

FOR PETS

The magazine for Blue Cross supporters

Issue 16

Basil's Purpose

Life as a therapy dog



Pets change lives
We change theirs



Pets change lives
We change theirs



Pet welfare and dog safety talks for primary schools

2025 marks 20 years of sharing our expertise and love of pets with young people across the UK.

Since 2005 we've delivered talks to over a million people, sharing our ambition to help ensure every pet can enjoy a healthy life in a happy home. Our free talks to primary schools and youth groups encourage understanding and behaviour change, giving young people the resources and knowledge they need to care for pets.



To book a talk, or to take a look at our resources and lesson plans for all ages, visit our website by scanning the QR code.

bluecross.org.uk/education



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COVER STORY

04 Basil is a star

Once-homeless puppy now transforms lives

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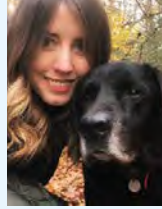
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WELCOME

Pets who have fallen on hard times can achieve extraordinary things, when people believe in them. This couldn't be truer for our cover star, Basil. Homeless before his first birthday, the misunderstood pup had a rocky start. But in a nurturing home and with health troubles stabilised, his remarkable talent shone through – and he now devotes his life to helping others. You'll also be reading about former stray cat Daisy, who spreads joy to all she meets at her palatial new home at a holiday park – a true rags to riches tale. Here at Blue Cross, we see the spark in every pet who arrives in our care, no matter how sick or scared they are. And that's why we'll always be here for them.

Aimee Brannen, Editor

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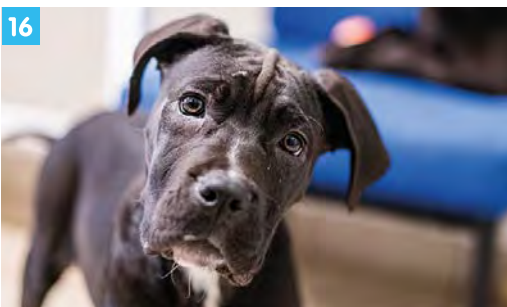
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Basil is a **STAR**

A once-homeless puppy has life-changing impact on his family and the many young people he helps as a 'self-taught' support dog...





I’m really grateful to have him in my life because he does a lot of things for me,” says Charlotte Pope, of rescue-turned-support dog, Basil.

Life for the 18-year-old from Jersey with special needs was transformed when her family welcomed the cavapoo home six years ago.

At less than a year old, Basil – a curious, intelligent and energetic boy – found himself at Blue Cross Suffolk.

His first owner had made the difficult decision to give him up, no longer able to juggle his care with that of a young family and a demanding work schedule.

Meanwhile, Charlotte’s mum, Sarah, wanted to welcome another dog into the family fold, 14 years after the death of their beloved cavalier King Charles spaniel, Murphy.

“I love having dogs, and I feel like a home is not a home without a dog,” says Sarah, who is a dog walker by profession.

COMPANIONSHIP

Sarah also hoped that a canine presence would provide companionship for her two daughters, particularly Charlotte, who has various learning needs and health difficulties.

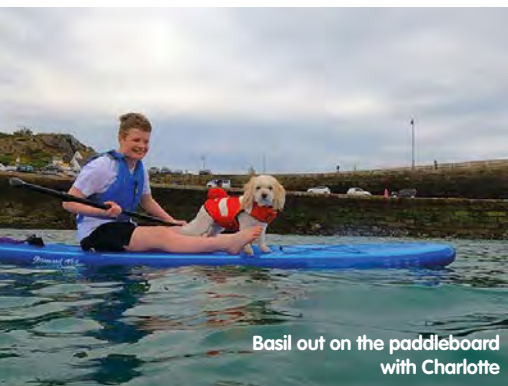
But never could she have imagined the life-changing impact Basil would have on Charlotte, as well as the many other young people he has helped as an official therapy dog.

When Basil first arrived home with the Popes, he was struggling with tummy troubles and allergies. Due to the veterinary ups and downs, it took him a long time to settle in.

Once treatment stabilised his condition, it also became clear that

“
He’s a special boy and he was meant for me, for us. He chose us and we chose him... Life wouldn’t be the same without him.
”





Basil out on the paddleboard with Charlotte

he needed lots of mental stimulation – and quickly channelled his busy brain into supporting Charlotte.

One of the ways he began doing this was intuitively sitting on the teenager's lap and providing calming deep pressure on her knees.

LIGHTBULB MOMENT

It was a gradual process, but mum Sarah says the "lightbulb" moment came during a hospital appointment for Charlotte several months after the family adopted Basil.

During what would normally be a traumatic experience for Charlotte, he hopped on her lap to help her during an unexpected blood test.

"It really blew me away," says Sarah. "Normally we have the special [numbing] cream on for hours before. But there was no 'magic cream'. She just did it... I couldn't believe it."

Since then, Charlotte, who describes Basil as her "best friend", has lent on the now seven-year-old dog for confidence when walking around town alone – and even when paddleboarding or surfing.

Charlotte says: "He helps me so much. I love taking him with me to places that make me feel anxious, like the hospital. And he's there to provide support.

"When I'm sad he just puts



pressure on me and it just makes my brain say: 'Look, you need to be happy now'.

"When he's on the paddleboard with me, he also provides that deep pressure. That makes me feel happy."

And he's there for Charlotte at the end of any bad day.

"I go straight to him, there's no doubt about it," she adds.

Of the remarkable impact Basil has had, Sarah says: "He's done it all naturally, he's sort of taught himself.

EXCITED

"I don't know what working does to stimulate him. But it obviously does something that makes him feel happy. Because he absolutely loves it and gets so excited."

Not only does Basil support Charlotte in an emotional and social way, but he also helps other youngsters with learning or behavioural challenges.

For three years, he has been going to a higher education college specialising in learning disabilities,

which Charlotte has just joined.

Basil's important work has also taken him to a school for children with behavioural challenges and a residential home.

Sarah continues: "I'm really proud of how far he's come from the beginning to now."

Meanwhile, at home Basil is a source of endless joy for the whole family – and a best friend to blind 12-year-old Norfolk terrier, Amy, who Sarah and her husband recently adopted from a sick relative.

Trips to the beach, of which there are many in Jersey, are the highlight of any day – and Basil's reward for his remarkable work.

On the day Blue Cross visits, he races along the sand and rolls around with happiness.

Sarah adds: "He has brought us so much joy and makes us laugh on a daily basis with his silly ways.

"He's a special boy and he was meant for me, for us. He chose us and we chose him... Life wouldn't be the same without him."

Palatial new abode for **STRAY CAT**

It's the ultimate rags to riches tale for a mum and kittens rescued from a building site...

Picking her way through broken glass and construction debris to find scraps to eat was part of daily life for stray cat Daisy.

But after a remarkable rescue by Blue Cross, the striking tabby has a palatial new home.

The two-year-old now has the run of woodland and gardens in the hallowed surroundings of the centuries-old Blenheim Palace estate, former Prime Minister Winston Churchill's birthplace in Oxfordshire.

The young cat can explore to her heart's content from her new home

at the historic house's luxurious Blenheim Palace Lodge Retreat.

Watching Daisy parade through the beautiful gardens surrounding the palace estate's luxury self-catering lodges, where she is cared for seven days a week by the on-site team, it's a world away from the car park where she was found.

Poor Daisy was just managing to survive with her kittens before her rescue by Blue Cross.

DANGER

Peril surrounded the young cat as she dodged construction work, broken







glass, and even rat poison to make it through the day.

Sadly, one of Daisy's kittens had already been fatally hit by a car in the hazardous conditions.

But with Daisy and three of her kittens – Tom, Oscar and Mary – miraculously surviving, Blue Cross was able to give the little family a fresh start.

While attending a computer game convention at the NEC Birmingham to encourage new supporters to join the annual Blue Cross Hallow-Stream fundraiser, our events team found Daisy and her kittens by chance.

"We felt compelled to do something," explains Thomas Martin,

Virtual Events Officer at Blue Cross.

"There was a skip, broken glass, and rat poison on the ground as there was building work going on.

"Daisy was very friendly and we had the impression she might've been a pet in the past. She wanted lots of fuss and attention.

““
**She'll just lay there
 for people to tickle her.
 She loves the
 attention.**

””

"But the kittens had clearly never been near a human before and were very scared.

"We didn't know how we would catch an unknown number of kittens running around the car park, but we were so worried about them and needed to help."

RESCUE OPERATION

Borrowing traps and carriers from another charity's local rescue centre, the team initially caught Daisy and young Tom, before later bringing Oscar and Mary to safety.

With available rescue spots in short supply, our rehoming team pulled out all the stops to make space for them.



The events team drove hundreds of miles to Blue Cross Bromsgrove, which cared for the cats overnight, before they were moved to our Burford rehoming centre the next day.

Thomas continues: "It was all worth it to reunite mum and kittens. It was so nice to have made a difference because they really couldn't have stayed in that situation.

"Going from a building site in a car park to Blenheim Palace is absolutely incredible," he adds.

Once Daisy was reunited with her two-month-old kittens, the whole family could be given the care they so desperately needed.

Alongside nutritious meals, routine

vet care included vaccinations, neutering, microchipping, flea and worming treatments.

Daisy also needed dental work to remove two broken teeth.

After plenty of care and attention from the team at Blue Cross Burford, all the kittens found loving new homes where they are thriving.

MAGNIFICENT

As for Daisy, the once-vulnerable stray is now mistress of a rather magnificent manor.

With around 2,000 acres of palace estate on her doorstep, it's clear she's in feline heaven.

Simon Oliver, Park Manager, says:

"Daisy has settled in really well and everyone has taken to her.

"She was very thin when she first came, but she's put on weight and she's really healthy.

"She'll just lay there for people to tickle her. She loves the attention."

Roaming around the birch and oak trees that surround Blenheim Palace Lodge Retreat – which recently appeared on BBC One's Interior Design Masters with comedian Alan Carr – Daisy can indulge her independent side too.

"It's brought everyone together having Daisy here," adds Simon. "We're a good team anyway, but it's really compounded it."





Lifelong FRIENDS

find haven together

Veteran miniature horses Pepper and Worcester came to Blue Cross after their elderly owners became ill and passed away after having them since they were foals...

Lifelong friends Pepper and Worcester had spent almost two decades together when their lives were turned upside down.

Terminal illness meant their elderly owners could no longer look after the veteran duo, and it was a heartbreaking wrench for them to leave the place they'd called home since they were six months old.

But watching Pepper and Worcester happily grazing in the Yorkshire valley they now live in, it's a joyful picture.

Confused and frightened, little Pepper and Worcester were in turmoil when they arrived at Blue Cross.

Patience, understanding and care were crucial to help the two friends.

At the age of 19, the duo had spent their entire adult lives treasured by their adoring owners.

During their final days in 2023, the couple were determined to safeguard their beloved pet horses' future happiness by contacting Blue Cross.

"They are two lovely horses and gave us so much pleasure over the years," said former businessman Mike Tansey fondly at the time.

"It was a very sad day when we couldn't look after them anymore as we'd loved them for so many years."

FUTURE

The devastating decision to give the horses up was a last resort, like it is for many elderly owners of pets.

But planning for the future through our Pet Peace of Mind scheme ensures that pets who outlive their people are found loving new homes.

"I'm very grateful to Blue Cross for being able to step in to help Pepper and Worcester," added Mike, who also made a generous donation to Blue Cross.

"It's good to know they've been able to stay together and are being looked after so well with their new family."

During 75 days in Blue Cross care at our horse rehoming centre in Burford, Oxfordshire, little dun-

Pepper and Worcester thriving in their new farm home



coloured Pepper and his dark bay pal Worcester received expert care.

The friends – each standing around eight hands high – were castrated and received treatment from the equine dentist and farrier, as well as routine vaccinations.

DEDICATED

Our team also familiarised them with being caught and handled by a variety of different people, to prepare them for a new home.

And it wasn't long before the characterful ponies – who had come from a breeding line of registered miniature horses – caught the eye of horse-lover Hayley Redfearn.

Looking for non-ridden companion ponies to join her family at their small farm in the stunning Colne Valley in West Yorkshire, Hayley was immediately smitten.

“As soon as I saw them, I knew they were for us,” she says.

“We’ve always been animal lovers and both my husband and I have had horses before. I really wanted ponies that my youngest daughter could grow up with.”

Three-year-old daughter Fidelma “absolutely loves” the new additions to the family, who have joined laid-back springer spaniel Jules and



cocker spaniel Bonnie on the farm.

Along with cats Milo and Pippin, plus a dozen sheep, Pepper and Worcester really are living the good life in their new surroundings.

“They like to be together and I come out and talk to them all the time,” adds Hayley, who also has 13-year-old twins Harry and Matilda.

WHINNYING

Whinnying to Hayley as she opens the door each morning, it's obvious the miniature friends have relaxed into their loving new home.

The boys can simply enjoy the rest of their lives together now, in a place that is as warm and caring as it is picture perfect.

Lauren Bush, Rehoming Coordinator at the Burford horse rehoming unit, says: “Keeping Pepper and Worcester together has been so significant for their wellbeing, and it's wonderful to see them so happy.

She adds: “Everyone at Blue Cross is very grateful to the donation from Pepper and Worcester's owners to help us continue helping pets and people like them.”

Find out more about Pet Peace of Mind at bluecross.org.uk/pet-peace-of-mind



Rehoming

Could you take me home?

These wonderful pets are in search of a second chance

HAN AND CHEWIE

Could your home be our very own galaxy far, far away? We're inquisitive and closely bonded boys with lots of love to give. We can live indoors or outdoors, as long as we get the attention and enrichment we need.

Bromsgrove, 0300 777 1842



JENNI

Apparently, I have a heart as warm as my coat – but, sadly, that hasn't helped to find me a home so far. I need a loving owner and a new herd of friends to take me under their wings as a non-ridden companion.

Rolleston, 0300 777 1846



LEXI

Is it me? I know I'm a sensitive girl, and I have some specific needs, but I didn't think I'd be waiting this long for a fresh start – it has been more than a year! I promise, I'm a sappy gentle giant once I know and trust you.

Bromsgrove, 0300 777 1842



TOOTHLESS

Despite my name, I have a few teeth left (but not many). I've spent most my life in kennels or running around a track, so dental care was never a top priority! But I hope to find out what life is like as a loved pet soon.

Hertfordshire, 0300 777 1844



OREO

I'm told I'm a charming boy, when it's on my terms. You see, I like to spend most of my days exploring the great outdoors. But I do love some fuss and playtime with my fishing rod toys in between all of my adventures.

Sheffield, 0300 777 1851



BOO

I'm on the lookout for a spacious new abode where I can indulge in all of my favourite hobbies – chewing, foraging and burrowing. It's taking a while to find the fresh start I need, so I'm hoping it'll be worth the wait.

Newport, 0300 777 1850



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



Neglected litter OVERCOME FEARS

Three starving puppies found abandoned in a park build strength and confidence in Blue Cross care...

Terrified, and with their ribs and spines protruding, it was clear that Ross, Chandler and Joey had been the victims of neglect.

The cane corsos – named after characters from the iconic TV show *Friends* – arrived at Blue Cross Bromsgrove in September last year, aged around six months old.

They were brought to us by a member of the public who found them alone and scared in a park.

Caroline Oram, Adoptions Coordinator, says: "They were very undernourished and covered in filth.

"All three were so worried by us. Joey was the only one that would come over; Chandler and Ross were too scared."

It was obvious that the siblings had experienced very little of the world and feared many everyday sights and sounds they encountered.

SPOOKED

"When we took them to the puppy run outside, they even got spooked by the wind," explains Caroline.

So, as well as building their



Left to right: Joey, Chandler and Ross



physical strength, the team had to start training and socialisation from scratch to build their confidence.

But, within two weeks, the brothers were coming out of their shells and learning to trust.

Caroline says: "When they arrived, they would bark and growl when we went into their kennel.

"But within a few weeks, they started doing these little happy stretches and would wag their tails when we went in to see them."

This rapid transformation was thanks to the team creating a sense of routine for the bewildered boys.

"It massively helped them," says Caroline. "We fed them little but every two hours. Once they started to feel a bit better, thanks to vital nutrition and food, they were more confident.

"Then whoever was on duty in the evenings spent more time with them so they got used to increasing amounts of human company."

She continues: "I'd just sit and spend time with them. It was

“
They were very
undernourished and
covered in filth. And all
three were so worried
by us.
”

amazing when I saw them play for the first time.

"The team did amazingly well at building their trust."

CONFIDENCE

Once they were confident with human interaction, the team introduced them to experiences such as having a collar put on, progressing eventually to walking on lead.

Soon enough, the brothers were ready to begin their next chapter.

Joey, who needed surgery for a swollen third eyelid known as cherry eye, flew the nest first.

Chandler soon followed, but for shy Ross, it took more than four months to find his perfect family.

Caroline adds: "It was wonderful for us all to see them be puppies who are happy, and then all of them become much-loved pets.

"They were so scared at first, but now they're acing it. My heart is bursting seeing them do so well."

Spring and summer DANGERS FOR PETS

With the changing of seasons comes new dangers for our pets. Here are some common things to look out for this summer.

BLUE GREEN ALGAE IN WATER

Blue green algae is a bacteria that clumps together in still water. In warm weather it can thrive and grow quickly.

Some types of this algae are highly poisonous and even fatal for pets. They can also be toxic for humans.

Look out for blue green scum (like pea soup), green flakes or brown

dots, or a blue green paint on the surface of water, or foam around the edges of ponds and lakes.

If your dog ingests blue green algae, they may vomit, have diarrhoea, collapse, or have breathing difficulties. Call your vet immediately if you think your dog has come into contact with it.





GRASS SEEDS OUT AND ABOUT

Grass seeds are pointy seeds at the end of long grass stems, often found in the summer months.

Usually seen in dogs, their sharp ends can get stuck in your pet's fur, skin, ears, eyes or nose. They can even work their way under the skin, especially in between your pet's toes.

This can be very painful, and you may notice a swelling, limping, or chewing and licking at the area. If you think your pet has a grass seed injury, speak to your vet.



FLY STRIKE IN RABBITS

Rabbits are especially at risk of fly strike when the weather gets warm.

It happens when flies lay eggs on warm, damp fur. When the maggots hatch, they can cause big painful wounds. Flystrike can be fatal within 24 hours, so it's vital to contact your vet if you spot any signs.

Look out for a lack of energy or appetite, patches of wet fur or fur loss, a bad smell, or digging into a corner to relieve pain. To prevent fly strike, check your rabbits' fur daily, keep them clean and remove soiled bedding.



SPRING GRASS AND WEIGHT GAIN

Lush spring grass contains more calories than other times of the year. So, for some horses, too much grazing leads to rapid weight gain.

Equine obesity poses serious health effects and increases the risk of conditions such as laminitis.

Monitor your horse's weight and adjust their diet and exercise routine if needed. Muzzles or grazing track systems can restrict grass intake. But ensure you still meet their basic needs of foraging, friends and freedom.

Kitten CRISIS

Amid unprecedented demand for our services, Blue Cross is caring for more kittens than ever before...

We've never seen numbers like this," says Hannah Wiltshire, Blue Cross Centre Manager, about the kitten crisis gripping our charity.

Last year, we cared for nearly 2,000 kittens across the country – a 49 per cent increase on 2023.

And the spiralling figures show no sign of slowing.

"For most of 2024, we've had six to seven litters in our care at any one time," continues Hannah, who is based at our Burford rehoming centre in Oxfordshire.

"And we're at a stage now where we can then struggle to rehome the

kittens, which has never been the case before," she adds.

The unprecedented demand for kitten care is likely due to a combination of neutering delays during the pandemic adding to the cat population, alongside the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Many litters are born at Blue Cross or arrive with their mum, which tend to be the easiest to care for.

But we're also seeing increasing numbers of orphaned kittens, litters with sick mums unable to nurse them, or youngsters abandoned on their own. Many of these need round-the-clock care and feeding.



Tiny Waffle here was found collapsed and fighting for her life in a road on her own at only three weeks old

Little Waffle with her adopted siblings Bagel, Churro and Pretzel



Ariel (left) and Daz were brought to us with their siblings in a laundry basket



Eloise and Colin were rescued from the streets with their mum before all three found loving homes



URGENT CARE

This was the case for accidental litter Persil, Daz, Lenor and Ariel who arrived at Burford at only three weeks old, in need of urgent help as their mum was too ill to take care of them.

One kitten in the litter had sadly already died and the remaining siblings, who were dangerously weak, could easily have met the same devastating fate without our expert team's speedy intervention.

But, without their mother's milk – which provides vital nutrients and boosts immunity – the kittens were still facing an uncertain future.

A demanding kitten bottle-feeding

“
We need two people for each feed, every two hours, 24 hours a day.
”

rota needed to be quickly drawn up, bringing with it significant costs and extra pressure on our team.

Hannah explains: “Caring for an emergency case like Persil, Lenor, Daz and Ariel – a young litter without a queen – has a pretty significant

impact on the team. We need two people for each feed, every two hours, 24 hours a day. Meanwhile, kittens who are still with their mum can be relatively self-sufficient.”

COLLAPSED

One of the many other emergency cases we've seen recently is that of little Waffle.

The tiny black kitten was found collapsed in a road all on her own, aged three weeks, with a low heart rate and body temperature.

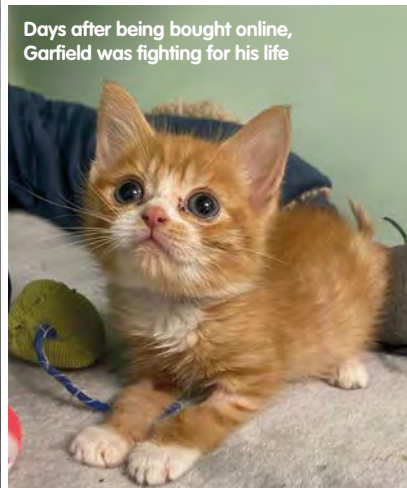
Waffle was given glucose and fluids and placed in an incubator at a vet charity close to where she was



Cookie weighed just 350g and needed a life-saving blood transfusion



Cat Tigerlilly's kittens were among 200 born in Blue Cross care in 2024



Days after being bought online, Garfield was fighting for his life



Gomez, Morticia and Wednesday were abandoned in a cat carrier

found, before heading to Blue Cross Bromsgrove in the West Midlands for ongoing care and rehabilitation.

But life can be tough for a lone kitten, so it was a lucky coincidence that Waffle was united with a trio of other abandoned kittens, who were just a week older.

Bagel, Churro and Pretzel took to Waffle immediately – welcoming her into their little clan.

Caroline Oram, Adoptions Coordinator at Bromsgrove, says: "Kittens are very vulnerable with their immune systems at that age but Waffle's a little fighter and thrived with her adopted siblings.

"Sometimes hand-reared kittens don't get the litter experience, but Waffle thankfully got that."

EMERGENCY

For another black kitten, called Cookie, it wasn't just Blue Cross that saved her life, but another kitten who had fallen on hard times, too.

Aged eight weeks, Cookie arrived at our Victoria animal hospital, collapsed. She was so heavily infested with fleas that the blood-sucking parasites had left her anaemic – her only hope was a blood transfusion.

Thankfully, an older homeless cat,

Nora, who was being treated for a leg fracture, stepped in.

Amanda Rumball, London Welfare Officer, explains: "Nora was a match for Cookie and donated some blood, which ultimately saved her life.

"After 24 hours, Cookie was a different kitten."

All the cats featured here are now happy in loving homes.

This is thanks to the life-saving care and love provided by our vets, nurses and rehoming teams, and our army of volunteer foster carers opening up nurturing home environments for so many litters in need. And of course, our kind supporters – thank you.

Have fun and fundraise for us this year

Request our fundraising
pack for ideas on how you
can help pets in need.



From cake sales...



to dog walks...



to gaming and
streaming.



There's something
for everyone.



Our fundraising pack includes tips and advice on planning your activity and making the most of the fun. There is something to suit everyone – with lots of virtual activities too.



SCAN ME

Fill in and return the form
to us at the back of the
magazine or visit
bluecross.org.uk/fundraising

Blue Cross is a charity that has been helping
sick, injured and homeless pets since 1897.



Pets change lives
We change theirs

Letters



We love to hear from you

Please send us your news and pictures of your pets!

BLACK CATS ARE WONDERFUL

It has been a year since we adopted Bubbles from Blue Cross Hertfordshire. She'd been taken in as a young pregnant stray a number of months before, having had her kittens which had already been adopted by the time we met her. We even managed to see a photo of her litter together before they were found new homes!

For anyone thinking of adopting a black cat, please do – if Bubbles is anything to go by, they're really special, sweet and have a wonderful nature.

We don't know her back story, or how she came to be a stray, but Bubbles now lives in a village in Cambridgeshire, spending her day either curled up in front of the fire, sat on our office desk learning all of the company secrets, or chasing around in the fields behind our home.

Thanks, Blue Cross!

Chris Hubbard



ADOPTED DOG LOVES HIS GARDEN

As you can see, Rags, our three-year-old Blue Cross rescue terrier, just loves to help out in the garden.

Katie Gooding

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 & Twitter

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Surgery gives SPRING BACK TO SPANIEL

Poor Willow must have been in terrible pain
but now she's got a new lease of life...

When Willow began passing blood, it was clear the springer spaniel was suffering badly.

But nothing could have prepared the 10-year-old's family for the root of her urinary troubles.

Six large wedge-shaped stones were found in her bladder, with one embedded in the inflamed tissue.

Poor Willow must have been in excruciating pain each time she tried to go to the toilet.

Thankfully healthcare workers Sam Clarke-Smith, 27, and Kim Rice, 25, had been keeping a close eye on their beloved pet's wellbeing after she had previously been diagnosed with a urinary tract infection (UTI).

Blue Cross admitted the friendly

pet for X-rays at our Victoria animal hospital in central London and discovered the painful cause of her ongoing problem.

"There were six stones in the bladder, each with a diameter of one to two centimetres, and they were pyramid-shaped," says Jack Meier, Blue Cross Head Veterinary Surgeon at Victoria animal hospital.

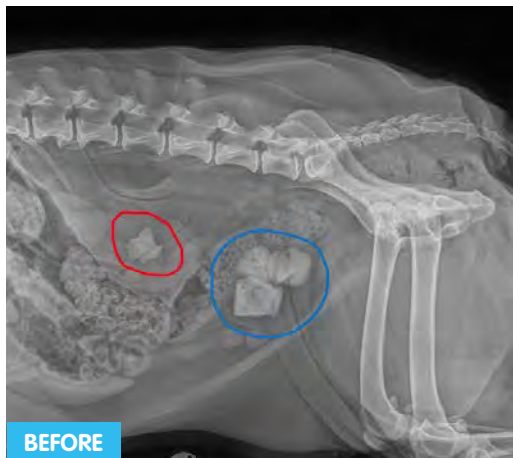
He continues: "Often we detect bladder stones when they are smaller, but it is possible for them to grow large without the dog showing obvious symptoms."

PIERCING

As the stones were so large, the best way to help Willow was surgery – called a cystotomy – to remove the







piercing cluster via a small incision in the abdomen.

Willow is among thousands of pets who receive low-cost vet care at Blue Cross Victoria each year – the hospital has never closed its doors since opening in 1906.

After the stones were removed, Willow's bladder wall was stitched up, followed by the muscles and skin of her abdomen.

"Without surgery, the stones would have continued to cause Willow pain and discomfort when urinating," points out veterinarian Jack.

"It is possible for stones to dissolve with an appropriate diet,

but it would have taken a long time given the size of the stones in Willow's bladder," he says.

RECOVERY

After recovering from her op, characterful Willow returned to life at

home in south London, where she loves nothing more than ball games in her neighbourhood park.

Her personality shines through in the company of other dogs, with her owners affectionately referring to their pet as 'The Monarch' as she watches regally over her pals.

With the operation last year now a distant memory, Willow has a single kidney stone remaining and has started a long-term diet to dissolve the mass, under the watchful eyes of Blue Cross vets.

"Willow is so much more bouncy now. She's got her springer spring back," adds Sam.

“ Willow is so much more bouncy now. She's got her springer spring back. ”



'One in a MILLION'

Homeless hamster is now adored by new family...

An elderly hamster has found a new lease of life – and a repertoire of tricks – in a loving home.

Russian hamster Roxy arrived in Blue Cross care in December 2023, aged 18 months, after her previous family's overly-curious dog began causing her stress.

The team at our Hertfordshire rehoming centre in Kimpton treated her for mites before Assistant Manager Aaron Potter took her into foster care. Little did anyone know at that point that Roxy had already found her forever home.

After losing their previous hamster, Aaron and partner Luke had no intention of having another.

But they quickly grew too fond of inquisitive Roxy's quirky ways to part with her.

And, as an older girl, the sweet grey and white hamster, who is now nearly three, is living out her twilight days by their sides.

Although slowing down in her older age, Aaron says Roxy remains alert and is very affectionate.

"She loves to groom me by licking my hand," he says.

"In the evening, she loves to

snuggle up in my blanket or jumper."

Clever Roxy also enjoys playtime and training sessions.

"We are working on training her to spin and to climb through our fingers. She is a very clever girl and is rewarded with a sunflower seed," explains Aaron.

When relaxing in her spacious cage, Roxy enjoys plenty of enrichment activities to keep her happy.

She can often be seen racing in her cork-lined wheel, gnawing on her dental stick treats, or foraging.

"Roxy is wonderful – one in a million," adds Aaron.



News Bitesize Stories



All the latest news from Blue Cross



Bee grew in confidence in our care



Derrick receiving dental treatment

Green shoots for ponies abandoned at garden centre

Two ponies abandoned at a garden centre in the depths of winter are now blossoming.

Little Bee and Derrick were left alone in the cold and wet field, with no one to care for their daily needs.

Thankfully, a local British Horse Society welfare adviser spotted the ponies and put in an urgent call to the Blue Cross horse rehoming centre in Rolleston, Staffordshire.

Rescuing them from the sodden field, which was close to flooding, was crucial.

Horses are designed to graze for most of the day, helping to keep their digestive system healthy, as well as their mental wellbeing. So, unable to graze, Bee and Derrick were in danger of serious illness like colic.

"We have no idea how long they had

been at the garden centre before we were contacted," says Maria Kavanagh, Centre Manager at Blue Cross Rolleston.

"Both ponies were clearly not used to being handled and we have little idea of their history."

The ponies were very anxious around people and needed time to adjust. Stress-free handling was crucial to the ponies getting the vet care they needed, including vital vaccinations, as well as worming treatment, and dental work.

The team used clicker training – a positive reinforcement technique – to get the ponies used to having headcollars put on, and daily activities like grooming and seeing the vet. This allowed the ponies to gradually grow in confidence.

Both have now found loving homes.

GREYHOUND UPDATE

A petition calling for an end to greyhound racing across the UK with more than 111,000 signatures has been handed to the Government.

Since 2018 more than 2,700 racing greyhounds have died. Last year alone, there were 359 deaths and 4,238 recorded injuries.

Blue Cross's campaign to ban greyhound racing is backed by historian, author and the owner of two ex-racing greyhounds, Professor David Olusoga OBE, who joined us at Number 10 to deliver the petition.

"It is time to end greyhound racing to prevent any more suffering for these gentle dogs," he says.





Long road to recovery

A broken hip following a fall at home meant little Taz was in desperate need of a healing space.

The kitten was just 10 weeks old when he arrived at Blue Cross Thirsk, limping from his painful injury.

He had been signed over to another veterinary charity after his fall, but was too young to have the surgery to fix his fractured back leg.

And so, a long rehabilitation period in Blue Cross care ensued. The rehoming centre team worked hard to ensure Taz got all the enrichment he needed while limiting playtime to prevent further damage to his hip.

After two months in our care, he was ready to have the surgery to fix his broken hip – and was then placed in a foster home where he could recover under close monitoring.

Finally, after 115 days in Blue Cross care, he found a new home.

TOOLBOX MICE ARE SAFE NOW

Crammed into a plastic toolbox and dumped outside a pet superstore, 10 tiny mice were left unable to fend for themselves.

With no water to drink, the young mice were thirsty and terrified.

Although the toolbox had airholes punched into its sides and top, the box measured a fraction of the space needed for the mice.

Two mice need a cage size of at least 80cm x 50cm floor space, by 50cm tall – and the toolbox was less than half that size for all 10 rodents.

Believed to be around four weeks old, the mice were taken in by our Devon team and given all the care they needed.

With names inspired by the toolbox – Stanley, Philip, Allen, Spirit, Sandy, Sledge, Skip, String, Sprocket and Staple – the inquisitive mice soon settled in.

With branches, tubes, climbing blocks and hiding places to explore, the dark, enclosed toolbox was quickly a distant memory.

Soon, they all found loving homes.



HERO DOG WINS AWARD

A dog's life-changing work helping others of his own kind has been recognised.

Labrador Riley was a finalist in the BBC's Make a Difference Awards for his vital work as a blood donor to help dogs at risk of blindness.

He was honoured with a highly commended trophy at a glittering ceremony alongside owner, Megan Markham, who is a veterinary nurse at our Grimsby animal hospital in Lincolnshire.

She says: "We use the serum of the blood for eye drops when we have patients with severe eye ulcers that are at risk of being enucleated (removed). I'm so proud of him."



Whatever happened to?

Once in pain and with nowhere to turn, a stray cat is now happy and loved in his new home...



JET

Affectionate and playful Jet arrived in our care as a stray.

The then seven-month-old black cat had a painful mouth inflammation when he was found and soon arrived at Blue Cross Southampton.

In our care, he received vital vet treatment for his gums, vaccinations and flea and worming medication.

And, after 45 days, the lovable pet jetted off to a new family, who renamed him Remy.

New owner Rebecca says: "We were so surprised with how quickly we bonded with him and how confident he was within a short amount of time living with us. "He is such a sweet and affectionate boy and loves to be close to us."

Rebecca adds: "We couldn't wish for a more perfect cat."

RABBIT DUO'S FRESH START

Sisters Daisy and Daffodil do everything together – and especially enjoy eating their greens side by side.

The black dwarf lop rabbits, both four, are inseparable and arrived at Blue Cross Hertfordshire last year in need of a home where they could remain together.

Rabbits need the company of their own kind to be happy, and Daisy and Daffodil are particularly close.

Sadly, though, the black rabbits were initially overlooked by potential adopters.

Billie Craig, Assistant Manager at our Hertfordshire rehoming centre, explains: "We do find that it's much harder to rehome black rabbits compared to other colours."

But, after nearly 130 days in our care, the sweet girls found a loving home together.





HOMELESS PUPPIES now thriving

A litter of puppies brought to Blue Cross in crisis when they were six weeks old are now enjoying life as much-loved pets.

The German shepherd mixes arrived in our care with their mum under heartbreaking circumstances; already struggling to provide care for the accidental litter, their owner was suddenly facing homelessness and the prospect of living in a car with all seven dogs.

Thankfully, our Southampton rehoming centre stepped in to provide urgent help.

Caring for six rambunctious puppies is a demanding task, but our team quickly put into place rotas, feeding schedules and a socialisation plan to give the litter the very best start to life.

Our dedicated outdoor puppy pen, closed to all other pets, enabled them to explore a garden environment safely ahead of their vaccinations.

While inside, we got them used to the many sights and sounds of a home environment.

Leonie Harrison, Adoptions Coordinator, says: "We would also

carry them around and up to the road so that they could see the traffic and get used to it.

"And we got them to meet as many new people as possible – making it really positive by sending them in with food," she continues.

The puppies' personalities quickly began to shine through. The three girls in the litter – Pippin, Jazz, and Braeburn – were more sensible, sensitive and calm.

While the energetic boys – Gala, Jona and Bramley – enjoyed lots of rough and tumble.

And Jona stood out as the "cheekiest" of the puppies.

It wasn't long before the puppies were adopted and, from the age of eight weeks, all six had found loving homes to head to.

COMPETITION



Oh So
Precious
PET KEEPSAKES

WIN! A pet keepsake kit

Like Blue Cross, Oh So Precious understands that pets are integral parts of our families. To celebrate this, they're offering four keepsake kits to readers.

From framed paw prints and fur bottles to personalised keepsake boxes and comforting memorials, Oh So Precious products turn everyday memories into lasting treasures. Not only is it a beautiful way to cherish every moment you share with your pet while they're by your side, it's also a celebration of the love between you beyond their lifetime.

And now, For Pets readers have the chance to win one of four complete pet keepsake kits containing a fur bottle alongside air dry clay and non-toxic ink pawprint sets within a special memory box. Find out more at ohsoprecious.co.uk

Rosemary Johnson was the winner of the pet-friendly boating holiday with Le Boat in our previous issue
Congratulations!

HOW TO ENTER

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

On pages eight to 11, we brought you the story of stray cat Daisy who now lives in regal surroundings. Which famous residence does she live alongside?

- Buckingham Palace
- Balmoral Castle
- Blenheim Palace

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, 30 May 2025
*Strictly one entry per household.

*For full terms and conditions, visit 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. You can change your preferences at any time by contacting our Supporter Care Team on 0300 790 9903 or email info@bluecross.org.uk

FIND US

Discover your local Blue Cross

We also have 58 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 Devon
- 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 **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:

First name:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

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 Bequeathed 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/gift-your-will 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.

We hope you enjoy the communications we send you. If you ever want to change how you hear from us, please contact our customer care team on **0300 790 9903** or by emailing preferences@bluecross.org.uk. To see more about how we will use your information visit bluecross.org.uk/privacy.



Alternatively, call 0300 777 1945 or email legacy@bluecross.org.uk and quote B125

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