

# FOR PETS

The magazine for Blue Cross supporters

SPRING 2024

## Deaf puppy

Learns to navigate the world



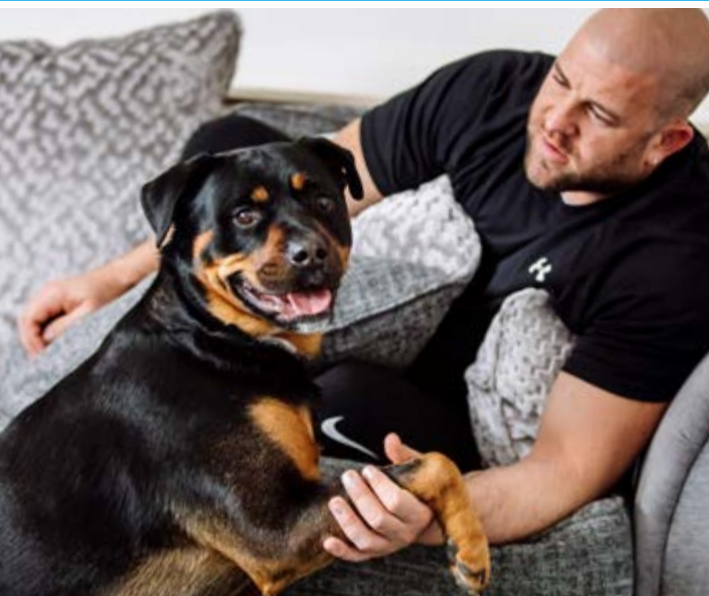
Pets change lives  
We change theirs



# Here to take your hand when they let go



Pets change lives  
**We change theirs**



## Free and confidential Pet Loss Support

No one should face the pain of losing a pet alone. If you're suffering any kind of pet loss and need support, or just want to find out more, please get in touch.

Call: **FREephone 0800 096 6606**

Email: [plsmail@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:plsmail@bluecross.org.uk)

Webchat and more:  
[bluecross.org.uk/petlosssupport](https://bluecross.org.uk/petlosssupport)

We're here every  
day of the year.





04

## COVER STORY

## 04 Deaf puppy

A caring home for Nancy

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## WELCOME

Pets are family. When we say goodbye to one, the grief can run as deep as it would for a relative. Our incredible Pet Loss Support service has been helping people in this situation for 30 years, and Blue Cross was the first charity in the UK dedicated to this cause. Many call our service, celebrated in this issue, a lifeline. And it exists because we recognise the enormous impact our cherished pets have on our lives. Take, for example, our cover star Nancy, a deaf puppy whose family are united in helping her navigate the world without hearing. Or cat Moose, whose amazing intuition helped alert his owner to breast cancer. Pets never fail to amaze us, and the stars of this edition are no exception.

Aimee Brannen, Editor

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## FEATURES

## 08 Pet Loss Support

Service marks 30th year of helping people through grief

## 10 Close bond

Four degus inspire next generation of animal carers

## 14 Pony's happiness

Megan is back on her hooves after horrific injuries

## 18 Remarkable cat

Moose returned owner's love in the most astonishing way

## 20 Second chance

Labrador finds a loving retirement home

## 26 Dumped in a bin

Kitten Buffy is now loving life with best friend Oskie

## 28 XL bully ban

Lovely Luna proves why the law is so wrong

## REGULARS

## 17 Take me home

These Blue Cross pets need a loving family

## 22 Pet advice

Muzzle training

## 25 Pet postbag

Your letters

## 30 News

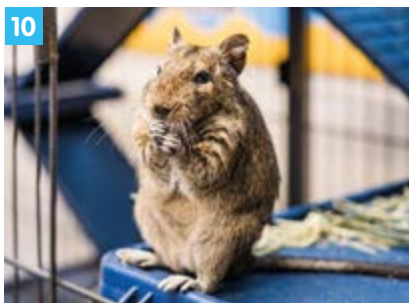
The latest Blue Cross news

## 34 Competition

WIN! A boating holiday

## 35 Contact us

Get in touch or come and visit



18



28



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# Difference sparks a **SPECIAL BOND**

Nancy is bringing joy to her new family, while their confidence grows in supporting her needs...

**C**ommitting to a disabled pet is daunting.

But being able to support deaf puppy Nancy has deepened the Hopkins family bond.

"It has been a challenge, but it's all been worth it," says Sophie Hopkins, who adopted Nancy from Blue Cross last summer along with her family.

"She has settled so well into her new furever home – it's like we've never been without her."

As Nancy gazes deep into Sophie's eyes, the connection is clear.

It's an affinity that was ignited the moment the family spotted Nancy's profile on the Blue Cross website.

"We are a happy, caring and nurturing family," explains mum-of-two Sophie.

"I felt we'd give a perfect home for a dog who has additional needs."

The apricot-coloured poochon puppy – a cross between a toy poodle and a bichon frise – was born with part of her right ear missing.

One-year-old Nancy's vertical ear canal is absent, along with the external ear flap, or pinna.

Sophie, 40, adds: "She is completely deaf – there are no low tones or high tones she can hear at all. But being born that way, she doesn't know any different. She is happy and content."

## **COMMUNICATION**

Working as an early years special educational needs coordinator with pre-school children, Sophie was already experienced in using Makaton, a programme that uses a mix of signs, symbols and speech to communicate in a visual way.

Husband Stephen, 37, who has also started learning British Sign Language through his work, says: "It has been different with Nancy because we can't just use regular dog training techniques. You have to think completely outside the box."

After welcoming two-year-old







Nancy with Sophie, 'big brother'  
Teddy and Rory

shih tzu Teddy into their Nottinghamshire home the year before, the couple and their sons Leo, 12, and Rory, nine, were eager for a companion for their beloved pet.

Travelling to our Suffolk centre, where Nancy had been staying in foster care after being brought to Blue Cross by her breeder, who wanted her responsibly rehomed, the family had high hopes.

"We came to the centre with Teddy and he was so chilled and just trotted in. We fell in love from there," continues Sophie.

"As soon as we'd seen Nancy, we just knew she was the dog for us and

we could really help her, and that Teddy would love a puppy around."

Since then, it's "almost like

“

**It's almost like Teddy knows she's got a hearing impairment. I'm sure he knows there's something special about her. He's so patient with her. He's the best big brother.**

”

Teddy knows she's got a hearing impairment," Sophie says.

"I'm sure he knows there's something special about her.

"He's so patient with her. He's the best big brother."

### **SIGN LANGUAGE**

The whole family have adapted to Nancy's needs, teaching her through sign language and finding different ways to play.

Joining the Hopkins family when she was just four months old, Nancy and her family had plenty to learn.

Low play includes rolling, rather than throwing balls, so Nancy can





keep her eyes focused on her toy and doesn't need to rely on hearing it drop to the ground.

And clear eye contact and hand signals are key to encouraging Nancy to follow instructions such as wait, sit and come.

"You can pick any sign as long as you're confident in what you're doing," explains Sophie, who also devotes time to helping manage son Rory's football team.

"The main thing is that we are getting her attention, so staying at her front or side.

"The sight is important so she's really locked into what we are doing."

## CONFIDENT

Daily 'sniffaris' allow Nancy to explore her surroundings using her sense of smell, while walks to the family's local field mean she can socialise with other pets.

"Nancy's really confident and she's made a few friends," says Sophie.

"For one springer spaniel puppy, she was the first dog he'd ever met and she was great at getting him to initiate play. It was a beautiful interaction."

Being deaf doesn't hold Nancy back from racing around the field with other dogs, and ensuring her family shares her joyful exuberance.

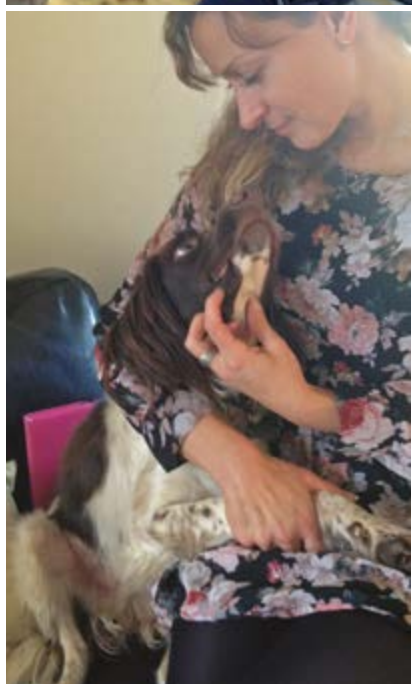
And while there have been setbacks – like with any pet – friends' support has been invaluable.

"If I'm feeling down or we've taken a step back, our friends at the field always remind me how far we've come and that Nancy is still a puppy," adds Sophie.

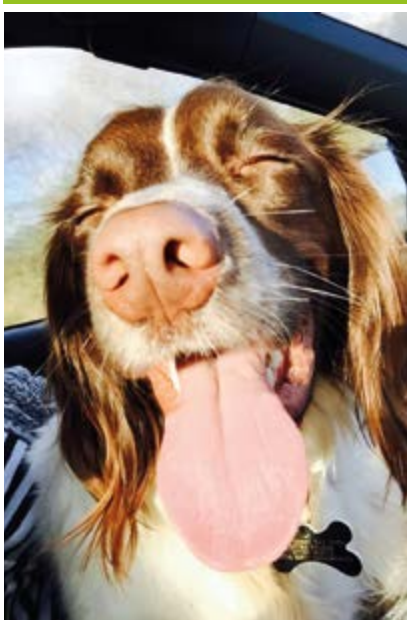
"They're always there to give advice and chat. They'll even tell me if they use one of my ideas, which is a really nice feeling.

"We can't go by the book, we have to work around Nancy's needs and when she's ready in her way.

"I feel we're a special home for a special dog. It was meant to be."



“  
Every minute I spent with  
Bailey was filled with  
laughter and happiness.  
”





# 'It was a HUG IN A PHONE CALL'

Our Pet Loss Support service is celebrating 30 years of helping people with the trauma of losing a pet, whether through death, rehoming, theft or other loss. We spoke to Michelle Weller, for whom the service has been a lifeline...

**N**othing prepares you for losing your best friend," says Michelle Weller.

"Bailey was more than my shadow – if he could've crawled inside me, he would have."

Springer spaniel Bailey was by nurse Michelle's side for nine years, spending all their spare time together developing a deep connection.

So, when he died suddenly in 2022, Michelle's world fell apart.

"I'd go in a room and, when he wasn't there, I'd almost have a panic attack," explains the 48-year-old from Wiltshire, who has two adult children.

"When I went to pick up Bailey's ashes from the vets, I absolutely broke down."

That was when Michelle was given a pamphlet about Pet Loss Support (PLS), a free and confidential service offered by Blue Cross.

## DARK PLACE

"When I phoned PLS for the first time, I didn't speak for the first hour, I just sobbed," she says.

Michelle continues: "The lovely person on the end of the phone just listened. It was as if someone had given me a massive hug."

"She took me out of that dark place I was in. It was a hug in a phone call."

The help of PLS over several months allowed Michelle to process Bailey's death, so she can now focus on their happy times on Devon's beaches, or scaling the heights of the Welsh mountains of Snowdon and Pen y Fan and climbing Scotland's Ben Nevis.

## GIVING BACK

Determined to give back, Michelle is training to run the London Marathon on 21 April in support of Blue Cross.

"Every minute I spent with Bailey was filled with laughter and happiness," adds Michelle, who will celebrate her 49th birthday as she runs the gruelling 26.2 mile course around the capital.

"Blue Cross is so special to me because the support they gave me after Bailey's death was one of the reasons I got up every day."



Here to take your hand when they let go

Call: 0800 096 6606

Email: [PLSmail@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:PLSmail@bluecross.org.uk)

Learn more about Pet Loss

Support at [bluecross.org.uk/PLS](https://bluecross.org.uk/PLS)

## PLS BY NUMBERS

# 1994

Pet Loss Support launches at Blue Cross

# 20,381

people helped by Pet Loss Support in 2023

# 220

volunteers trained to offer support

# 365

days a year – PLS is available 8.30am – 8.30pm every day

Donate to Michelle's marathon fundraiser at [bluecross.org.uk/michelles-story](https://bluecross.org.uk/michelles-story)


CLOSE BOND

# DEGU FRIENDS

inspire animal carers





A close-up photograph of two degus in a wire cage. The degu in the foreground is light brown and white, looking towards the right. The degu in the background is darker brown and is looking towards the camera. They are both perched on a blue plastic structure within the cage.

Once homeless degus are now at the forefront of education on small pet happiness...

**F**our degu friends have found a fulfilling new home where they can stay and play together – and help inspire the next generation of animal carers.

Peach, Pearl, Opal and Locky have a new extended family since they were adopted last year by the dedicated animal care team at a special school in Bedfordshire.

The sociable pets can be heard chattering away in their specially-designed environment, which is packed with enrichment activities to keep them happy and healthy.

"The students helped design their environment so it's really stimulating for the degus," explains Cath Kerr, who leads land-based education at the school for young people aged up to 19 with special educational needs.

"They have been so interested to learn more about degus, finding out facts like where in the world they come from, and the types of food they like," Cath continues.

As degus are active and agile their

**Left to right: Pearl, Opal and Locky**







accommodation has opportunities for them to carry out all their natural behaviours including running, jumping, climbing, digging, foraging, sand bathing and exploring.

Cath adds: "Peach, Pearl, Opal and Locky are doing really well and love being within earshot of the pupils as they interact with each other."

The bonded female friends had spent more than two years enjoying life together at their previous home in the south west of England.

But sudden job loss and a home move meant their family were no longer able to keep their pets.

Spending 38 days being looked after in Blue Cross foster care arranged by our Newport rehoming unit in south Wales, the degus are among more than 5,000 pets we help to find a new place to call home each year in the UK.

## RESEARCH

The Chiltern School team did extensive research before adopting the degu, which can live to around eight years, including making sure their home was large enough – Blue Cross recommends a small group of degus have a cage at least 120cm tall with 90cm x 60cm floor space.

Climbing platforms, rope nests and hideaway spots all provide enrichment for the degus, while their herbivorous diet includes plenty of hay and very occasional healthy treats like sunflower seeds.

This helps them avoid health problems like dental disease and diabetes, which they can be prone to.

Cath continues: "Some pupils might just watch the degus and observe how they interact with each other, while our post-16 pupils working towards recognised land-based

learning certificates are involved with feeding, cleaning and grooming, as well as basic health checks.

"We were really pleased we could rehome pets from Blue Cross because it does so much to help animals and the experience is so enriching for us all."

The degus are enjoying life in their new home, with a dedicated animal care cabin set up to make sure they feel comfortable and secure at all times, including during school holidays and weekends.

Georgie Riley, Centre Manager at Blue Cross Newport, adds: "It is really positive the degus could be rehomed together as they were bonded and we didn't want to split them.

"We are grateful that the school wanted to rehome all four degus and the enclosure that the school has set up is really great."







# From police case to **PONY JOY**

Megan has overcome painful leg wounds to find happiness...

**H**orrific injuries on both back legs have left extensive scars that give a clue to tiny Megan's suffering.

Underweight and with overgrown hooves, the miniature Shetland pony was terrified when police brought her to Blue Cross Burford.

At just eighteen months old, poor Megan was in a terrible state.

Facing months of specialist treatment to help her recover from her awful injuries and neglect, the little palomino pony needed dedicated care.

Not only did the bandages on her deep leg wounds need changing regularly but, once they'd healed, Megan needed intensive physiotherapy as the scar tissue was restricting her movement.

Two years later and it's hard to believe Megan is the same pony that first arrived with us in 2021.

The tiny filly – who stands just 80cm at the withers – may still be a youngster herself, but her confidence has grown so much that she gives a helping hoof to other ponies in need.

Now in a loving home with Chloe Benjamin, who is a Blue Cross equine foster carer, the adorable Shetland makes her family "smile every day".

## TRANSFORMATION

First taking Megan on as a foster pony when her own ridden horse sadly passed away, Chloe can't believe the transformation in the confident Shetland.

"I met Megan when she first came into Blue Cross as a tiny baby with all her bandages still on," explains Chloe, who has cared for Shetlands since she was a child and was working as an equine nursing assistant when she met Megan.

"She was such a skinny little pony

when I first met her, and her wounds were quite deep.

"I was feeling a bit empty after my horse had passed away, so I was over the moon to be offered Meg.

"Meg's been our permanent resident for the past two years and we've fostered another five Blue Cross ponies since she's been here.

"She's been our little foster mum and brings out the confidence in them. Her personality is amazing."

## COMPANION

Enjoying her favourite treat of a fresh banana, or following Chloe and her wheelbarrow around, Megan has settled into her life as a happy companion pony.

As well as giving a much-needed boost to other foster ponies, Megan shares her new home with 13-year-old chestnut Mullion, another Blue Cross rescue who has been with Chloe for the past six years.

"They are such a cute couple," adds Chloe. "Meg's very confident and just takes everything in her stride. She's such a wonderful pony considering where she's come from.

"Meg has massive scars on both back legs along the front of her fetlocks. The wounds were quite deep so the scars will be there for life but she's got no worries now.

"She makes us smile every day."

For Lauren Bush, Horse Rehoming Coordinator at Blue Cross, seeing Megan flourishing is a happy result.

"Megan came to us in such a sad state, underweight, with overgrown hooves and very bad rear leg wounds," says Lauren.

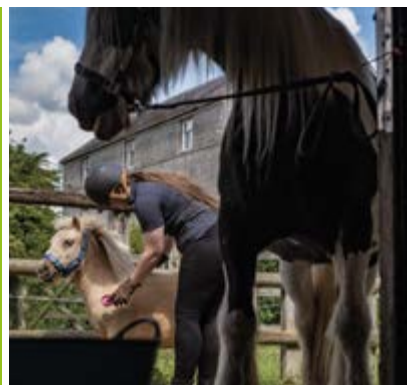
"It's a delight to see her now after a long recovery, enjoying life with her new family and four-hooved friends."



Megan (left) grazing with fellow rescue Mullion



“  
She's been our  
little foster mum  
and brings out the  
confidence in them.  
Her personality  
is amazing.”





# Adoption

## Could you take me home?



These wonderful pets are in search of a second chance

### SOOTY AND SWEEP

We're the best of friends, and couldn't bear to be separated from each other – so we're looking for a home where both of us can live. We enjoy cuddling up together, binkying and exploring our surroundings.

**Manchester, 0300 777 1852**



### HOPE

Although my name is Hope, I'm beginning to lose it. Aged two, I was found all alone in a garden. And now I've been waiting for months for someone to love me. Could you be the one to change my luck?

**Southampton, 0300 777 1847**



### BAZ

My life up until now has been spent racing around a track, and now I want to know what being loved in a warm, cosy home feels like. As a calm and gentle boy, with an elegant stroll, I'll make the perfect companion.

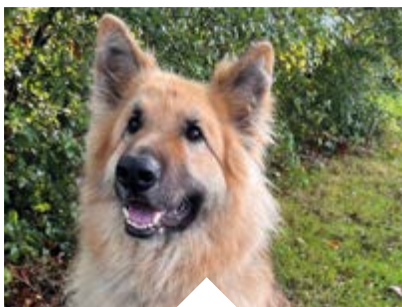
**Thirsk, 0300 777 1848**



### JOLENE

I'm told that I'm a sweet little mare who is a joy to groom. I'm even happy to have my feet picked out! So I can't understand why I'm still here. All I need is an adult-only home to be a companion for a ridden horse.

**Rolleston, 0300 777 1846**



### MILLIE AND RITA

Perhaps it's because we're elderly ladies, or the fact we come as a pair? We're not sure, but we've been waiting for more than five months to find a warm retirement home to call our own. Could it be with you?

**Suffolk, 0300 777 1843**



### IVAN

I bond quickly with humans but I'm less keen on other dogs, so I'm looking for a quiet home where I won't see too many of those. I may have some health needs, but if you can take me on, I'll be a loving friend.

**Southampton, 0300 777 1847**



Find your new best friend at [bluecross.org.uk/rehome](https://bluecross.org.uk/rehome)





# 'LISTEN to your animals'

After helping Moose to overcome his sad past, the cat returned the love to his owner in the most remarkable, potentially lifesaving way...

**T**he little three-legged Moose scampering across the floor couldn't be more different from the terrified cat who hid for a week when he first arrived at his new home.

"He was in a bad way when he got here – terrified," Carol Watson, who adopted him in 2017, recalls.

Moose had been hit by a car and left at a vet's when he was about two years old. His left hind leg was amputated and he spent a long time in rehabilitation at Blue Cross Thirsk, in North Yorkshire.

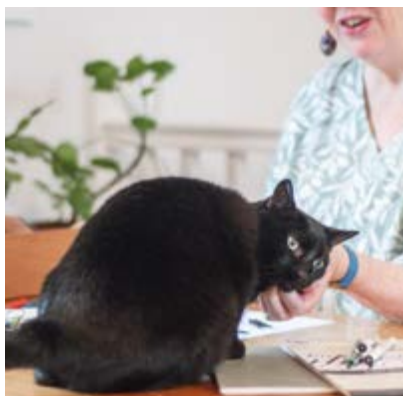
Understandably, he was extremely nervous. But with Carol's gentle encouragement – progressing later to daily tuna, cuddles and even morning massages – Moose's confidence started to grow.

"He started to get closer and trust me," Carol, who had initially only planned to foster Moose before adopting him, explains. "Bit by bit he started coming out of his shell."

She continues: "From then on, he's just been a sweetheart. He's a real character. You feel utterly privileged that you're in his orbit. He's a survivor, but he's also a bit soppy."

Their bond has gone from strength to strength.

A few years ago, as Carol sat processing news of her uncle's death,



“  
I've rescued him,  
but he's rescued me.  
They rescue you,  
without you realising  
you needed it.  
”

a tear ran down her cheek. Moose was suddenly by her side.

"He licked the tear off my cheek," she remembers.

"He's in tune with stuff."

## INTUITION

But nothing quite prepared her for a day in May last year, when Moose flew across the room to claw at her breast – totally out of character for the sweet and gentle boy.

Carol forgot about it until the area became painful, which she first put down to a possible infection.

But following a routine mammogram soon after, she came home one evening to a letter.

Normally Carol would have left reading it until morning, but Moose's odd behaviour made her open it there and then.

An abnormality had been found and she was due at hospital the next morning for further tests.

A biopsy was taken from the exact same spot that Moose clawed her, and she was soon diagnosed with breast cancer.

Carol says: "Without Moose, I wouldn't have opened that letter, so I'd have missed that appointment."

"I would have got treatment, I would have had surgery, but not as fast. And it was a fast-growing cancer. I'm eternally grateful. He's not behaved like that before or since."

"Listen to your animals. They've got skills we do not understand, and they should be respected."

Moose has since been a fantastic support to Carol while she receives chemotherapy, cuddling up to her each evening.

She adds: "I've rescued him, but he's rescued me. They rescue you, without you realising you needed it."



# HOMELESS to holiday fun

Loving Poppy found the family home she deserved...

**I** magine going from a life of long walks, swimming and playtime to living in a car, with no place to truly call home.

Life for much-loved pet Poppy and her owner had taken a sad turn after years of happiness together.

Desperate to give Poppy the life she deserved, a tough call to Blue Cross led the friendly Labrador staffie cross

to a loving new home filled with fun.

Walks on the beach, swimming in streams and camping trips are keeping Poppy happy and healthy now – a far cry from the cramped conditions of a car.

After taking on Poppy as a youngster, the bond between the lovable lab and her original owner had grown over nine years.

Unexpectedly homeless, Poppy's owner made the difficult decision to contact Blue Cross for help with their beloved pet.

That call made a huge difference for the 10-year-old dog, who has found a new family thanks to the dedicated support of our team.

Bubbly and confident Poppy found herself at our Suffolk rehoming centre,





where she became a firm favourite during 97 days in Blue Cross care.

"Being a slightly older dog, Poppy stayed with us for longer than average, so we're delighted she's found such a lovely home," explains Charles White, Centre Manager.

"She's found best friends in her new family and is loving life with them."

Poppy's photo caught the eye of a nature-loving family who were looking for a rescue dog with plenty of personality and experience under her collar.

Travelling from Southampton to meet Poppy, adopters Jess and Chris Parsons felt an instant connection with the affectionate black Labrador.

"We made our decision in the first

10 seconds," says Jess, 40, who works as an education officer for a regional wildlife charity.

"Poppy came straight out to meet us wagging her tail, so it was instantly

“

**Poppy came straight out to meet us wagging her tail, so it was instantly clear she was the dog for us.**

”

clear she was the dog for us."

The couple and their three-year-old son Tommy have fallen in love with

Poppy since she's become part of the family, enjoying regular woodland walks, beach trips and riverside hikes.

A recent camping holiday in the Lake District meant all the family could indulge their zest for getting active in the great outdoors.

Jess continues: "Lots of people asked why we didn't get a puppy as we had a young child but, for us, having an older, gentler dog is so much better."

"Tommy is definitely her favourite, she's all over him with excitement when he gets back from pre-school."

Fresh air and fun activities are now part of Poppy's daily routine – and days spent in the confines of a car are long-forgotten.

# How to MUZZLE TRAIN YOUR DOG

A muzzle is useful in a variety of situations, including for vet visits or if your dog is nervous around people or other dogs. As long as it's introduced slowly with tasty treats, your dog can feel comfortable in their muzzle.

## TOP TIP

Be patient, positive and jolly while muzzle training your dog. Keep training sessions short and only move on to the next step when your dog is comfortable.

## FINDING THE RIGHT MUZZLE

A basket muzzle is the best type as it allows dogs to drink water, eat treats and pant freely. The right size should not cover or rub their eyes, or be too loose.



## STEP ONE

Place a treat in the bottom of the muzzle – cream cheese is ideal as it's sticky. Your dog may try to put their nose in the bottom of the muzzle themselves to lick the treat. Do not fasten the muzzle – just let your dog enjoy the treat. Repeat a few times in different areas, such as the house, garden or on a walk.



## STEP TWO

Once your dog is comfortable putting their nose in the muzzle, pass them a treat through the gaps at the end of the muzzle. This rewards your dog for staying in position. Repeat until your dog is comfortable staying in the muzzle for longer periods of time.



## STEP THREE

Once your dog is ready, you can work towards fastening the muzzle. At first, fasten it, reward them through the muzzle, then remove it right away. Gradually leave it on for longer periods of time with lots of rewards throughout.



## STEP FOUR

Once your dog is ready, you can begin to move around while your dog is wearing the muzzle. By keeping your dog active and rewarding them with treats, you'll keep their attention on you. Vary the places you practise, such as on walks.





## Get ready to host the puurfect tea party

No matter the season, it's always the perfect time to indulge in a cosy cuppa with your nearest and dearest. That's why Paws for Tea is now a year-round event.

So mark your calendars and gather your loved ones for an unforgettable celebration! From indulging in delectable cakes for our feline friends, to treating yourselves with tasty biscuits in support of our canine companions, and everything in between, there's a paw-some experience awaiting everyone!

**Whatever you choose to do, our fundraising pack includes all you need to get organised. Get one free using the form on the link below or contacting us by phone on 0300 790 9903.**

**[bluecross.org.uk/paws-tea](http://bluecross.org.uk/paws-tea)**



## Take on a challenge for Blue Cross

Help pets and people in crisis

From treks and runs to abseils and skydives, taking on an active challenge is a great way to push yourself and do something amazing for pets in need.

Rise to the challenge and raise funds to keep our services going and our network of pet food banks open. With your support, families can carry on feeding their beloved pets, even in the toughest times.

**We're ready and waiting to support you.**



“ I decided to run, kayak and bike 125km over the month in England, Scotland and Wales in memory of my dog, Ozzy. What did I most enjoy? Being outdoors and doing something memorable for the best dog ever and make him proud.

**Kate O'Regan**

”

Find your challenge  
**[bluecross.org.uk/challenge-events](http://bluecross.org.uk/challenge-events)**



# We love to hear from you

Please send us your news and pictures of your pets!

## REMEMBERING OSCAR

On 1 June 2010 we adopted a border jack called Oscar from Blue Cross. He was a rather manic inmate, a wheel chaser, obsessed with balls and frightened of life.

We stuck with him and through persistence and consistency he slowly calmed down. Over the first couple of years, it was a joy to see him develop, begin to trust and realise that our house was his forever home. He developed into a real character who had many adventures, charmed everyone he met and was loved by many, many people.

He loved the water and especially the sea. He scared us a few times when he swam out to sea and just kept going until he got cold and finally returned to dry land! He never lost his love for a ball and would play in the garden all day with the numerous balls he had. He would place them around the garden like a constellation of stars.

He grew to love us and all our family and friends and he became very friendly

towards other dogs, especially younger dogs which he seemed to gently teach how to behave.

In March 2022 he developed a tumour in his right eye and had to have it removed. He bounced back from that and enjoyed another year of good health. Last year it became clear he was slowing up and showing his age. He gradually declined and eventually, on 15 May he died peacefully on the way to the vets. We think he just wore out and died of old age. We don't think he was in pain, and he died in the car, which he loved, and was with us there.

We had him for 13 years and we think he must have been at least 16. We are missing him dreadfully but we know he had a full and happy life and we are so glad we had him.

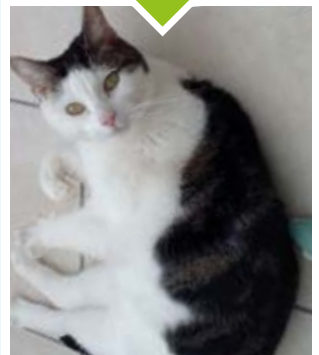
So, thank you Blue Cross for saving this lovely soul and giving him a new start in life with us. Thank you for all you do.

**Ruth Bullock and Wendy Dodd**

## ELSIE IS LOVED

In May I adopted this lovely girl from Bromsgrove Blue Cross. She spent two weeks hiding under a bed but is now very happy to snuggle up to me to watch TV. She is very gentle and loves exploring the garden but is easily scared if there are men nearby. I have found her a lady vet!

**Mary Crayston**



## We love to hear how Blue Cross pets are changing lives...

Please email your letters and photos to  
[editor@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:editor@bluecross.org.uk)  
or write to For Pets Editor, Blue Cross, Shilton Road,  
Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF

Find us on Facebook & Twitter

 /thebluecrossUK  @The\_Blue\_Cross



# INSEPARABLE rescue kittens

Rescue kittens Biffy and Oskie are best of friends after being adopted together...

**B**iffy and Oskie are inseparable. And with each recovering from a tough start in life, it's no wonder they're such firm friends.

Despite coming to Blue Cross separately, the adorable duo formed

an unbreakable bond while in foster care together – the place they can now call their loving home.

"Biffy and Oskie are inseparable and love to play, sleep and even drink from the same water bowl together," laughs Laura Morris, Pet Welfare Assistant at Blue Cross Burford.

The two young cats were both fostered by Laura when they arrived at Blue Cross as kittens in crisis needing round-the-clock care.

Like many of the pets we take in, the two kittens had to fight hard for their survival.

As the sole survivor of his litter, we weren't sure if little tabby Oskie would pull through.





**DUMPED IN A BIN**

“  
Biffy and Oskie  
are inseparable  
and love to play,  
sleep and even drink  
from the same water  
bowl together.  
”



At just a few weeks old, Oskie found himself in the care of our Victoria animal hospital after his two siblings died, and his owners were struggling to hand-rear him.

Sadly, he had a deformed hind leg which had become infected and needed to be amputated.

Fortunately, Oskie recovered well and was able to travel to our Burford rehoming centre in Oxfordshire where Laura took him into foster care and “just fell in love with him”.

It wasn't long before Laura adopted Oskie but, less than a month after making it official, she found herself hand feeding another tiny kitten, who had been found dumped in a bin.

### **DUMPED IN A BIN**

Poor Biffy was only two days old when he was thankfully found by a rubbish collector who heard his cries.

Cold and hungry, Biffy was brought to our Merton animal hospital before being transferred to our Victoria site for the emergency care he needed.

Weighing just 93g – less than a satsuma – and without a mum providing milk, Biffy, who was then known as Tiny Tim, needed to be handfed every two hours.

He was soon transferred to our Burford rehoming centre where he went straight into foster care with Laura, and met his new pal Oskie.

“Biffy was very lucky to be found

when he was, because if he'd been left any longer he wouldn't have survived as a newborn without food,” explains Laura.

Sharing his new home with Oskie meant Biffy could experience feline behaviour first hand.

“It's incredibly rewarding to see Biffy and Oskie as they are now, compared to when they first came to us,” adds Laura, who has since adopted both cats.

“Oskie's doing brilliantly on his three legs, running around playing and he's also very affectionate. Biffy's doing great, he has well and truly settled in – he's definitely found his mischievous side but gives the best cuddles.”



# Cruel LAW

Seeing gentle Luna leave Blue Cross with a wonderful family to love her was a day those caring for her feared may never come...

**F**un-loving and affectionate Luna loves nothing more than sofa snuggles with her family and best friend Rex.

But this sweet soul nearly didn't get the chance to live – and, devastatingly, many dogs like her weren't as lucky.

This is because Luna's looks resemble a type of dog – an American bully XL or XL bully – which was banned under the Dangerous

Dogs Act in December. From then, it became illegal for charities like Blue Cross to rehome them, with euthanasia the only option.

## RACE AGAINST TIME

Luna was just six months old and thriving in foster care when the law change was announced by the Prime Minister in September, triggering a race against time to get her adopted.

Whether a dog fits into a banned

category is based on a set of measurements and characteristics, rather than DNA or temperament. And Luna is a shining example of why this law is so ill-judged.

She melts the hearts of everyone she meets with her calm and kind nature, and new owner Lisa Miller says she has brought her and partner Nathan "so much joy" since adopting her in November.

Luna also shares a special bond

Join our campaign to end breed specific legislation at [bluecross.org.uk/endBSL](https://bluecross.org.uk/endBSL)



with the couple's other rescue dog Rex, an American bulldog cross staffie. They're now inseparable.

"They're just lazy lumps – we call them logs," laughs Lisa. "Because all they do is cuddle and sleep. I just can't believe how lovely and calm they are together. It's great to see."

But adopting Luna wasn't a decision taken lightly. Like all owners of XL bully types, Lisa and Nathan had to apply and pay to place her on an exempted dogs register, with strict conditions including wearing a muzzle and lead in public for life.

Thanks to careful muzzle training from her devoted foster carer Caroline Oram, Bromsgrove Adoptions Coordinator, unflappable Luna has taken this in her stride.

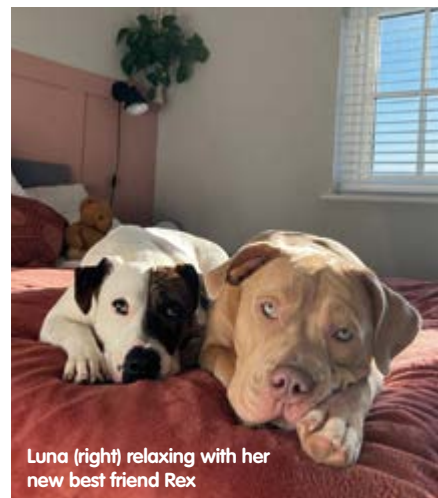
## FUTURES STOLEN

But this law robbed many other XL bully types in rescue of their futures and, for those belonging to families unable to go through the exemption process, the only option was putting them to sleep.

Blue Cross has long campaigned to end Breed Specific Legislation – which also bans four other types of dogs – as we believe that the government should target all irresponsible owners rather than demonising specific breed types in this way.

Becky Thwaites, Head of Public Affairs at Blue Cross, says: "We recognise the need to protect the public from harm, but we do not believe this is the most effective way to do this.

"We don't believe a dog's safety and temperament can be judged by a measuring tape. The law unfairly discriminates against thousands of good-natured dogs like Luna, who has proved herself to be a loving pet."



Luna (right) relaxing with her new best friend Rex



# News

## Bitesize Stories

All the latest news from Blue Cross



## Mother and pups thrive

**H**eavily pregnant, undernourished and due to give birth any day, Gloria was in desperate need of a place to stay.

The 15-month-old beagle cross couldn't be cared for at home, as her elderly owner fell ill.

Full of energy but days away from giving birth, Gloria's family contacted Blue Cross for support.

She was soon in the expert care of our Suffolk rehoming centre and gave birth to 10 pups after eight days.

Sadly, not all survived, with one stillborn and another pup born with a deformity passing away. Another pup with malformed bones in all of his legs later had to be put to sleep.

### MOTHERHOOD

Happily, Gloria's other seven puppies – three female and four male – are all doing well in new homes after the "brilliant mum" took to motherhood despite the difficult start.

Flea and worm treatment and high protein puppy food gave Gloria and the puppies the best possible start to their new lives.

Sadie Hollinsworth, Suffolk Assistant Manager, says: "At Suffolk, we have dedicated team members who



installed wifi and a camera in the unit to be able to monitor her, throughout pregnancy, whelping and with the puppies.

"Along with this, the team regularly checked her and the puppies throughout the night, while during the day a dedicated member of the team looked after her every need."

Sadie adds: "Gloria is very sweet and loving once she gets to know someone. She made a brilliant mum."

Inspired by the animated film *Madagascar*, the pups were named Gia, Fossa, Skipper, Moto Moto, Melman, Marty and Alex.

Once Gloria recovered and her puppies were old enough, they joined families across the country in Suffolk and Norfolk, to Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Oxfordshire and London, with their futures set to be full of love, care and fun.

## LOOK FOR US ON TV

Blue Cross will be hitting TV screens this spring with a brand-new advert.

Weaving together different tales of love between pets and their people, we hope the commercial will inspire more supporters like you to get involved, as well as reaching more families in need of our services.

From pet food banks to veterinary care, we've never been needed more by struggling pet owners. Meanwhile, our rehoming services continue to care for homeless animals.

Keep your eyes peeled – we'd love to hear your thoughts once it airs at [info@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:info@bluecross.org.uk)







## Fun times for gerbils

Dynamic gerbil duo Bill and Ben arrived in Blue Cross care when they were just six weeks old.

Like many small pets that we help, they were part of an unplanned litter – the result of their parents being wrongly sexed and sold in male and female pairs which quickly breed.

### BONDED

Gerbils need the company of their own kind and, as Bill and Ben were bonded, as well as sociable and friendly, they soon found a new home where they could remain together.

Sarah Warn, who adopted the pair in August last year, says the gerbils are “having a whale of a time” as part of the family.

Her son Elliott, 10, continues: “We are having a very good time with Bill and Ben, and they are being very cheeky in their new home.

“When we first got them, they were very scared of us and would barely come out, but along the way we have got them playing with us and they won’t stop being noisy at night time.”

## FAMILY LEGACY OF HELPING BLUE CROSS

A supporter with a rich family history of helping Blue Cross continued his legacy with a generous donation left in his will.

Architect David Ottewill, who passed away in 2022, pledged £1,000 to pets in need, having helped our charity throughout his life, even designing the original kennels at our former Cambridge centre.

His father-in-law, Stuart Gelder, who became joint secretary of the Blue Cross in 1953, had inspired him to support our cause.

Alongside his wife and five children, Mr Ottewill also adopted a Labrador cross beagle called Honey from Blue Cross in the 1970s, whose daughter Miranda said was “an adored pet”. She adds: “I am so pleased he thought of your charity.”



## ABANDONED HORSE SAFE NOW

An injured horse abandoned at Appleby Horse Fair is back on his hooves and in a happy home.

Skewbald native Tommo, three, was found alone in terrible pain and poor condition at the annual event in Cumbria back in 2022.

With a gaping wound among his many ailments, he needed treatment at the scene before being taken to our Rolleston horse rehoming centre in Staffordshire.

Horse Rehoming Coordinator, Emily Hancock, says: “He had conjunctivitis in both eyes, a large wound on his hindquarters and lots of rubs and scrapes all over the body. He was also treated for ringworm at the centre.”

### UNDERWEIGHT

As Tommo was so underweight, he had to be placed on a personalised diet plan with feeds little but often.

Once he was on the mend, he developed a “boisterous and confident character”, says Emily.

And after more than a year in our care, he found a loving home.



## Whatever happened to?

Every year Blue Cross finds families for thousands of homeless pets. We've caught up with a familiar face to see how they're doing...

### LILY

Found shivering in the snow days before Christmas 2022, Lily was scared, in pain and starving.

Now, she's thriving as part of a loving family in a warm home – and is gaining confidence by the day.



Lily, the star of our recent Christmas appeal, spent 134 days in the care of our Hertfordshire rehoming centre before being given the fresh start she needed by Sam and Jamie Cairns and their two children, Tilly and Tommy.

And while they have helped to heal the scars left by Lily's sad past, she has also helped Sam through the grief of losing her beloved mum.

Sam's parents adopted two lurchers from Blue Cross during their marriage. So, following her mum's death, Sam felt compelled to look on our adoption pages online – and the rest is history.

"She's completed us really," says Sam. "I just wish my mum had met her. She would have absolutely loved her."

## MICROCHIPPING LAW FOR CATS

Microchipping your cat will soon be compulsory in the UK.

From 10 June, the owners of any cat without one will be breaking the law and could face a fine of up to £500.

Up until now, 80 per cent of stray cats Blue Cross helps every year are unchipped, so their families can't be traced. Cats like Nigel (pictured), found straying with no fur on his hind quarters.

Becky Thwaites, Head of Public Affairs, says: "We've long campaigned for mandatory microchipping so we welcome this law change. The microchipping procedure, which takes seconds to complete, is a safe and permanent way of identifying cats and ensuring that they will be reunited with you should they go missing."

Find out more at [bluecross.org.uk/microchipping](https://bluecross.org.uk/microchipping)







## Deaf cat learns TO TRUST AGAIN

**D**eaf tabby Dash has come a long way from the shy and worried boy he once was.

The two-year-old blossomed with the dedicated team at our Southampton centre after arriving with an open leg wound needing vet care, along with routine vaccinations, flea and worming treatments.

Being deaf means Dash “startles quite easily”, explains Admissions Coordinator Kirsty Smith.

But lots of careful handling, playing with his favourite rod toys and tasty treats of fresh chicken enabled Dash to relax in our care.

This, along with steps to make sure Dash was never startled, helped him gain the confidence he needed.

### CONFIDENCE

Jo Newcombe, Pet Welfare Assistant, explained that approaching him from angles he could see you from was extremely important, along with gently tapping a foot or closing a door, as deaf cats can still feel these kinds of vibrations.

She continues: “It has taken a long time to gain his trust, however, Dash now lets me stroke him and give him gentle chin scratches. On occasion he

will rub into my hand, this has taken several months to get to this stage, but he seems to enjoy this.

“Dash is incredibly playful, and this is the way to his heart, he is a real character and there is never a dull moment with him.”

And, after more than 200 days in our care, Dash found the patient and understanding home he so deserved.





**le boat**  
Who's on board?



# WIN! A dog-friendly boat holiday

**I**n partnership with our friends at Le Boat we are giving you the chance to win a seven night boating holiday for up to four people and your dog\*.

Le Boat is the number one provider of boating holidays on the beautiful inland waterways of the UK, Europe and Canada. They boast the world's largest fleet of self-drive boats to hire and the widest choice of destinations.

Not many of our customers know how to drive a boat, but they soon realise they don't need to. The team at Le Boat show you how easy it is, giving you the confidence to navigate the waterways so you can relax and enjoy your time together.

And the best thing... your four-legged friends can come along too. We all know they're part of the family!

Find out more at [leboat.co.uk](http://leboat.co.uk)

**The winner of the pet portrait by Blue Cross official artist Stephen Yorke, in our autumn 2023 issue, is Antonia Barnes. Congratulations!**

## HOW TO ENTER

To be in with a chance of winning, answer the question below:

On pages 10 to 13, we brought you the story of four degus. What are their names?

- ☐ Princess, Pearl, Opal and Locky
- ☐ Peach, Pearl, Opal and Locky
- ☐ Peach, Pearl, Opal and Lucky

Fill in your name and contact details and post\*\* to:

**Freepost BLUE CROSS FOR PETS**

Or, enter online at

**[bluecross.org.uk/forpets](http://bluecross.org.uk/forpets)**

Name: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: .....

Telephone: .....

Email: .....

Closing date Friday, 3 May 2024

\*Strictly one entry per household.

\*The prize is one Le Boat boating holiday of seven nights for up to four people and one dog in any of Le Boat's destinations (excluding Italy and Canada). The prize may be taken on any budget or comfort boat in the Le Boat fleet sleeping up to four, subject to availability. Amendments to boats; guests; duration or otherwise are for the winner's sole cost and subject to availability. The prize must be taken by 31 October 2024 (excluding 26 March – 5 April, 27 April – 21 May, 5 July – 31 August). Includes boat hire only. For full terms and conditions, visit [bluecross.org.uk/forpets](http://bluecross.org.uk/forpets). \*\*Blue Cross respects your privacy and will keep your information safe and secure and will only use it in accordance with our Privacy Policy. We will not sell, rent or share your personal data with other organisations for their marketing purposes. We may use your data for profiling purposes to make future communications more relevant to you. To see more about how we will use your information visit [bluecross.org.uk/privacy](http://bluecross.org.uk/privacy). You can change your preferences at any time by contacting our Supporter Care Team on 0300 790 9903 or email [info@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:info@bluecross.org.uk)



# FIND US

Discover your local Blue Cross

We also have 57 shops, and a rapidly growing number of pet food banks and donation points

## Our animal hospitals

- 1 Grimsby
- 2 Hammersmith
- 3 Merton
- 4 Victoria

## Our pet care clinics

- 5 Derby
- 6 York

## Our rehoming units and centres

- 7 Bromsgrove
- 8 Burford
- 9 Exeter
- 10 Hertfordshire (Kimpton)
- 11 Manchester
- 12 Newport
- 13 Rolleston
- 14 Sheffield
- 15 Southampton
- 16 Suffolk (Ipswich)
- 17 Thirsk



## Say hello, find your nearest Blue Cross or make a donation

**Call:** 0300 790 9903 **Email:** [info@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:info@bluecross.org.uk) **Visit:** [bluecross.org.uk](http://bluecross.org.uk)

**Write to us:** Freepost BLUE CROSS FOR PETS

### Book a free education talk

Animal welfare and responsible pet ownership workshops for children and young people in schools.

**Call:** 0300 111 8950 **Visit:** [bluecross.org.uk/education](http://bluecross.org.uk/education)

### Pet Loss Support Service

Free and confidential support for anyone coping with the loss of a pet, for any reason.

**Call:** 0800 096 6606. Lines open every day, 8.30am to 8.30pm.

**Email:** [plsmail@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:plsmail@bluecross.org.uk)

For the full map of all Blue Cross locations visit [bluecross.org.uk/findus](http://bluecross.org.uk/findus)



Pets change lives  
We change theirs

# Remember me in your Will



Pets change lives  
We change theirs



If pets have a place in your heart, please find a place for them in your Will. A gift in your Will can help secure the future for thousands of pets.

Order your FREE information pack on making or amending a Will and leaving a gift to Blue Cross online at [bluecross.org.uk/gift-your-will](http://bluecross.org.uk/gift-your-will)

Or complete the coupon and send to:  
**Freepost BLUE CROSS FOR PETS**

Alternatively, call or email and quote: B124

Telephone: **0300 790 9903**

Email: [legacy@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:legacy@bluecross.org.uk)

**Thank you for your continued support.**

Title:

B124

First name:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

- ☐ I have already included a gift to Blue Cross in my Will
- ☐ If you are happy for us to contact you by phone, please tick\*



\*From time to time we may wish to communicate with you by phone with news about the pets you are helping and ways you can help in the future. If you are happy for us to do this, please fill in your details above.

Blue Cross is a charity registered in England and Wales (224392) and in Scotland (SC040154).



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REGULATOR**