

FOR PETS

The magazine for Blue Cross supporters

Issue 17



Kitten survival

Fresh start for one-eyed strays

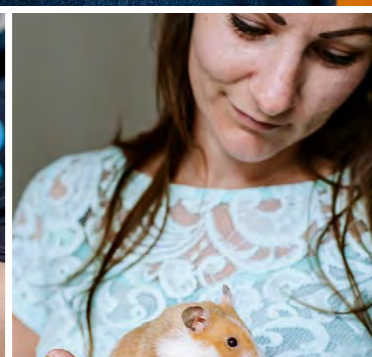
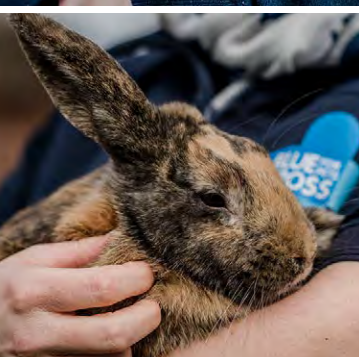
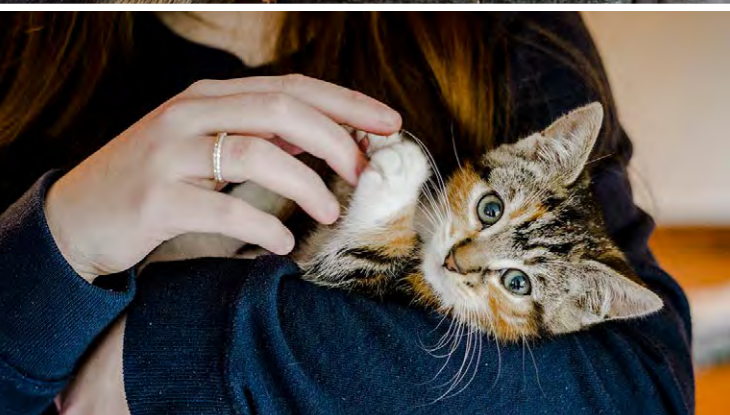


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Pets change lives
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04

COVER STORY

04 **In sickness and
in health**
Sick siblings' survival

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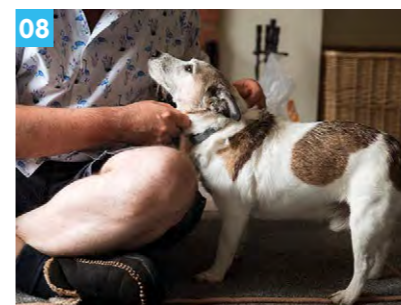
ILLUSTRATION

Perched Bird

WELCOME

We love to celebrate the special bonds pets share with each other, as well as their people. Like our cover star Solar, who is inseparable from her likely sibling Kicia. Blue Cross reunited the kittens, who were found straying with identical eye injuries – the result of untreated cat flu. With love and the right preventative care, they needn't have endured such trauma. We'll always be there for pets like Solar and Kicia, but we strive for a world without this suffering. Our education service is key to this. In 20 years, it has taught more than a million people about the care and empathy pets deserve. I hope you enjoy reading about this work on pages 26 and 27, alongside the other incredible stories in this issue.

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08



10



14



22

FEATURES

08 Senior shine

Dog rocks his golden years

10 Alpine's arrival

Newborn foal thrives

14 Born survivor

Brave guinea pig's joy

22 Heart surgery

Puppy's life-saving op

26 Education

Inspiring future pet owners

28 Fighting spirit

Injured stray cat heals

REGULARS

17 Take me home

These Blue Cross pets need a loving family

18 Pet advice

Myths debunked

21 Pet postbag

Your letters

30 News

The latest Blue Cross news

34 Competition

Win a dog-friendly boating short break

35 Contact us

Get in touch or come and visit

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In sickness and in HEALTH

Stray one-eyed kittens Kicia and Solar were by each other's sides in our Blue Cross hospital – now recovered, they have found a happy home together...



Tamsin Devas doesn't need to give her house number to visitors – her two cats, sitting like bookends in the front window, mark the spot. Despite each having only one eye, former strays Kicia and Solar don't miss a thing happening on the street.

Tamsin, of Gloucestershire, was on safari in South Africa, watching big cats in the wild, when these two very special little cats popped up on the Blue Cross website adoption pages.

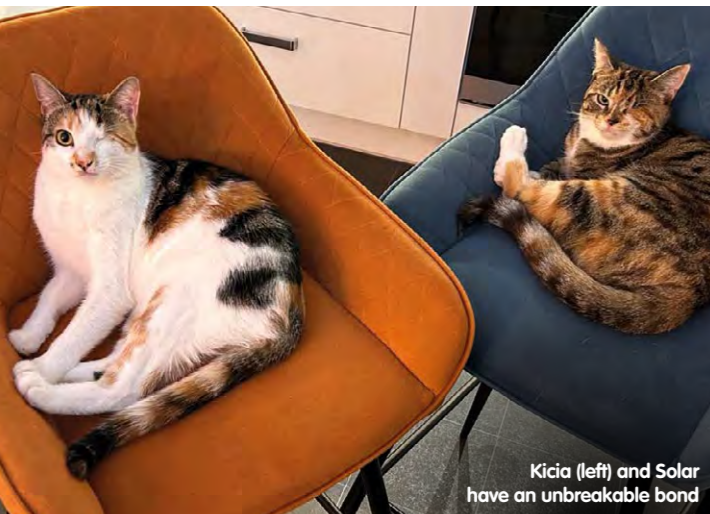
"I'd lost my cat Pumpkin suddenly

in summer 2024, four days before we went on holiday," Tamsin says.

"The thought of a home without a cat was depressing so my daughter Libby, 16, and I browsed the Blue Cross website from Cape Town. When I saw Kicia and Solar, I applied to adopt them immediately."

CAT FLU

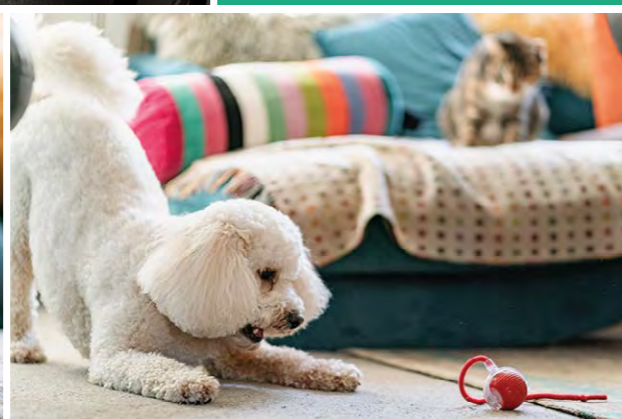
At just six months old, Kicia and Solar had been through a rough time. Thought to be sisters, though no one knows for certain, they arrived



Kicia (left) and Solar have an unbreakable bond

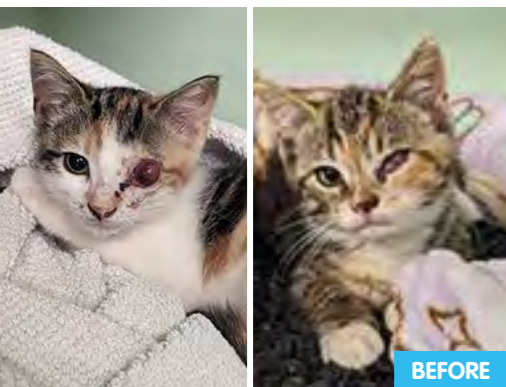
“
The breakthrough came when Kicia wanted to cuddle me on the sofa – which meant sitting next to Bentley.
Bentley was very calm and soon they were playing together, Solar biffing him on the nose if he got too enthusiastic

”



as strays on the same day at our flagship Blue Cross animal hospital in Victoria, central London.

Each had a ruptured left eye – likely the result of untreated cat flu – and both were crawling with fleas.



BEFORE

Sadly, their eyes could not be saved, and Kicia and Solar underwent surgery to remove them – known as an enucleation – one day apart.

“Cat flu can cause severe damage to the eyes if left untreated, leading to complications such as ulcers or even rupture,” Shai Belhassen, Blue Cross Vet, says.

“In cases like Kicia and Solar’s, removal of the affected eye is often the only way to relieve pain and prevent further infection.

“Fortunately, cats adapt remarkably well to life with one eye.”

After surgery, the Blue Cross team placed Kicia and Solar in a shared kennel to recover. The girls slept and

cuddled together for comfort. Then they moved into foster care, sharing one of three heated duplex chalets in the Kent garden of Blue Cross fosterer Wendy Penfold.

Six thousand miles away in South Africa, after a day spotting cheetahs, Tamsin received a message from Wendy about her adoption enquiry.

“We chatted on WhatsApp and Wendy told me their stories,” Tamsin says. “The poor little lambs,’ I thought. ‘They’ve been through the mill.’”

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

So, on her return to the UK, Tamsin drove two-and-a-half hours to meet the girls. As expected, she fell in love.

“Solar came straight out to say hello and we played with her toys. Kicia was timid, but I encouraged her with Dreamies,” Tamsin says.

Back home, Tamsin had prepared the spare room in anticipation of adopting the girls, okaying her preparations with the Blue Cross rehoming team.

Bentley, the family’s three-year-old cavapoo, was excited to meet his new sisters but Tamsin took a cautious approach, watching Blue Cross online guidance videos on introducing dogs to cats.

“Bentley hasn’t got a bad bone in his body, but the introduction had to be right,” Tamsin says.

“I put one of his blankets in the girls’ room, so they’d grow used to his smell,” she continues.

“He was fascinated when we woke the morning after the girls’ arrival to the sound of them chasing around their bell balls. Who was behind that closed door?”

Next Tamsin attached a stair gate to the spare room door, with rails Bentley couldn’t fit through.

That meant Kicia and Solar could slip out and explore the house with a sanctuary to return to.

Evenings, Tamsin kept Bentley on his lead and encouraged Kicia and Solar to join them in the front room. The trio were soon firm friends.

BREAKTHROUGH

“The breakthrough came when Kicia wanted to cuddle me on the sofa – which meant sitting next to Bentley,” says Tamsin. “Bentley was very calm and soon they were playing together, Solar biffing him on the nose if he got too enthusiastic.”

Tamsin’s “happy place” is now on the sofa in the evenings, with all three snuggled beside her. At night, she sleeps diagonally across her bed to make room for them all.

“They are happy campers,” Tamsin laughs. “My one-eyed wonders and their lovable buffoon of a big brother – thank you, Blue Cross, for bringing us together.”



Rocky with David (left) and George on the way to his favourite place – the beach



“
Rocky drags us to the pub – he’s fallen in love with the landlady Marie
”



ROCKY ROCKS his golden years

There’s plenty of life in the old dog yet – never has that saying been truer than in the case of jack russell terrier Rocky...

Beware if you lay out a picnic on the beach in Scarborough – you may find an uninvited guest racing over to join in. That’s exactly what happened when Blue Cross caught up with Rocky at South Bay.

He was posing for photos on the sands like a celebrity, basking

in attention and sunshine. Then he smelled a sausage roll at a hundred paces and was off.

It’s such a joy for everyone at Blue Cross Thirsk rehoming centre to see Rocky living his best life.

When Rocky came into their care aged 13-and-a-half, he was anxious and confused. His owner, who he’d been with since a pup, had just passed away. Bereft, in kennels Rocky barked and howled.

After a full health check which resulted in the removal of 11 rotten teeth, one of Blue Cross Thirsk’s amazing foster carers took Rocky in while he waited for his forever home.

Then George Preston and David Taylor from Scarborough spotted him on our online adoption pages.

“There was something about Rocky’s photos that drew me in,” George says. “David was slightly worried about his age – we’d lost our previous terrier Butch a year earlier and the grief flooded us. But I knew we could offer Rocky a lovely retirement home – three old boys with pipes and slippers together.”

So they drove to Thirsk to meet him. Rocky walked into the introductions space, set up like a living room, and jumped on the sofa between them.

“He gave us both an approving sniff as if to say: ‘Okay, you’ll do,’” George smiles.

ANXIOUS

But the first few weeks with George and David, Rocky was unsettled.

“We’d try and take him for a walk but at the end of our drive he’d refuse to move, shaking and shivering,” George says. “I think he’d led a sheltered life in his old home and was scared of the world. At night, he’d bark and pace, anxious.”

“‘You’re safe,’ we told him – we understood he’d been through a lot of change. Then one day it all clicked into place.”

Now Rocky is confident of his place in the world – with energy levels far surpassing the norm for a senior dog.

“George and I are worn out trying to keep up with him,” David laughs.

“He sees George as number one, himself in second place and me somewhere way down after that.”

Rocky’s favourite place, after the

beach, is The Frigate, a cosy local pub en route to South Bay.

“Rocky drags us to the door,” David says. “He’s fallen in love with the landlady Marie.”

The feeling is mutual.

“Rocky is my favourite regular,” Marie says. “He was a bit nervous when he started coming in but now he settles on the cushioned seats and people watches. He’s the perfect pub dog – everyone loves Rocky.”

Between the beach and the bar Rocky is shining in his golden years. He even enjoyed a summer holiday, sharing a cabin on the overnight ferry to the Isle of Man with his humans.

“Rocky completes our family. We can’t imagine life without him,” George says.

Newborn foal's 'BEST' START

A neglected horse finds health
and happiness before giving birth
in Blue Cross care...





“

Alpine is growing into a lovely horse. And that's because she's had the best start, she has the best mum and she's in the best place

”



Foal Alpine has only ever known love and happiness since taking her first breath – a start to life worlds apart from her mother's likely experience.

Mum Strawberry arrived at Blue Cross Burford in late 2023 having been rescued by the RSPCA in a terrible condition. It took extensive dental work and farrier treatment under sedation to get her happily back on her hooves.

But the mental scars ran deeper. So, when the team discovered Strawberry was pregnant, it was a race against time to help her overcome her fears.

This was vital to ensure she could be handled during the birth if needed and to enable her foal to grow up confident around humans.

Suzanne Morgan, Horse Welfare Assistant, says: "Strawberry was very nervous when she first arrived. She wouldn't come near us and ran away if we approached her.

"But after a week or so, she started to show that she liked people, and she wanted to approach us. Even though she was still scared, it was a promising start."

CONFIDENCE

From there, the team gradually began getting Strawberry used to being caught in the field and wearing a head collar before progressing on to lead training.

"It took a very, very long time for her to be led happily, but we just went at her pace. We did everything we possibly could to give her confidence," continues Suzanne.

Accustoming Strawberry to vet handling for routine treatment like vaccinations and blood tests, as well as getting her used to touch in places



Suzanne with Alpine and Strawberry

she'd likely need attention during birth, was also essential.

Suzanne says: "As soon as she was used to being groomed, I got her used to things like her tail being picked up and handled, and our hands under her belly. All the things that we might need to do if there were any problems during foaling."

TEXTBOOK BIRTH

But, thankfully, little Alpine – aptly named after a tiny variety of strawberry – arrived in a "textbook birth" one Sunday afternoon in September last year.

She became the first foal born on site at Burford since 2019.

"Strawberry was brilliant – very calm, and did everything she needed to. I just watched, monitored and made sure that there were no problems," explains Suzanne.

"She gave birth very quickly. It was all over in five or 10 minutes, which is how it should be."

And, as hoped, mother and daughter blossomed – with brave little Alpine growing up enjoying human interaction on her terms, as her mother now does.

"It has just been wonderful. Alpine is so much like her mum and quite calm. She's not had the upbringing that Strawberry had, which is a good thing – so she's not got that fear of people," says Suzanne.

"Alpine is growing into a lovely horse. And that's because she's had the best start, she has the best mum and she's in the best place.

"It has been lovely watching her grow and develop," adds Suzanne.

One year on, both mum and daughter are in new homes where they continue to grow in confidence.





Small but **MIGHTY**

Noelle suffered an unimaginable trauma when she was stolen by a cat – but the tiny guinea pig’s huge reserves of courage carried her through...

It wasn't the Christmas gift one Devon cat owner had been expecting – a baby guinea pig. When their cat appeared with the tiny white, ginger and black bundle in its mouth on Christmas Eve 2024, they were shocked. Gently retrieving the baby, they popped it in a cardboard box and drove to the local veterinary surgery for help.

"The cat owner must have got such a shock to find a baby guinea pig in their cat's mouth," Katy Young, who has fostered guinea pigs for Blue Cross Devon rehoming, advice and behaviour unit for two years, says. "Where on earth had the cat picked it up?"

The vet took the guinea pig – a female – in over the festive period, estimating her age at just four weeks. Guinea pigs are only weaned at three weeks, so this baby was very young to be away from her herd.

And she was injured, with a half

centimetre cut on her neck and a wobbly gait.

The vet gave her antibiotics, hoping the wound would heal and that her wonkiness was due to an infection, rather than permanent spinal damage caused by her ordeal.

Noelle – as the vet practice named her – clung on to life through the end of 2024 and into 2025.

So, on 2 January, the vets contacted Blue Cross Devon for help. Our team decided that superstar fosterer Katy was best placed to care for Noelle.

SUFFERING

"When Noelle arrived, I felt so sorry for her," Katy says.

"She was such a tiny thing to have suffered all this trauma. Her cut was healing but she still had a limp.

"Get better!" I told her. I set her up in a big enclosure in my summerhouse, out of sight of my herd of five guinea pigs as she needed to convalesce

in peace and quiet. At least she had a good appetite and loved her vegetables, especially lettuce. That gave me hope."

Sure enough, about 10 days after Noelle arrived, she stopped limping and her back straightened out.

"I was so relieved. Maybe she'd had a bit of bruising and it simply healed," Katy says. "I'd become very fond of her during her fight for survival so I asked the Blue Cross team whether I could adopt her."

Yes! Katy and her children Sophia, nine, and George, 11, were over the moon with the news.

"Blue Cross advised us on how to introduce Noelle to the herd," Katy says. "The best method is called side-to-side bonding so, over a few days, we put Noelle's enclosure next to my gang's so they could see and sniff each other."

"My lot reacted well apart from Mashed Potato, one of my ginger girls. She chattered her teeth at Noelle, a sign of aggression. 'Uh-oh,' I thought."

"But over time with the side-to-side bonding Mashed Potato calmed down. Brave little Noelle was totally unfazed. When we put her in with the herd, there was a bit of chasing but she stood her ground."

Noelle is fully grown now and is still the dinkiest in the herd. But, though she might be small, she is mighty.

"Guinea pigs show their dominance by rearing their head back – that's their way of saying: 'I'm the boss,'" Katy says. "When Noelle does that, the others respect her. I think that resilience and toughness is why she survived being caught by a cat. She's a born survivor."



Noelle with fellow Blue Cross guinea pig Ronnie



“ I think that resilience and toughness is why she survived being caught by a cat. She's a born survivor ”



Rehoming

Could you take me home?



These wonderful pets are in search of a second chance

STORM

At the ripe old age of 21, I'm looking for a calm home as a non-ridden companion alongside some sensible new horsey friends. I'm told I'm a dream to catch, lead and groom, and I thrive off human interaction.

Rolleston, 0300 777 1846



ANGEL DELIGHT

Don't let my little rolls of fat fool you – I'm an active girl who loves to burrow, explore and zoom on my exercise wheel. I admit, I am carrying a few extra grams – but the team here are helping me reach my optimal weight.

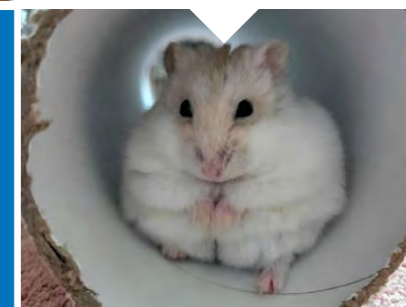
Manchester, 0300 777 1852



JACK AND BLAKE

We were so scared at first, but we're gaining confidence each day thanks to the lovely humans here. We've even learned to love strokes! But above all else, we love each other and need a home together.

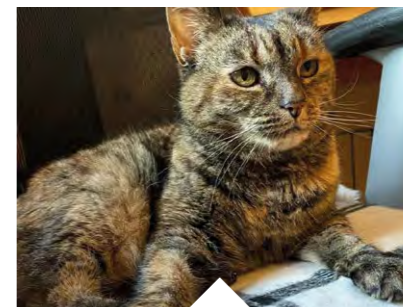
Southampton, 0300 777 1847



TEDDY BEAR

I'm a sweet and affectionate older gent in search of a loving retirement home. Life's little simplicities make me happy – food, fuss and a comfy arm chair. So, in the words of Elvis Presley, let me be your loving Teddy Bear?

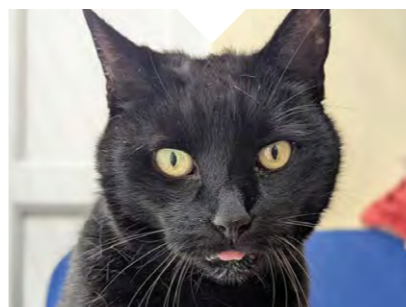
Bromsgrove, 0300 777 1842



TURBO TOBY

Turbo may be in the name, and I sure am fast, but what I really want is a sofa to snuggle on. After years of racing and kennel life, I'm dreaming of a cosy home and the love of a family who I can call my own.

Suffolk, 0300 777 1843



MARGARET

At the age of 13, I was found all alone in someone's garden. But now, I'm looking forward to the security of life in a loving home. And if it has a little sunny corner where I can lap up some rays, it would complete me.

Hertfordshire, 0300 777 1844



Find your new best friend at bluecross.org.uk/rehome

Fact or fiction PET MYTHS EXPLAINED!

Discover the truth behind these common pet misconceptions



Myth: MY DOG KNOWS WHEN HE'S BEEN NAUGHTY!

Truth: The 'guilty look' on your dog's face is not guilt at all. This is appeasement behaviour in response to your emotions. It may look like guilt, but they are in fact trying to calm the situation down. Dogs don't understand why we scold them for something they did earlier. But they may learn that you'll get upset when you return home. This can cause anxiety and an increase in unwanted behaviours, such as chewing or toileting. So, it's important to never tell off your dog if they make a mess while you're out.

Myth: CATS ALWAYS LAND ON THEIR FEET!

Truth: When cats fall from a moderate height, they can land on their feet due to their instinctive reflexes. But this isn't always possible and they can still be seriously injured even when they land on their paws, as their body may not be able to absorb the shock of the fall. Every year, Blue Cross vets treat cats who have fallen from a height. Prevent serious falls as much as possible, by keeping windows and balconies off limits to your cat.



Myth: MY HAMSTER ENJOYS AN EXERCISE BALL TO RUN AROUND!

Truth: Exercise balls can make hamsters stressed and exhausted, as they cannot hide or escape. They also have poor ventilation. Instead, encourage exercise with a suitable enclosure and correctly sized wheel. Plenty of tunnels, places to burrow and areas to forage will keep your hamster moving. You can also buy a secure, hamster-safe playpen for time outside of their enclosure.

Myth: MY RABBIT IS HAPPY LIVING ALONE!

Truth: In the wild, rabbits live together in groups for safety. They're also highly social animals who enjoy eating together, grooming each other and snuggling up to stay warm. Even pet rabbits still need this companionship, so it's important to have at least two rabbits. Without a friend, your rabbit may become lonely, depressed, bored and frustrated. Neutered pairs of the opposite sex or same-sex siblings are best.



Myth: MY HORSE IS BEING NAUGHTY!

Truth: When your horse is 'pulling faces' or threatening to bite or kick, there is almost always an underlying reason. Horses aren't naughty or stubborn like us, so it's likely that they are in pain, uncomfortable or even afraid. If your horse shows signs of discomfort or finds situations challenging, speak to a vet or a qualified professional to rule out health problems first. If they aren't in pain, it could be a training issue, fear or even poorly fitted tack.

Could your children or grandchildren raise vital donations for pets in need?



Pennies for Pets is a fun and rewarding way for kids to help animals by earning pennies through small chores.

We're encouraging young people across the country to complete small chores for people they know – like parents, neighbours and grandparents – in return for small amounts of money to support sick, injured and homeless pets.

Sign up at bluecross.org.uk/PenniesForPets

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

Letters

We love to hear from you

Send us your news and pictures of your pets!



'GENTLEST LITTLE CAT'

I rehomed Narla, a pretty little calico cat from Blue Cross at Bromsgrove back in January 2023 after the sad loss of my previous cat Czarna.

She was such a nervous little darling who had been rehomed before but was brought back because she was too timid.

She was four at the time and I was determined to bring this little cat out of her shell.

It has been a long road, but patience has been the key and now at six years old she wants to be petted and stroked, plays with her toys, and sleeps on the bed or gets on the armchair with me. I can only describe her as the sweetest, gentlest little cat I know and am honoured to call her mine. Thank you, Blue Cross.

Linda Smith



SQUEAKING FOR BREAKFAST

Just wanted to give an update about Gary and Graham, who I adopted from you in November!

Firstly, they're still called Gary and Graham (because how could I change those names?!) and I always get compliments on their names, so great job to whoever named them.

They were extremely shy to start with, especially Gary. But over time they have really come out of their shells and are the loveliest, funniest piggies – always squeaking for their breakfast! Gary is particularly fond of pea flakes, whilst Graham is more preoccupied running around like a crazy pig. They both love a good chin rub and a scratch behind the ears.

They've settled in so well and seem to be loving life. I feel so lucky to have them – thank you again for letting me give them a home.

Kirsty (and Gary & Graham)

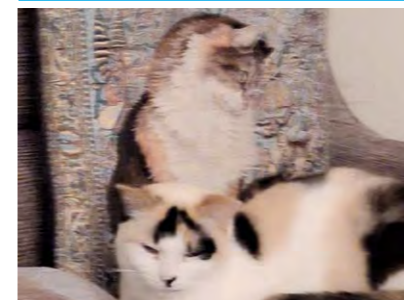
IN MEMORY OF LEAH

Our little precious girl passed away recently, and we set up a standing order on her behalf for your charity. Here is a picture of our baby enjoying a day at the pub and waiting for her hamburger.

Leah was a Pets As Therapy dog, and she helped so many people with her loving temperament.

She was a month away from the age of 14.

John T Korczynski



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

Please email your letters and photos to editor@bluecross.org.uk
or write to **For Pets Editor, Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF**
Find us on **Facebook (/thebluecrossUK)** and **X (@The_Blue_Cross)**

Tiny dog's BIG OPERATION

Puppy Pixie was only two months old – and needed life-saving surgery. Blue Cross vet Vicky was by her side every step of the way...

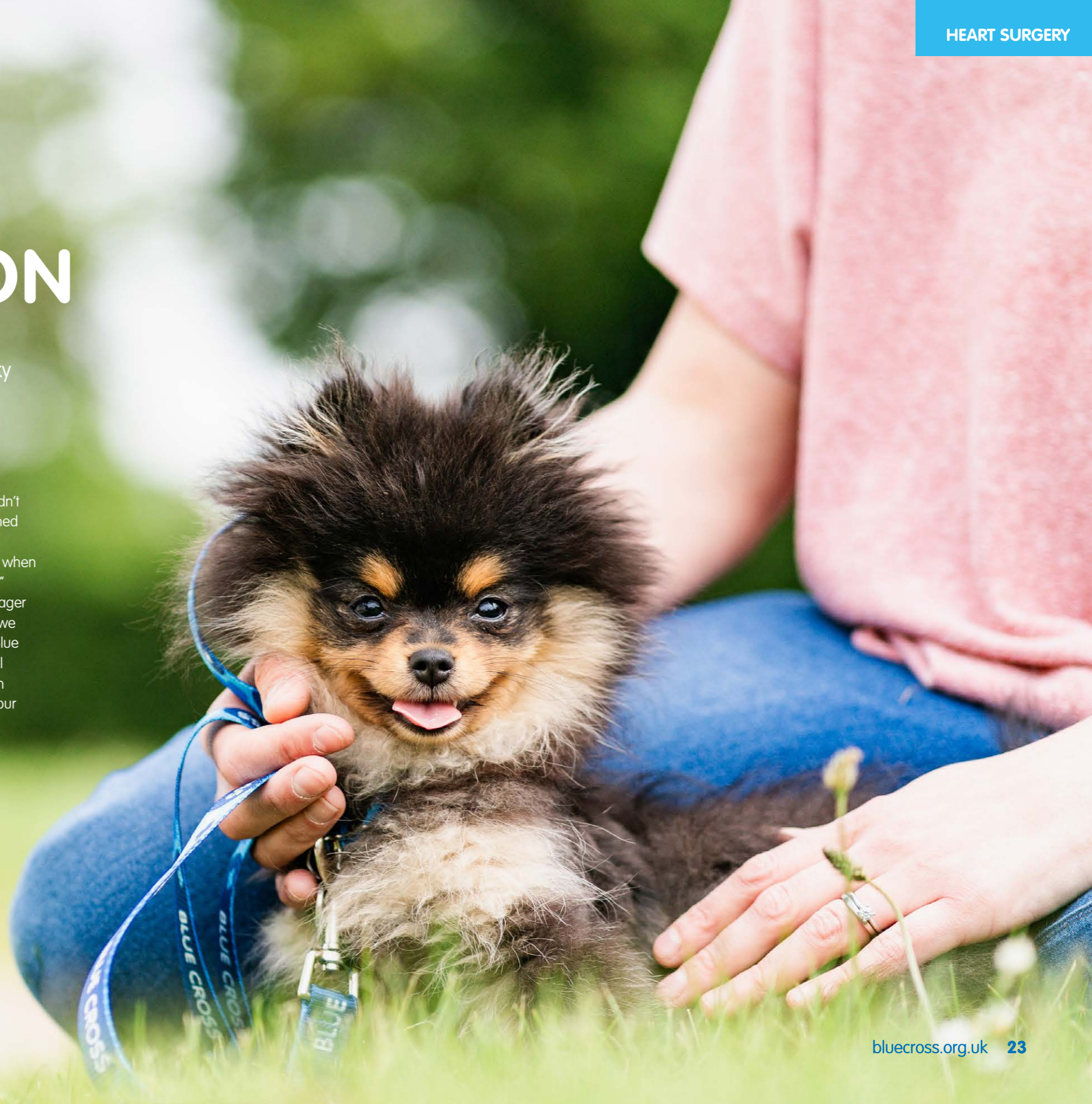
At four months old, Pixie the Pomeranian appears a typical puppy.

She's bright eyed and inquisitive, leaping around on her lead eager to explore the world, but hiding behind her fosterer Amy's legs and peeking shyly out when another dog appears.

In fact, there's nothing typical about Pixie. Her previous owner brought her into our Devon rehoming, advice and behaviour unit when she was just two months old. She'd been for a puppy health check with her littermates

when the private vet detected a heart murmur requiring further investigation. Pixie's owner couldn't afford expensive vet bills so signed her over to Blue Cross.

"Pixie was so tiny and friendly when she arrived – we all adored her," Asha Rowlinson, Assistant Manager at Blue Cross Devon, says. "But we knew she needed to go to our Blue Cross hospital in Victoria, central London, for tests so arranged an immediate transfer with one of our volunteer drivers."





Pixie underwent a life-saving operation before being adopted by Susan

RISKY SURGERY

Pixie was admitted as an in-patient. Under sedation, she had a heart scan which revealed a congenital heart defect called patent ductus arteriosus (PDA). In layman's terms, a small foetal blood vessel that should have shrunk and closed after birth stayed open, directing blood into the

pulmonary artery and lungs instead of through the heart and around the body – a bit like a faulty wiring system. This means the heart has to work harder to give the body what it needs – and, eventually, fails.

Without surgery, Pixie's life would be short – most dogs with PDA die before their first birthday.

But, if surgery was successful, she'd be a perfectly healthy dog, set to live a long, happy life. That had to be balanced against the risks.

"There's the anaesthetic risk in a puppy as small as Pixie, but the big danger is fatal haemorrhage," Vicky Ebers, Senior Veterinary Surgeon at Blue Cross Victoria, says. "The blood vessel that requires closing is very

fragile and if it tore during surgery Pixie could bleed out and die."

After in-depth discussions, Vicky and the Victoria team decided to operate. Professor Dan Brockman, a surgeon from the Royal Veterinary College, had been teaching Vicky to perform PDA surgery and agreed to oversee the op.

SMALLEST PATIENT

On the morning of surgery Pixie weighed 1.25kgs, around the same as a bag of sugar.

"Dan and I have performed four PDA operations together, but Pixie was by far our smallest patient – in fact, she's the second smallest dog Dan's ever done this surgery on

through his whole career," Vicky says.

So she felt very protective of Pixie, staying by her side as she was anaesthetised. Then, under Dan's supervision, in a delicate two-hour operation, she closed the gap in Pixie's blood vessel. When Pixie woke in the recovery room, Vicky was there.

"She was woozy, but her little tail wagged when I petted her – what a trouper," Vicky says.

"When the nurses told me she was eating the next day, I was so relieved. By day three, she was bright-eyed and impatient to get out of her kennel. 'I'm fixed now,' she was telling me. 'Let me go so I can get on with my life.'"

So, just four days after surgery, Pixie

– wearing a cone, on painkillers and antibiotics and with a 10-centimetre scar – was transferred to Blue Cross Hertfordshire to convalesce in foster with Amy Aston, Foster Coordinator.

“When the nurses told me she was eating the next day, I was so relieved. By day three, she was bright-eyed and impatient to get out of her kennel. ‘I’m fixed now,’ she was telling me

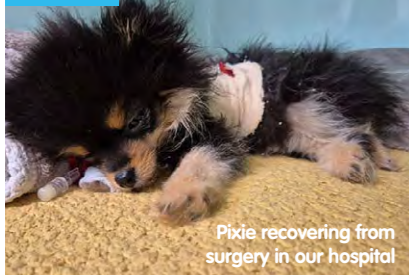
JOYFUL

After recovering and growing in confidence, Pixie was adopted and is now a cherished family member.

"Pixie is super-friendly with everybody – dogs and people – and my grandchildren adore her," says Susan, Pixie's new owner. "She's doing well at puppy classes, and my vet says there's no sign of any heart problems – he's very impressed with the work of Blue Cross Victoria animal hospital. I feel privileged to have adopted her. She's just adorable."

Vicky, the vet who saved Pixie's life, is over the moon. She says. "Thanks to us, she has her whole life ahead of her. I'm so proud to work for Blue Cross."

BEFORE



Pixie recovering from surgery in our hospital



EDUCATION IS KEY

Blue Cross celebrates milestone anniversary of inspiring future generations to be compassionate and caring pet lovers...

Empathy and respect for all pets throughout the whole of society is the future that Blue Cross strives for.

And for the past 20 years, our education team has been working tirelessly to achieve that goal – reaching the pet owners of the future through school and youth workshops and helping adults in need of education around animal welfare.

Kerry Taylor, Education Manager, says: “Pets bring so much to our lives – love, laughter, companionship and so much joy. They deserve to live long, happy lives, and education is key to making that happen.

“By developing knowledge, and shifting attitudes and behaviour, we can improve welfare and quality of life for all pets.”

Our education talks have reached more than a million people since their launch in 2005. Alongside school and youth group visits, our team has also previously worked with prisons to teach offenders about dog welfare.

KINDNESS

A network of 76 trained volunteers helps us to deliver these vital sessions. One of them is Geraldine Guest, who has been supporting this Blue Cross cause for 19 years.

Last year alone, she delivered 187 talks and spoke to nearly 20,000 children and adults.

Geraldine became a volunteer after



“I thought it was the perfect way I could do my little bit to help young people learn to be kind to animals”

heeding a call in a dog magazine in 2006. She says: “I thought it was the perfect way I could do my little bit to help young people learn to be kind to animals.

“Having a dog myself really made me aware of the cruelty and neglect that was occurring around the country and globally at that time. Such incidents seemed to be becoming more frequent, and I was feeling increasingly disturbed by these reports.”

Blue Cross school and youth group talks teach youngsters about the key principles of pet welfare

as well as the basics of dog body language and safe interactions.

Geraldine continues: “The talks share information that can be very activity-based in a fun way which helps children to learn, change and improve in their attitude and care towards pets.”

A BETTER WORLD

Our work to educate future generations is vital, but in recent years there has been a growing need for more targeted work with adults due to a rise in dog-related incidents.

Since 2019, Blue Cross has been working with police forces across the country to educate those accused of low-level dog-related offences through our responsible dog ownership course.

Jason Cortis, Education Officer, who leads on the work, says: “The half-day course enhances knowledge and attitudes towards dog legislation and improves awareness of animal welfare and behaviour in a non-judgemental way.

“It has been proven to dramatically reduce rates of reoffending and improve the lives of the pets and people it helps. As a result, we now work with 37 police forces in the UK.”

Blue Cross sees the devastating impact of poor pet welfare every day. We hope that in years to come, our education work will have helped build a world in which no animal suffers.

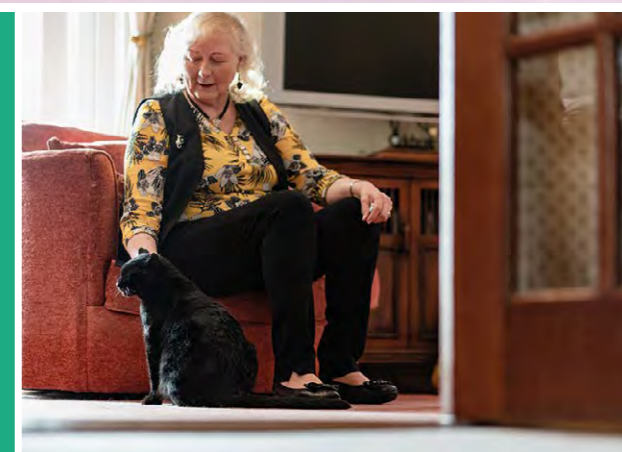
Visit bluecross.org.uk/education for more information or to book a school talk



“

One day he sniffed my hand. A week later, he took a treat from me. About a month in he climbed from his bed and sat at my feet. I realised he wanted a fuss – he loved being stroked under his chin

”



From the streets to the SETTEE

Hamlet's life had been one long struggle for survival. But Blue Cross was there in his darkest hour...

A proper stray tom cat with fat cheeks and a fighting spirit – that's how Amanda Rumball, London Welfare Officer for Blue Cross, describes Hamlet. And the six-year-old moggy needed every ounce of that fighting spirit when he arrived in Blue Cross care.

When Hamlet was hit by a car,

concerned passersby spent an hour trying to catch him. Then they bundled him in a box and took him to Blue Cross Victoria.

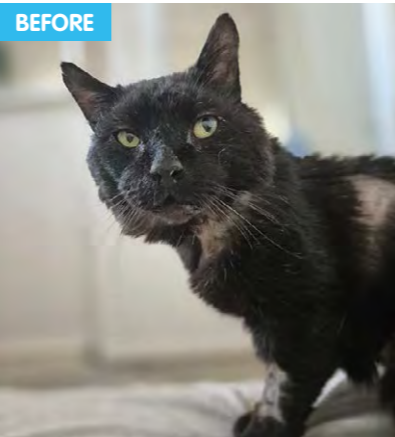
"Our vets performed an operation to wire his broken jaw back in place, remove broken teeth and bone and fit a feeding tube," Amanda says.

Hamlet was also badly bruised, in

pain and, finding himself in a kennel in a strange building, very confused.

But, Amanda says, "that tom cat fighting spirit" helped him hunker down and battle on. His jaw slowly healed, and he moved into foster care with Blue Cross volunteer Wendy Penfold in Kent.

It was a haven for Hamlet while he waited for a home of his own. But –



BEFORE

bless him – the adoption enquiries weren't exactly flooding in.

POIGNANT

Pam Towler, Wendy's neighbour, met Hamlet during one of her weekly volunteer visits, keeping the cats company. Pam and husband Dave had lost their cat Amber a year earlier and donated her things to Wendy.

"When I first saw Hamlet, he was in Amber's bed – very poignant," Pam says. "He was tatty with shaved patches all over. Even his whiskers were cut off on one side to wire his jaw – he looked lopsided. He had such sad eyes, so I sat by his bed and talked to him."

Hamlet didn't even turn his head to

look at Pam. But she persevered and slowly a friendship developed.

"One day, he sniffed my hand," Pam says. "A week later, he took a treat from me. About a month in he climbed from his bed and sat at my feet. I realised he wanted a fuss – he loved being stroked under his chin."

When Pam went on holiday, she missed Hamlet. "I realised how attached I'd become and suggested to Dave we adopt him," she says.

After 103 days in Blue Cross care, Hamlet had found his family!

"We opened his cat carrier at ours, he lay down on the rug by the radiator and fell asleep," Pam says.

"He knew he was home."

Pam is surprised by how well-

mannered Hamlet is, given his past living on his wits on the streets.

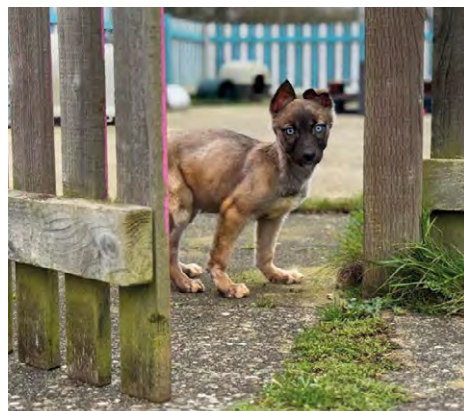
"Our previous cats scratched at our bedroom door for breakfast but Hamlet just sits politely outside, waiting," she says.

"Dave and I had to really persuade him he's allowed on the settee. 'Come up, Hamlet,' we'd say, patting the spot between us. He thought it over for days – then one morning jumped up and looked at me as if to say: 'Is this okay?' I stroked him and he laid down. Now that's his spot."

And who could deny Hamlet his home comforts? On the streets his life could have ended in a tragedy worthy of Shakespeare. Instead he's found a fairytale ending, thanks to Blue Cross.

News Bitesize Stories

All the latest news from Blue Cross



BONDED PAIR

Abandoned rabbits Kirstie and Phil thankfully had the same luck as their TV property guru namesakes when it came to finding the perfect home.

But it was less about 'Location, Location, Location' for the bonded bunnies, who were instead in need of space, companionship and love above all else.

Found in a layby beside a road, the one-year-olds – likely to be siblings – were taken to a private vet before arriving in the care of Blue Cross Burford.

Thankfully, Phil had been neutered, as pairs of the opposite sex can quickly breed.

After 36 days, and Kirstie's spay surgery, they hopped into a loving new home together.



'MAJESTIC' transformation

Found under a bridge in a box, starving and riddled with worms, puppy Athena was in grave danger.

A passerby took her, along with four littermates – also critically malnourished – to a private vet for emergency treatment.

As the runt of an eight-week-old litter, Athena was being picked on badly and was soon transferred to Blue Cross Burford, with her siblings going to another rescue charity.

Jess Sweeten, Volunteer Coordinator and an experienced puppy fosterer, provided the husky cross with the specialist care she needed.

"She was very small, skinny and scraggly when she arrived," says Jess.

Athena weighed just 3.4kg but would have been even less than that had her belly not been swollen with worms. She also had patches of fur

loss and a wound on her tail where her siblings had bitten it.

She had all of the emergency and routine vet treatment needed, but the biggest focus was to get Athena nourished and putting on vital weight.

NOURISHMENT

This meant frequent small meals with food for sensitive young tummies.

She soon began to flourish, says Jess. "She was energetic and quirky. I don't like to overuse the phrase 'a bit of a character', but she is."

After 31 days in Blue Cross care, she went to her new home – on a 28-acre country estate, where her owner works.

Jess adds: "It's amazing to have been a part of her transformation from the scrawny, slightly ratty looking puppy to this big, majestic husky cross greyhound that she is now."



DAD AND DAUGHTER FIND HOME TOGETHER

Doting feline dads don't come much better than Harry.

He provides the perfect mix of love and fun for his daughter Bean, who idolises him.

The closely bonded pair arrived at our Hertfordshire rehoming centre after Bean's mother started to reject both her and Harry, forcing the family to rehome them.

CUDDLE

Naomi Gosheron-Parr, Adoptions Coordinator, says: "It is very rare for a father and daughter to be so bonded.

"It's because they were indoor cats and Harry was always around. We were told that when the mum had Bean's litter, he cuddled the kittens.

"Harry and Bean have an incredible bond. They allorub, where they scent mark each other. And they groom each other, play a lot together, and sleep together. In foster care, they slept together on the windowsill."

Separating the pair was never in question – and, although it took some time, we eventually found them a home where they could stay together.

GOLDEN OLDIE BEN

Age is no barrier to finding the perfect companion – as Ben proved when he arrived at Blue Cross just a few weeks before his 16th birthday.

The terrier and dachshund mix was anxious in kennels, chewing the skin on his right front leg and barking. It was heartbreaking to see.

This sweet old boy deserved his home comforts so the team at our Burford rehoming centre placed him with one of our amazing volunteer fosterer carers.

"At nearly 16, Ben is the oldest dog I have met coming into Blue Cross care," says Anouska Ashmead-Bartlett, Admissions Coordinator at Burford.

"We try to make kennels as comfy as possible for the pets we look after but Ben was really struggling.

"But our foster carer said Ben was the easiest dog she'd ever looked after. He enjoyed lying in the sunny spots in her home and curling up on her lap. Then we just needed to find the right person to adopt him."

Luckily for Ben, the right person soon came along. Jenny, 84, says: "We're lucky we found each other."



UNWANTED 'GIFT' GERBILS NOW LOVED

A pair of unwanted gerbils arrived at Blue Cross after being given as a child's birthday present.

Siblings Cheese and Pickle, now two, were quickly placed in foster care via our Sheffield rehoming, behaviour and advice unit.

Sophie Andrews, Adoptions Coordinator, said: "These girls are more entertaining than the TV. They love to play hide and seek in their bedding, digging so deep you'd think they were searching for gold."

After nearly 90 days, Cheese and Pickle went from unwanted gift to cherished and loved pets.



Whatever happened to?

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

PEARL

Gentle cob Pearl found herself in Blue Cross care in October 2022, after her owner could sadly no longer afford to keep her.

Despite being a placid girl in good health, the days and months waiting for a new home turned into years.

"Pearl had a few introductions, but the potential adopters always viewed her alongside another horse and chose them," Verity Anderton-Johnson, Assistant Manager for On-site Services at Rolleston, says.

"Or it could be due to Pearl's age – she's 20. Some people worry about taking on an older horse."

But, after a whopping 892 days in our care, Pearl – who featured in our May appeal – found a home.

New owner Joy says: "Pearl is well and has settled in with my horse. She is very friendly."

ANXIOUS CAT

When Tiggs first arrived, he was so shy he made a nest with his blankets and hid in it.

The six-year-old white and ginger puss was on feline antidepressants for anxiety and had been having 'accidents' in his former home.

Behaviourists at Blue Cross believe this was down to the stress of sharing his living space with other cats and a dog.

He also suffered with urinary crystals – a potentially fatal condition for cats if left untreated, as there is a risk of developing a blockage.

Tiggs started to feel brighter with treatment and his natural curiosity soon overcame his anxiety, allowing him to greet the Thirsk team.

"When he got to know us all, he was straight over to say 'hello' and have a snuggle. He's a sweetheart," Amy Winder, Assistant Manager for On-site Services says.

After 91 days in our care, Tiggs was adopted.



Stressed hamster finds HAPPINESS

Little Fawn now spends her days snoozing, burrowed snugly beneath layers of deep bedding. At night, she explores the many enrichment options in her accommodation.

It's a stark contrast to her previous life confined to a cage a fraction of the size it needed to be – and without crucial opportunities to explore, play and burrow.

The Syrian hamster arrived at Blue Cross Hertfordshire terrified in October last year and showing signs of severe stress.

Naomi Gosheron-Parr, Adoptions Coordinator, explains: "She sadly didn't have the right accommodation

or enrichment in the previous home and had been overhandled."

Our team put her straight in a spacious cage – the minimum size recommended is 100cm long and 50cm wide and tall – and soon found her a foster home.

UNSETTLED

But the now one-year-old hamster struggled, and returned to the centre in need of extra support.

"She was climbing the bars and biting them, and seemed really unsettled", says Naomi.

This behaviour is a sign that hamsters are lacking enough deep bedding of the right type to fulfil their

natural instinct to burrow and build tunnels to feel safe.

Even though Fawn now had plenty, the stress caused by a previous lack of burrowing opportunities meant coping mechanisms like climbing and chewing the bars had become an engrained habit.

"Stress in small animals can really affect them long term," says Naomi.

Our behaviour team stepped in to design a bespoke setup for Fawn in a glass tank rather than a cage in a bid to help. This included lots of layers of dust-free bedding, and enrichment activities for her to explore such as wooden obstacles and food foraging.

To everyone's relief, Fawn began to thrive – and started to burrow for the first time.

And after more than three months in our care, she found a loving home where her confidence can grow.



WIN! A dog-friendly boating holiday

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

Le Boat is the number one provider of self-drive boating holidays on the beautiful rivers and canals of the UK, Europe, and Canada. With the largest fleet of boats across 18 destinations, there's something for everyone – and dogs are welcome on all of them.

No licence? No problem! Anyone can do it. With Le Boat, you need no experience to be the captain of your own boating holiday. With over 55 years of experience, their expert team and insider knowledge will guide you every step of the way — so you can relax, reconnect with loved ones, or simply do whatever floats your boat.

Find out more at leboat.com/en

HOW TO ENTER

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

On pages 28 to 29, we brought you the story of a stray cat rescued after being hit by a car. What is his name?

- Romeo
- Macbeth
- Hamlet

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

Freepost BLUE CROSS FOR PETS

Or, enter online at bluecross.org.uk/forpets

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Closing date Friday, 31 October 2025.
 Strictly one entry per household.

*The prize is one Le Boat boating holiday of three 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. The prize must be booked at least eight weeks before departure and taken by 31 December 2026 (excluding all school holidays). Includes boat hire only. Once booking is confirmed, no amendments can be made. For full terms and conditions, visit bluecross.org.uk/forpets

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Congratulations!

The winners of the Oh So Precious boxes in our spring issue are Marysia Trembecka, Julie Hasler, P Kay and Jacqueline Ward.

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Our animal hospitals

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

Our rehoming units and centres

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



We also have 58 shops, and a rapidly growing number of pet food banks and donation points

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

Call: 0300 790 9903 **Email:** info@bluecross.org.uk **Visit:** 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

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

For the full map of all Blue Cross locations visit bluecross.org.uk/findus



Pets change lives
 We change theirs



Leave a gift in your Will and you could change pets' lives long into the future.



Pets change lives
We change theirs

Please send me a Gifts in Wills information pack

Title: B225

First name:

Surname:

Address:

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Email:

I've already included a gift to Blue Cross in my Will

*Please tick if you are happy for us to send future communications to you by: Telephone Email

If you DO NOT wish to hear from us by post please tick this box:



By leaving a gift in your Will, you can ensure your love for pets lives on.

Long after you're gone, you can still be there. There for a sick pet in the operating theatre. There when a homeless pet finds a loving family. Including Blue Cross in your Will is a powerful way to protect sick, injured and homeless pets for years to come.

A gift of any size will have a huge impact for the dogs, cats, small pets and horses that need us, and it will be so gratefully received.

Request our free Gifts in Wills information pack today for guidance on making or amending your Will and leaving a gift to Blue Cross.

Making a Will needn't feel daunting, thanks to our trusted partners MyIntent and the National Free Wills Network, who can help you write one for free. You can find out more in the pack.

To receive your Gifts in Wills information pack, visit bluecross.org.uk/gifts-in-wills or complete the coupon and return to freepost: **Blue Cross For Pets**.

*From time to time we may wish to communicate with you 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 opposite.

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Alternatively, call 0300 777 1945 or email legacy@bluecross.org.uk and quote B225

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In 2024 our rehoming teams helped 7,809 dogs, cats, small pets and horses and our vets and nurses cared for 27,184 sick and injured animals.

To donate to Blue Cross, fill in and **post this form to: Freepost BLUE CROSS FOR PETS** or you can donate **by phone: 0300 777 1888** or **online at bluecross.org.uk**

By completing this form you are confirming that you are 16 or over

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Address

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Please accept my donation of:

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

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the tax that Blue Cross and any other charities and community amateur sports clubs (CASCs) you support will reclaim on your donations for that tax year. Please note you will be responsible for any shortfall. Blue Cross will claim 25p back for every £1 gift aided. Please let Blue Cross know if you want to cancel this declaration in future, change your name, home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

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Please don't forget to let us know if you have moved home recently. Updating us is really important, because without your new address, we are unable to claim Gift Aid on your donations, which is worth 25p for every pound you donate.

Remember to update your pet's microchip details when you move, too.

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Freepost BLUE CROSS FOR PETS

Please note, we select our mailings up to 21 days in advance, so you may receive one or two more to your old address before the change takes effect. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience.

OLD ADDRESS

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Address

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Please send me further information about how I can get involved in fundraising.
For more information complete and return the form or email events@bluecross.org.uk

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**Please return this slip in the post to:
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