

Blue Cross Emergency Care Fund



Service delivery guide

June 2020

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Section one - Introduction

About Blue Cross

Sick, injured and homeless pets have relied on us since 1897. Abandoned or unwanted, ill or injured, pets turn to us for help every year. Our doors are always open to them, and with your support, they always will be.

Each year, thousands of cats, dogs, small pets and horses turn to our animal hospitals, clinics and rehoming services for treatment and to find them the happy homes they deserve.

Our vision is that every pet will enjoy a healthy life in a happy home, and we won't rest until we achieve it. But we really need your help.

We care for more than 40,000 pets every year, but we know it's not enough – there are many, many more out there that still desperately need us, and we must be there for them.

Our services include:

- Rehoming - we find new homes for abandoned or unwanted pets
- Clinical - we care for poorly pets when their owners can't afford private treatment
- Behaviour - we help pets with behavioural issues to have happy, healthy futures
- Education - we educate pet owners of the future by giving talks and offering advice
- Pet bereavement - we support people struggling to cope with the loss of a much-loved pet.

For further information please see our website at bluecross.org.uk

Relationship management

Our Veterinary Grants Team carries out the day to day administration of our Emergency Care Fund and will be your first point of contact for questions you may have. You can contact them:

Email: vetgrant@bluecross.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 777 1988

Within your practice you should nominate a team member to oversee the emergency care fund and act as a point of contact for all Blue Cross communications and monthly invoicing

We will contact you in the first month of joining the fund and periodically throughout the year to check how the fund is running in practice.

Overview of the Emergency Care Fund

Our Emergency Care Fund (ECF) is designed to support pet owners in receipt of certain means tested benefits, when faced with unexpected vet bills.

The ECF is specifically for emergency cases, such as pyometra and foreign body removal, and not for cases where treatment can be delayed until the owner is able to make financial arrangements.

We wish our grant to make a true difference to clinical outcome and lower the number of pets which are euthanised due to financial circumstances, despite having a favorable prognosis for a future good quality of life. Grants should be reserved for cases where a good long-term outcome can reasonably be anticipated. We will provide a grant of up to 50 per cent of the total treatment cost, up to a maximum of £200.

Unlike many other charities, you make the final decision on whether a client can access grant funds, providing they are in receipt of our standard eligible benefits and treatment falls within our scope of service.

Section two – Scope of service

Client eligibility

Our Emergency Care Fund is intended for those most in need and there are a few ways for you to decide which clients to award a grant to. Firstly, the means-tested benefit system is our core way of checking client eligibility and we'd encourage you to use this too. We accept the means-tested benefits listed below and if a client is in receipt of one of these, they simply need to show you their award letter.

- Pension credit (not standard state retirement pension)
- Housing benefit
- Income support
- Working tax credit
- Child tax credit
- Council tax benefit (not 25% single person discount)
- Jobseeker's allowance – Income Based
- Employment & support allowance – Income based
- Universal credit

Secondly, with changes to the UK benefit system and many organisations reporting rises in poverty, it is likely you will meet pet owners living in crisis who don't receive formal support such as income from benefits. In these circumstances we encourage you to consider carefully why that person is not claiming benefits and whether they might have assets which rule out a benefit claim. But there are many genuine cases of hardship and the scheme relies on you to make the final decision on whether to award a grant, as you are in direct contact with the client. Below are some examples you could consider when awarding a grant to a client who doesn't receive a means-tested benefit; however, this list is by no means exhaustive.

- Homelessness (including couch surfing)
- Delays in the processing of a benefit application or sanction
- Significant disruption to income perhaps down to ill-health, bereavement, or redundancy
- Accident or natural disaster such as housing fire or flood
- Robbery, fraud, identity theft
- Abandonment by partner
- Ex-offenders in rehabilitation programmes or ex-service men returning to civilian life
- Victims of domestic abuse
- Rehabilitation as part of a programme to overcome addiction/dependency.

Distance from practice

Whilst we don't set a specific catchment area that clients must fall within to access the grant; we recommend the pet's welfare is considered when advising clients to travel to the practice. For example, it may not be suitable for a client to travel long distances in an emergency situation, when there are other providers more local to them.

Proof of ID

If a client shows a benefit award letter to you, we encourage you to ask for photo ID too, particularly if you are not familiar with the client. This is to ensure that the client is the recipient of the award letter. If the pet is microchipped, the microchip details should match the client's benefit (or other) details.

Frequency

Clients can request support from the ECF once every 12 months. It is worthwhile noting that any corrective surgery will not be eligible for an additional grant and this should be taken into consideration when agreeing the type of treatment. See the 'condition eligibility' section for further information.

Pet eligibility

Species

In recent years the amount of species kept as pets in the UK has dramatically increased, along with the knowledge and skills required to treat them. Therefore, our grant is only available for pets commonly domesticated in the British Isles such as:

- Cats
- Dogs
- Rabbits
- Guinea Pigs
- Hamsters
- Gerbils
- Ferret
- Degus
- Chinchillas
- Small birds, such as budgies.

Your practice may have the skills within to treat exotic pets, however, please note this is outside our scope of service and therefore not eligible for funds from the ECF.

Abandoned or Stray Pets

All abandoned and stray pets should be scanned for a microchip and attempts made to locate the registered keeper. If an abandoned or stray pet requires emergency or urgent care and you've been unable to locate the registered owner, the Emergency Care Fund can be used to facilitate treatment. Usual payment amounts apply (50%, up to maximum of £200) and as the owner has not been identified you select No on the is the pet owned section on the online application form.

Condition eligibility

Grant funds are only available for treatment that's deemed to be an emergency/urgent. Additionally, the treatment prognosis should be strong, and the pet should be expected to lead a reasonably normal quality of life.

Examples of emergency cases could include:

- Foreign body removal
- Fracture repair
- Pyometra
- Limb amputation
- Urinary blockage
- Poisoning

To assist you when making decisions on whether a condition is eligible for support, we will provide an Assessment Matrix. This is a simple flow chart which is designed to take into account the treatment required, prognosis and quality of life for the pet. A copy can be found in the appendix and printed versions have been supplied with this pack when starting the service, however if you need replacements please contact our admin team at vetgrant@bluecross.org.uk Please note though, this flow chart is not designed for public or client viewing and is only intended for use amongst your team.

The type of questions we would ask you to consider includes:

- Can treatment be delayed without impacting the pet's quality of life?
- What is the age of the pet, versus life expectancy?
- Would you describe the treatment required as an emergency or urgent? (immediately necessary to preserve a good quality of life?)
- Is the likelihood of treatment success high? Will treatment be curative? (in most cases palliative treatment should not qualify for a grant)
- If treatment is successful, will the pet be able to live a reasonably normal quality of life?
- Is the client able to carry out any post treatment care? (this could be ongoing)
- Does the treatment have any ongoing financial implications? If so, can the client afford these?
- What is the alternative if financial support is not provided?

Outside of scope

The ECF is designed specifically for emergency treatment therefore routine treatment and ongoing chronic care, are not eligible for support.

In addition, the following areas are not eligible for support from the ECF:

- Referral/specialist treatment such as chemotherapy
- Breeding related complications such as caesarean, where the pregnancy is the result of a planned mating i.e. the owner is a known breeder or has a number of pets that would reasonably be expected to constitute a breeding group. In other cases, a Caesarean may be provided, if the owner agrees, and the animal is clinically suitable, to a concurrent neutering.
- Euthanasia
- Standalone consultations
- Diagnostics –
 - o which do not directly impact treatment
 - o where therapeutic trial is an optionOur aim is to avoid our funding being used for diagnostics that result in no further action or resolution.
- Alternative treatments such as acupuncture or homeopathy
- Home visit/call out fees.

Clinical guidelines

We have produced a variety of clinical guidelines which outline our recommended approach to treatment in a pragmatic way for some of the most common conditions we see at our hospitals. These may be useful for your teams when recommending treatment options to clients where finances are a concern. They can be viewed at bluecross.org.uk/clinical-guidelines

Grant amount

The ECF can provide financial support amounting to 50 per cent of the total treatment costs, up to a maximum of £200.

For example, if the total treatment amounted to £375, we will contribute £187.50. If the cost of treatment was £500, we would contribute £200.

We offer a full day training course for your vets and vet nurses on how to deliver these special consultations, as well as client record books.

Further guidance

If you have any questions relating specifically to whether a condition is eligible, please contact our clinical compliance team via email:

BCQ@bluecross.org.uk

For advice on client or animal eligibility please contact the vet grant team on 0300 777 1988 or via email – vetgrant@bluecross.org.uk.

Section three – Administration

Application for ECF support

For each client receiving ECF support an online application form must be completed shortly after the time of treatment (grants cannot be awarded retrospectively). They outline:

- Is it for an owned pet?
- Pets name and species
- Client name, address, email and contact telephone number
- Eligibility – Means tested or Other financial hardship
- Practice details
- Pet treatment and total costs
- Upload treatment history and Invoice
- Practice declaration

Once you have submitted the application online you will receive a confirmation email

There is an ECF Practice Guidance and FAQs that was sent to each practice. We can forward further copies if required.

Please be aware that if you send an application via email or post they will take considerably longer for us to assess and the invoice may be delayed in processing for payment.

Post grant mailing

All grant recipients will receive a mailing delivered through e-mail in the month following their pets grant award with a link to a short feedback survey, to help us gain their feedback on the service they have received. We will encourage clients to tell their treatment story and success so that we can raise awareness of the impact we are having

Section four – Financials

Funding Availability

By signing up to the ECF, your practice has access to our centrally held fund from which to make grant awards from. We carefully monitor the volume of practices signing up to the ECF and usage, to ensure funding is available throughout the year when it is needed. If, due to high demand, funding is becoming low we will notify you of this and again if it were no longer available so you can make your team aware.

Quarterly reports

We will provide you with reports on a quarterly basis which outline the volume of grants provided and level of funding used. These will be forwarded to your relationship manager by approximately the 20th of January, April, July and October.

Reports should be monitored closely, and any actions cascaded to your team ASAP – for example, it would be wise to inform your clinical team if funding availability became low.

Invoicing and payments

You should submit your online application forms with the clinical history and invoice once treatment has taken place. We will allocate a purchase order number for your practice for the year and this will need to be quoted on all your invoice paperwork, this will help to ensure prompt processing.

Our standard payment period is 30 days from invoice date and monies are deposited directly into the bank account you provide. We make two payment runs a month.

Bad debt

Any outstanding balances on client accounts are the responsibility of the client and not Blue Cross. These should be managed in accordance with your own practice debt management policy.

Section five - Fundraising

Fundraising target

Our priority is to work with practices that are able to use our funding so that we're helping as many pets as possible. Obviously, we'd be very grateful if you were able to fundraise for us to help ensure our ECF is sustainable.

If your practice becomes an active ECF user, we will work with you to find ways in which you may be able to support us.

Collection boxes

We will provide you with a collection box(s) for your reception counter and these will need to be counted and banked.

We will provide you with paying in slips to bank money collected from fundraising activities on a regular basis.

Clothing donations

We have a partnership with veterinary suppliers NVS to collect donated clothes which can be sold in our charity stores. If you use NVS and would like to promote this service to your team and clients, you can order a supply of donation sacks from NVS using product code 345052.

Full bags can be handed back to the NVS driver who will transfer them on to us. Drivers will collect on a daily basis, so you'll not be cluttered with lots of full donation sacks.

Section six – Education & marketing

Community talks

Overview

Every year we speak to over 80,000 people as part of our national programme of free talks which teach children, young people and families about responsible pet ownership and keeping safe around dogs.

Our talk package includes

- Pet care
- Keeping safe around dogs
- Keeping young children safe around dogs (specifically for families)
- RespectaBULL (responsible dog ownership in the community)
- Work of Blue Cross and animal welfare

As a trusted and valued partner of Blue Cross, you have access to our education speaker training and resources. To take part, you should be clearly spoken, confident and empathetic when speaking to a variety of groups across a range of ages. Education volunteers are also subject to a DBS check, organised by Blue Cross.

Having a dedicated volunteer speaker at your practice is a great way to engage the local community and build relationships with clients, whilst educating on local animal welfare issues seen in your community.

Training

Training to become a volunteer speaker is through distance learning and should take a maximum of four hours. Once qualified, you will have access to a number of resources such as PowerPoint presentations, leaflets for children, young people and families and stickers for those younger groups.

Please contact education@bluecross.org.uk for more information quoting the name of your veterinary practice.

Pet bereavement support

Overview

Grieving for the loss of a pet, whether through death or enforced separation, can be a very sad and difficult experience. Life, once filled with the love and friendship of a pet, may suddenly seem very empty.

Our Pet Bereavement Support Service launched in 1994 and since then we've helped tens of thousands of pet owners of all ages and from all walks of life.

Volunteers respond to calls and emails on the support line every day. They are volunteers of all ages and backgrounds. All have experienced the loss of a pet and have completed a training course. They offer a 'listening ear' and give time, patience and encouragement to pet owners as they work through their loss.

Training

With over 20 years' experience in pet bereavement support and training, we love to share our skills and expertise to enhance the support available for pet owners facing or experiencing pet loss. The following opportunities are available:

1. Accredited e-learning course providing the skills to support bereaved pet owners – over eight weeks this course provides 32 hours of accredited CPD
2. Live webinars on bereavement, quality of life and emotional needs
3. Bespoke face to face training for your practice

For further information please visit:

bluecross.org.uk/courses-professionals-and-volunteers

You can also contact our team directly on **pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk**

Promoting to clients

We have a range of posters and flyers for your practice to help bereaved owners. These can be ordered from:

bluecross.org.uk/download-our-pbss-literature

Blue Cross campaigns

From time to time, we run a variety of campaigns to raise awareness of Blue Cross and pet welfare initiatives, we will forward literature relating to these, for example flyers and posters to you for display in the practice.

Section seven – Miscellaneous

Client complaints

The ECF provides support to the client towards emergency or urgent vet care via your practice, however the owner remains your client and any complaints should be managed by yourself according to your own local policy.

Annual audit

Our audit process is designed to ensure our donors' money is being spent in the best way, while evaluating our processes to identify ways to improve efficiency.

We will follow up grant applications to ensure the fund is being used appropriately by using client surveys (to obtain feedback on the service received and assess entitlement to the ECF) and by reviewing treatment history post grant.

Abandoned or stray pets

All abandoned and stray pets should be scanned for a microchip and attempts made to locate the registered keeper.

The following table will help guide you in your decision making when handling stray or abandoned pets. In certain circumstances our rehoming services may be able to help if there is one in your local vicinity.

Abandoned dogs	Check if lost or stolen, with local dog warden	If not lost or stolen, contact local Blue Cross rehoming centre for transfer	If no space available at Blue Cross, follow your normal abandonment procedure
Stray dogs	Stray dogs are the responsibility of the local authority and should be transferred to the dog warden		
Abandoned cats	Contact local Blue Cross rehoming services for transfer	If no space available at Blue Cross, follow your normal abandonment procedure	
Stray cats	All stray cats should be transferred into the ownership of the practice, by the finder, using a Blue Cross 'transfer of ownership' form (copy can be found in the appendix)	Contact local Blue Cross rehoming service for transfer	If no space available at Blue Cross, follow your normal stray procedure
Caged small pets – rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters	Contact local Blue Cross rehoming service for transfer	If no space available at Blue Cross, follow your normal stray/abandoned procedure	
Birds, reptiles and wildlife	Blue Cross can't offer rehoming services for these species, follow your normal stray/abandoned procedure		

Owned animals in need of rehoming

Owned animals shouldn't be admitted to your practice with the intention of rehoming through Blue Cross rehoming services. These clients must be referred to the nearest Blue Cross rehoming service. In the case of vulnerable people, please contact us for advice.

Third party rehoming

It may be possible to set up an agreement with our rehoming services to guarantee a placement for your stray and abandoned pets through our third-party Home Direct Scheme. If you're interested in setting this up, please email vetgrant@bluecross.org.uk and we'll place you in touch with our Head of Rehoming Development.

External communications

Press releases

There may be opportunities for us to run joint releases in your local media, on specific pet care topics. For example, if there is a parvo or lung worm outbreak in your area. If this is something you would like to do, please get in touch with us and we can make arrangements, if possible.

Media interest

If you are approached by local media on any topic related to Blue Cross, please contact us prior to making any comment.

Case studies

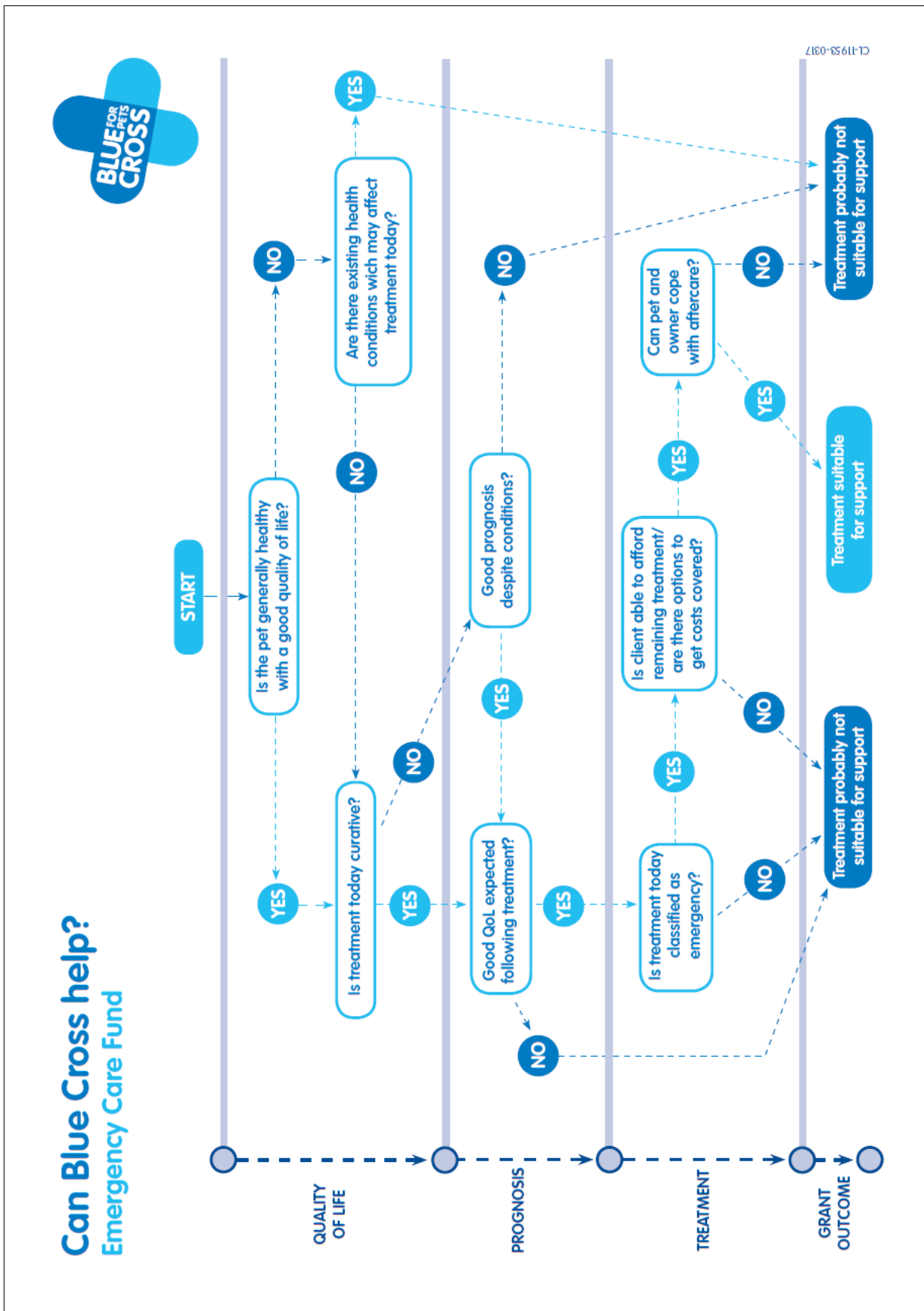
Telling the story of our clients and their pets enables us to raise awareness of our service and pet welfare, as well as secure funding for us to help even more pets and people in the future.

If you identify a pet or client who you feel would make a great case study, follow these steps:

- 1) Gain their verbal agreement to be contacted by us
- 2) Forward their contact details and a brief overview of the case to our helpdesk
- 3) If the owner is happy for a photograph to be taken of their pet to support the case study, please ask them to complete a 'Model Release Form' (a copy can be found in the appendix) and forward this together with the photo to our helpdesk.

Examples of good stories may include unusual foreign objects or pets surviving against all odds and how provision of a grant has impacted on owners and their pets.

Appendix A – Assessment Matrix



Appendix B – Model Release Form

MODEL RELEASE FORM

PHOTOSHOOT INFORMATION – to be completed by Blue Cross representative for internal reference only

Date _____ Job no _____
Photographer _____
Description _____

MODEL RELEASE INFORMATION – to be completed by any member of the public appearing in Blue Cross photos

I understand that Blue Cross wishes to use the photographs, videos and/or audio recordings featuring me and/or my children and/or pets (names below), of whom I confirm I am the parent/guardian or owner for the purposes set out below.

I, the undersigned, grant Blue Cross and Blue Cross Trading Ltd, and others we wish to promote our work, exclusive permission to use, publish or reproduce photographs, videos and/or audio recordings referred to above in which I, my children or my pet appear, and the information and quotations from any interviews, in all and any media throughout the world including Blue Cross and Blue Cross Trading Ltd printed publications, promotional and fundraising material, Blue Cross website, social media and to store and make available the images on the Blue Cross photo library database.

I agree to Blue Cross and/or Blue Cross Trading Ltd storing copies of the photographs, videos and/or audio recordings for the above specified purposes or to Blue Cross storing my contact details on its database in case it needs to contact me, or transferring or storing the photographs, videos and/or audio recordings to a destination outside the European Economic Area (EEA) for the purposes set out above.

I have read and understood the terms of this release form and accept them.

I am over 18 years of age (Please note that a parent/guardian must sign where under 18).

Signature _____ Date _____

CONTACT DETAILS:

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Children's names _____

Pet's name/description _____

MC/1832-0617

Thank you for helping us develop our library of photographic material. This is a valuable resource and contributes greatly to our ability to promote the charity and hence to help pets.

BLUE CROSS, SHILTON ROAD, BURFORD, OXFORDSHIRE OX18 4PF
0300 777 1897 • photolibrary@bluecross.org.uk • bluecross.org.uk
Registered charity no: 224392 (England and Wales) and SC040154 (Scotland)

