donate to Blue Cross. Alternatively, you can donate online at www.bluecross.org.uk

From time to time we may wish to communicate with you by phone or email. If you would like us to do this please fill in your phone number and email address below.

Title: _____ First name: _____

Surname: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Please accept my donation of:

£10 **£20** **£35** **£50** or other (please specify) **£** _____

I enclose a cheque / postal order made payable to Blue Cross

Please debit my Maestro / MasterCard / Visa Debit / Visa Credit / Charity Card

Card no.

(if applicable) Valid from / Expiry date / (Maestro only) Issue no.

Signature Date / /

Return to: Blue Cross, Freepost OF224, D13BP1, Burford OX18 4PF

For more information, please call **Supporter Care** on **0300 790 9903**



Find out more about fundraising for Blue Cross

Please send me further information on the following:

UK challenges Running Overseas challenges Fundraising pack Tea party

For more information on these challenges, please complete the form below or email events@bluecross.org.uk

Title: _____ First name: _____

Surname: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Return to: Events team, Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF

For more information, please call **Supporter Care** on **0300 790 9903**

