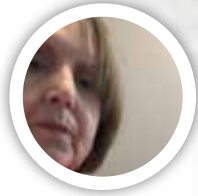


## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Suzon Ahern  
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## FEATURED CATS

Clark Griswold,  
Mimi & Gianna  
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## ADVICE CAT

Ruu  
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# THE CAT HOUSE Scoop

© Essence in a Flash by Kimberly McCarty

VOLUME NO. 23 | ISSUE NO. 2 | FALL 2023



### ADOPTION FACILITY

3633 "O" Street  
Lincoln, NE  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 6-8 pm  
Sundays 1:30-4 pm

PO Box 23145  
Lincoln, NE 68542  
Hotline: 402-441-9593  
info@thecathouse.org  
thecathouse.org  
facebook.com/thecathouse

### BOARD MEMBERS

Faye Stevens *President*  
Julie Dahlke *Treasurer*  
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The Cat House is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, all-volunteer organization funded entirely by donations and adoption fees.

## Happy 25th Purr-thday TCH!

By Kris Silva

It's hard to believe that 25 years have passed since The Cat House embarked upon its journey as a no-kill cat sanctuary serving the greater Lincoln, Nebraska, area. Over these two and a half decades, we've provided hundreds of cats and kittens with a temporary home until their purrfect human match was found.

We have seen our fair share of changes throughout this time, starting as a network of foster homes with a few kitties available for adoption at PetSmart, to a number of rented facilities, and eventually to our very own home. In 2014, we took a significant leap by purchasing a two-story office building at 3633 "O" St. The transformation of this space into a haven for our feline friends was a labor of love. This current location not only meets our cats' needs but also provides a welcoming space for potential adopters to get to know the cats in a home-like environment.

One of our proudest achievements has been our ability to increase our impact on the community. We've not only found loving homes for numerous cats but also expanded our trap-neuter-return program for feral cats.

*Continued on page 6*

## Cats & babies: Keeping them happy together

By Allison Hunter-Frederick

Do you have a baby on the way as well as a cat in the family? A new baby is one of the top reasons that cat owners will surrender their cats, but if you prepare your cat for the arrival of a tiny new stranger, the two can live together safely.

### Develop a Sustainable Schedule

Decide ahead of time how your new schedule might look once your baby arrives. Figure out who will handle the following cat responsibilities and when: meals, litter boxes, vet appointments, grooming, playtime, and attention. If you plan to shift any cat care routines from you to another family member, make the switch months before your baby's birth to allow your cat time to adjust to the style and skills of the new caregiver.

Identify ahead of time activities that your cat enjoys and that you can provide despite all of the new baby responsibilities. Keep the ideas as simple as hiding treats, tossing toys, and even just rubbing your cat's ears.

*Continued on page 4*

# Calendar of Events

## Harbor Coffee Truck, Bake and Garage Sale

October 28 / 8 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
The Cat House, 3633 "O" Street

## Seward Junior Women's Holiday Craft Show

November 18 / 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.  
Seward County Fairgrounds

## Nerdmas 2

December 2 / 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Liberty First Credit Union Arena (Ralston Arena)  
7300 Q Street, Ralston

## Tractor Supply Company Santa Photos

December 3 / 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
9531 N 130th Street  
Waverly

## Falling Snow Craft Fair

December 16 / 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Lancaster Event Center  
4100 N. 84th Street

# Happy Tails Stats

Here are the number of cats adopted in recent months.

April	16
May	22
June	26
July	30
August	42
September	43

# Volunteer Spotlight: Suzon Ahern

By Ann Adams

In every corner of the world, there exist individuals whose unwavering dedication and boundless compassion create a ripple of positivity, touching countless lives. Suzon Ahern, a cherished volunteer at The Cat House, embodies the essence of selfless service leaving an indelible mark on both the shelter and the feline residents it houses.

Suzon's journey to TCH is a testament to her deep commitment to animal welfare. After relocating from Des Moines, Iowa, where she had spent several years working tirelessly at Furry Friends Refuge, she brought her passion for shelter work to Lincoln in 2018.

Before dedicating herself to the welfare of cats, Suzon's life was devoted to teaching adults with disabilities in California for over 31 years. Her transition to shelter work might have surprised some, but her love for cats and her desire to make a difference were unwavering. Despite battling a chronic illness, Suzon found solace and purpose in her work with the cats at TCH.

Suzon's volunteer shift at TCH is not your typical commitment. You'll find her at the shelter overnight on Sundays and again on Thursday afternoons. It's during the quiet, late night and early afternoon hours that Suzon works her magic. The cats and kittens eagerly await her arrival, seeking attention and play in the peaceful stillness.

Suzon's routine at TCH is nothing short of remarkable. She begins her shift by checking on all the cats, visiting each unit. Her responsibilities include feeding the cats, ensuring the cleanliness of the rooms, recording each cat's food intake, and reporting any signs of illness or behavioral concerns. Her meticulous attention to detail helps maintain the well-being of the shelter's feline residents.

Beyond her duties as a feeder and cleaner, Suzon is also a devoted cat socializer. This is where her passion truly shines. Engaging with the cats, creating bonds, and showering them with love and attention are her favorite activities. Her heartwarming interactions bring comfort and joy to the shelter's residents.

Throughout her time at TCH, Suzon has witnessed countless heartwarming moments. One of her fondest memories is witnessing bonded pairs finally finding their forever homes. Yet, as any true



cat lover knows, saying goodbye can be bittersweet. Suzon also finds immense joy in helping shy and fearful cats come out of hiding, ready to embrace the love and care they deserve.

Suzon's dedication to feline welfare extends beyond the shelter. She shares her life with four cats, including two beloved TCH alumni, Rosie and Leroy. Her home and life are a testament to her profound love for these furry friends.

## Volunteer Opportunities

You can fill out a volunteer application online at [thecathouse.org](http://thecathouse.org), come in during open hours to fill out an application, or e-mail questions to [volunteer@thecathouse.org](mailto:volunteer@thecathouse.org). You're in for a rewarding experience!

### Opportunities to help include:

- Open hours
- Daily care, feeding, room cleaning, and socializing of cats
- Facility maintenance
- Newsletter articles, photography, and production
- Assisting with communication to volunteers and/or the public
- Adoption counselor
- Post-adoption follow-up calls
- Filing
- Grant writing
- Fundraising
- Retail events
- Feral/TNR program
- Foster care

# Clark Griswold

By Martha Stoddard

The person who caught Clark Griswold and his brothers, Eddie Cousin and Frank Shirley, thought the three kittens were candidates for our Trap-Neuter-Return program—getting neutered, microchipped, vaccinated, and then heading back to live the rest of their lives on the streets. But Clark's brothers convinced the veterinary staff that the whole gang was friendly and deserved a chance to get a home.

So, the three came in to The Cat House, where Clark promptly made it clear he was not going along with the plan. He enjoyed playing with his siblings but stayed well out of reach of any humans. Even after his brothers got adopted, he remained on high alert against any attempts at making friends.

Except that, once in a while, he could be convinced to play. At times, he seemed to enjoy (non-touching) human company. Eventually, he allowed a few people to scratch his head and then a few more, while he wound his way around their legs or flopped on the cat bed beside them. He even took to calling out to people to come pet him. He allowed some to pick him up briefly.

It's taken a long time and a lot of patience, but Clark seems to have figured out that his brothers were on to something. Now, he just needs a home of his own.



# Mimi & Gianna

By Martha Stoddard

Mimi and Gianna aren't exactly yin and yang cats. But you might swear they were if you see them spooning in a bed, one white, one gray (or blue in the language of cat colors) with white markings. These elegant cats are not the type who throw themselves at humans. They prefer to wait until humans prove themselves worthy. For those who pass the test, though, they'll offer a subtle purr and a little elevator butt.

The pair originally lived in Fremont, where they were taken in by a local rescue group. They lingered there after they tested positive for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, or FIV. It's a virus that weakens their immune system and scares some people off. But the virus is not easily transmitted, and cats with FIV can live normal lives, even sharing a home with non-FIV cats.

Mimi and Gianna eventually came to The Cat House, where they have made themselves at home until something better comes along. The two are bonded, which means they must be adopted together.



## These cats are looking for forever homes.

Visit our shelter on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6 to 8 pm and Sundays from 1:30 to 4 pm.



Beauty (FeLV+ FIV+) – 3 yrs



Selena – 9 years



Lola – 8 years



August – 4 years



Taffy – 5 years



Mia – 9 years



Tomato – 3 years



Campari – 4 months



Shay – 8 years



Scribbles (FeLV+) – 1 year

# Wish List

## DRY CAT FOOD

- Any dry cat food
- Science Diet Optimal
- Science Diet C/D Stress\*
- Royal Canin Baby Cat
- Science Diet W/D\*

## CANNED CAT FOOD OR PACKETS

- Science Diet or Iams – kitten & adult – turkey, chicken, salmon (ground or minced)
- Fancy Feast – turkey, chicken, salmon (Classic); Grilled Delights with Cheddar; or Broths sold in pouches
- Fancy Feast Kitten
- Hartz Delectables – sold in packets
- Science Diet W/D or Z/D\*
- Royal Canin Baby Cat Loaf

## SUPPLIES

- Brooms
- Paper towels
- Kitchen and office trash bags (13 gallon size)
- Copier/printer paper

## CLEANERS

- Scent-free liquid laundry detergent (sensitive skin)
- Scent-free dryer sheets (sensitive skin)
- Clorox bleach (regular type)
- Anti-bacterial hand soap
- Dawn dishwashing soap
- Dishwasher detergent/pods
- Clorox disposable wipes
- Swiffers

## CAT LITTER

- Non-clumping, regular clay litter (no clumping, pine, or newsprint type litter)

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Meat flavored baby food (chicken or turkey)
- Small chenille or cotton reversible bath rugs (no rubber backs)
- Aluminum trays (no smaller than 8" x 13")
- Lint rollers
- FortiFlora® Feline Nutritional Supplement
- Purina Pro Plan Hydra Care Supplement
- Gift certificates to [entirelypets.com](http://entirelypets.com)
- Gift cards to Tractor Supply, Walmart, Target, Petco, or PetSmart

\* sold at vet clinics

## Cats & babies, continued from page 1

In addition, add independent enrichment options to your cat's day—nature videos, calming music, food puzzles, catnip parties, motion-operated toys, and forage boxes (for hiding toys).

Try to minimize the changes that you make to your cat's life. Keep the same food, litter, and vet throughout this adjustment period. Also, resist the urge to heap extra attention on your cat to avoid confusing your cat when your attention lessens.

Cat parent Kimberly Bailey said, "I was worried about my cat because she was my first baby, and we moved her to a different room to prepare for the baby. Right before baby was due, we set up a calming diffuser, made sure kitty was up to date for vet visits, and portioned out her food into small Tupperware containers so feeding was easy in the chaos of the newborn stage."

### Change Your Cat's Environment Gradually

Prepare the baby room in small stages to give your cat time to adjust. As you do, let your cat see your baby's crib, swing, changing table, diapers, and clothing. Create a positive association to the baby paraphernalia by pairing with treats and playtime. In addition, allow your cat to rub on baby supplies to mark them, which will make them feel familiar and give your cat less reason to mark with urine. You can help the baby paraphernalia smell like home to your cat by rubbing a cloth on your cat's chin and cheeks and then rubbing this cloth on the corners of the room and furniture.

If you'll need to relocate any of your cat's resources, do this slowly and ahead of time. Make sure your cat's resources are optimally set up. The introduction of a baby may cause stress for your cat, causing an environment that previously had been acceptable to become unbearable. Increase the number of low and high places your cat has to help it feel safe and secure out of your baby's reach. Boxes, covered beds, perches, and shelves are all useful.

### Create Barriers in Your Baby's Space

Establish boundaries for when your baby comes home. Cover the crib and the changing table so that your cat doesn't claim these as sleeping areas, or teach your cat not to climb into them. Limit your cat's access to the baby's room to only when you are present by installing a stacked baby gate or closing the door.

Cat owner April Scribner Shields said, "Our issue was that the Terrible Tabby

Twosome thought the crib, cradle, and bouncy seat was for them! A week or so before the blessed event, I awoke to an odd sound. My husband and I crept downstairs to find our cat hanging out in the bouncy seat batting a baby toy."

Cat owner Summer Pruit said, "Anything we didn't want the cats getting into, we made difficult/uncomfortable to access so they quickly got bored and ignored it. For Jasper's crib, we used tape and aluminum foil, and for Brock's crib, we filled it to the brim with stuffed animals. Once baby came home, we slept with our door shut. Babies are warm and my cats love to snuggle them, which we want to discourage when we can't monitor."

### Desensitize Your Cat to Baby Sounds and Smells

Prepare your cat for the new sounds and smells of a baby. Let your cat hear the sound of a baby's cry by playing an audio clip from the internet. Start by playing it at a just audible volume for a few seconds, and at the same time, create a positive association by pairing with treats and playtime. Over time, if your cat shows no interest in the sound, increase the volume until it is at a normal level and also the duration of exposure. You can help your cat get used to baby toys by letting your cat see them ahead of time and periodically turning them on.

Prior to your baby's birth, expose your cat to baby detergent, lotions, powders, and other products, but don't force your cat to smell them. Instead encourage a positive association by pairing their smell with treats and attention. Once your baby is born, have a family member bring home an item of clothing or a blanket that carries your baby's scent for your cat to sniff. By getting your cat accustomed to your baby's smell ahead of time, your baby will seem less foreign to your cat when the two meet.

Cat parent Cassy Bredthauer said, "We set up everything before baby came and let my cat explore everything. Played some baby crying videos so our cat could hear it. Brought home the baby blankets and put one on my side of the bed where he likes to sleep and put one downstairs near the cat bed. Then when our baby was here, we held our baby while the cat would sit on my lap and smell our baby."

By following the previous tips from cat parents and cat experts, everyone in your family should be able to live together safely and happily.

# Donations in memory & honor of...

## In memory of

Mary Harrington from Michael Stalker

Diane Vajgrt from Gladys Boeckner

Douglas Zimmerman from his family

Barb Shively from Patrick Shively and Sarah Hoehner

Mimi (John Martin's fur baby) from Amber Pendley and MHA-NE Peers

Ed and Pat Roth from Jan Roth-Schoonover

Cathy Knapp from Lance and Madelyne Knapp; Jill and Randy Flagel; Marion Casburn; and Julie and James Hogg

Greg Arp from Marjorie Arp; Phyllis Randall; Quinn Painer; Stacey Hawkey; Constance May; Nancy Pittman; Jerry Stanley; Lois Princ; Cheryl Pohl; Claude and Linda Jensen; Brad and Judy Shay; David Wallick; Lori Waters; Jan Znamenacek; and Kim Youngsook

Max, Carmen's dog, from Jerry Tyrrell

Janine Koch from Lisa Hill

Robert (Bob) Bridges from Mary Bridges, Yvonne Nunn, Mary McCown, Rebecca Sue Johnson, Linda Becker, Connie Kreifels, Judy Schlitz, and United Steelworkers AFL-CIO

Lucy from Judy Allen

Jerald Northrop from Karen Beck; Andrea Ellinger and family; and A.C. Swanberg

D.C. from Kristyn Funk

Popeye from Julie Petersen and Suzon Ahern

Lexie from Natalie Umphlett

Stormy from Katherine Martin

Dolly from Stephanie Abdulrazaq

Princess Callie from Isabel McCullough

Kiwi from Patricia Speelman

Charles Sayward from Gabriel Kerlik

Rosie from A.C. Swanberg

Margerat Ogden from Deborah York

Hoshi, Chad, and Ember from Becky Heinzman

Jack Bedell from Megan Reininger

Irene Ernst from Judy Jones, Elizabeth Cullinane, Janell Hall, Doralee Bell, Roger Meyer, Sue Soulliere, Jane Moorhouse, and Laine Drake

Kathy Griffith from Jerry Tyrrell

Suzie Laws from Catherine Bischof; Deena Renemans; Brent Leacox; and Jim and Karin Leacox

Wendy Francis from Norma Kalbach, Linda Hanneman, Jean Piontek, Shelley Suellwold, Dianna Hietbrink, Mary Lynne Schroeder, Patricia Halverson, Joann Dickmeyer, Megan Moslander, Mary Bills-Strand, Karen Jennings, Lilly Blase, Margaret Christy, Mary Werner, Marvin Wiens, Linda Knox, Lori Rausch, Sharon Heusman, Teresa A. Brown, Mary Belka, Nancy Parker, Annie Ritchie, Lisa Betts, Laurel Marsh, Shirley Flynn, Cynthia Brammeier, and Sharon Shelley

Marilyn Baalhorn from Leona Copley, Patricia Amedeo, and David Polivka

Chris Lyman from Lynn Pepperd

Dale Lynn Sinram from Michele Hoyne

Jack Buehler from Jeanne Millican, Tracey Wagner, Marilyn Wagner, Doris Dermann, Christine Jones, Barbara Brewer, and Mark and Eloise Herr

Norma Ann Patzloff from Errol Vanicek

Betty Burmeister from Loren and Elizabeth Burmeister

Arthur Exstrom from Lois Exstrom

Tater Tot from Jeremiah Ourada

Judy Phelps from her estate

Shari Aldrich from Clyde Harkrader and Jean and John Harrison

Kay Griffin from Brenda Hohbein

Jason Fiese from Deb DeFruiter

Carlos Salinas from Michael Stroup

## In honor of

Rose Weddell from the Courier Committee

Arabella from Joe Divis

Will Lounsbury's birthday from Kerrie Carpenter

The Cat House volunteers who care for Roundface from Alexandra Todd

Chance from Jo-Hanna Goettsche

His brother and sister's birthdays from Douglas Defruiter

Joy from Suzon Ahern

BeeBoo from Rhonda Cook

## Special thanks to

Dr. Kelly Jordan Cause For Paws

Dr. Shelley Knudsen Nature's Variety

All Feline Hospital Petco

Vondra Veterinary Clinic Tractor Supply

Wachal Pet Health Center

Pitts Veterinary Hospital

Creature Comforts Mobile Veterinary Service

# TikTok cats: Balancing entertainment & responsibility

By Ann Adams

TikTok, the popular short-form video platform, has revolutionized the way we consume cat content. Cats have become internet celebrities in their own right, with countless TikTok users showcasing their adorable antics. While TikTok's cat content can bring joy and insight, it's essential to consider responsible pet content creation and viewership as we navigate this digital feline frenzy.

TikTok cat videos can be a powerful tool for raising awareness about cat behavior, care, and adoption. Many content creators use their platform to educate viewers about responsible pet ownership, such as the importance of spaying/neutering, regular vet visits, and proper nutrition.

Cat videos are known for their entertainment value, and they often serve as a source of stress relief for viewers. The joy and laughter brought about by these videos contribute positively to people's mental well-being.

Unfortunately, not all TikTok cat videos prioritize the welfare of the animals involved. Some creators may exploit their cats for views and likes, subjecting them to potentially harmful situations just for the sake of entertainment. Examples include dressing cats in costumes, forcing them into uncomfortable situations, or startling them for shock value.

Cats are sentient beings and should be treated with respect and dignity. In some videos, it's clear that cats are uncomfortable or distressed, yet the content creators continue filming. Consent and respect for an animal's boundaries should always be a priority.

Viewers of TikTok cat content wield considerable influence in upholding the welfare of these animals. It is imperative that viewers report and abstain from interacting with content that exploits or jeopardizes cats, while also actively endorsing and engaging with responsible creators.

# Feline allergies unmasked: How to recognize and help your allergic cat

By Cassie Kilmurray

Is your four-legged companion suddenly feeling a bit scratchy? Is its constant itching leaving you both scratching your heads? No worries, you're not navigating the world of allergies alone!

## Spotting The Clues

Cats, just like humans, can suffer from allergies. However, our feline friends don't always exhibit allergies in the same way we do. Instead of sneezing and runny noses, cats have their unique ways of telling us they're not feeling their best—excessive licking, chewing, or grooming, which can lead to skin problems and other discomforts. It's essential to know what to look for to help your furry companion. Here are subtle clues that your cat might be struggling with allergies:

- Itchiness: Watch out for your cat constantly licking, chewing, or scratching themselves.
- Hair Loss: Patches of fur missing due to their excessive grooming.
- Skin Redness and Irritation: Signs of redness, rashes, or scabs on their skin.
- Gastrointestinal Issues: Some cats may experience vomiting, diarrhea, or a reduced appetite.

Spotting the symptoms of allergies is vital to your cat's well-being. If you notice any of the symptoms mentioned, it's essential to consult your veterinarian for a proper diagnosis and treatment plan.

## Common Types of Allergies and How to Help

Allergies in cats are commonly separated into three categories: flea, environmental, and food.

### Flea allergies

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, flea allergies are the most common type of allergy found in cats and have been on the rise for the past 10 years. Flea allergies are caused by a reaction to the saliva transmitted through a flea's bite, resulting in intense itching, hair loss, and skin irritations. Even a few flea bites can trigger severe itchiness. Because of their size, fleas are often hard to find unless specifically looking for them. Usually, fleas and scabs from their bites appear on a cat's head, neck, abdomen, lower back, or tail.

The good news is that flea allergies

can be easily managed with preventive medications, available in both topical and oral forms. Other medications to control itchiness and treat skin infections can be used based on your vet's evaluation. It's also essential to treat your home for fleas and ensure that any other cats or dogs living with you are similarly treated.

### Environmental allergies

Just like humans, cats can develop allergies to things in their surroundings. According to the AVMA, common allergens include grass, mold, and pollen, as well as unexpected things like plastics in their food and water bowls, cleaning products, detergents, and scented candles or air fresheners. Figuring out the source of environmental allergies often involves ruling out all other causes. Also similar to allergies in humans, cats with environmental allergies will experience flare-ups seasonally when the allergens in the environment get higher.

The most effective way to manage environmental allergies is to remove the trigger from your cat's environment. Frequent cleaning, vacuuming, and dusting, and washing your cat's bedding and other household items regularly can help reduce allergens in your cat's environment. Additionally, using unscented cleaning products, detergents, and litters can help reduce allergens. When your cat experiences an allergy flare-up, evaluation by the vet is recommended.

### Food allergies

Did you know that cats can develop allergies to certain ingredients in their foods, just like their pet parents? Cats can develop allergies to specific ingredients in their diets, with unusual or excessive itchiness being the primary indicator. Gastrointestinal problems such as vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, and decreased appetite can also be signs. The most common food allergies in cats are to chicken, beef, dairy, eggs, and fish, according to Tufts University Cummings Veterinary Medical Center. While cats can be allergic to other ingredients, this is usually uncommon.

Diagnosing a food allergy typically involves conducting a food trial, during which your cat is placed on a diet with limited ingredients and specific ingredients are slowly removed over time. Food trials

usually last for about 8 to 12 weeks, with many cats experiencing improvement within the first month. These trials are strict because it is a process of elimination and any food not recommended could negatively affect the results of the test. If you have questions about what to feed a cat during this trial, your vet will be able to assist you.

Although allergies can be frustrating for both pets and their parents, being able to recognize the signs and get proper treatment is essential for your cat's well-being and happiness. It's best to get to the root of discomfort sooner rather than later. When in doubt about changes in behavior, recommended diet changes, or cat-safe anti-allergy medication, talk with your vet. Together, you and your cat can work toward a healthier and more comfortable life.

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## Happy 25th Purr-thday TCH, continued from page 1

This program helps control the feral cat population and improves the quality of life for these cats and their human neighbors.

Throughout these years, we've been fortunate to have the unwavering support of our dedicated volunteers and generous donors. Your contributions have allowed us to continue our mission and provide a safe haven for cats of all ages, temperaments, and health conditions.

As a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization funded largely by donations and adoption fees, your support has been instrumental in our success. We've witnessed remarkable transformations and celebrated countless happy endings.

As we reflect on this incredible journey, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you who has been a part of TCH's legacy. Your love for cats and dedication to our cause continue to inspire us.

Looking ahead to the future, we remain committed to our mission of providing every cat and kitten with a chance at a better life. With your continued support, we'll keep growing, expanding our reach, and making a difference in the lives of cats in our community.

Thank you for being a part of our family and for helping us create a brighter future for all feline friends.

# Ruu makes the stretch to talk about arthritis

Dear Advice Cat:

*I never thought I'd be writing you but I'm worried about my cat. She used to love playing and running around. We fought all the time about her jumping on the counter. Now, she spends a lot more time in her bed and she doesn't even try to get on the counter. She gets up slowly when she gets up. I mean, she reminds me of my grandmother with arthritis. Do you know what's going on?*

Signed, Slow to figure it out

Dear Slow:

Why are you asking me? I'm trying to get some rest here. What's that? The newsletter editor is telling me I agreed to take over the Advice Cat column after Almond Joy passed away. I must have been half-asleep if I volunteered for that job. What? The editor thinks I could help people and cats? Humph. People are fine. Other cats, who cares? But I guess I can do it this time, as long as it isn't too strenuous.

So, you say your cat is slow and likes to sleep? Sounds like me. My name is Ruu. I

don't see any need to hurry, and I love my bed. Truth be told, though, I used to do more before my joints started aching. The vet says I have arthritis. Are you surprised? Cats can get it, just like humans, and for many of the same reasons. Wear and tear on the joints from old age is a big one. There's also genetics, injury, or congenital defects. Bad diets and some medications can also cause problems. And packing on the pounds can make it worse, let me tell you. All those extra servings I enjoyed have come back to bite me.

Your vet can diagnose arthritis by doing a thorough exam that may include bloodwork and X-rays. The vet will also ask you about symptoms, like less energy, jumping or moving less, limping, losing muscle mass, problems grooming (hard to bend that far), not using the box properly, and unusual irritability or aggression. Me, I get irritated a lot. People want to pet me when I'm trying to sleep, or they think they can make free by giving me more than three pets at a time. Annoying.

But back to your problem. Even if your cat has arthritis, there are ways you can

help. There are supplements that can help out. Common ones are glucosamine/chondroitin, similar to what some humans use, and Omega-3 fatty acids. The vet can prescribe various medications for pain. Talk to your vet about the options. Some are good only for the short-term. Others can be pricey. Some may be easier to give to your cat. A word of warning: NEVER give your cat anything out of your medicine cabinet without a vet's OK. Some common human pain medicines can be toxic to cats.

You can help your cat in other ways, too. If she's overweight, try to get her to lose a couple pounds. Exercise is good, even a slow stroll around the house can help. If she has trouble jumping, a set of pet stairs can be the answer. Getting a litter box with a low entrance and elevated food and water dishes can make life easier, too. Some people try massages or physical therapy or acupuncture. And a heated bed can be cozy for those old bones.

Speaking of beds, I hear mine calling. This has been a lot of work for an old gal.

Good-night, Ruu

# Sammy goes from hissy to kissy

By Martha Stoddard

Sammy has come a long way from Christmas Eve 2021 when he first showed up in Phyllis and Dennis Gaibler's backyard. This street-wise cat found the food she left out for other feral cats and soon became a regular visitor. He appeared twice a day like clockwork, but he always kept a cautious distance.

It was 9 months before Sammy allowed Phyllis to touch him. From there, though, it wasn't long before he started showing up to hang out on the deck with her. As the weather turned colder, Phyllis put out a heated shelter. By December, she had coaxed him into spending nights in the garage, out of the elements.

Eventually, she took him to a veterinarian to get neutered and vaccinated. The vet also tested him and found that Sammy had the feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), which weakened his immune system and put him at higher risk of catching diseases from other cats. So Phyllis brought him into her house, where he enjoyed lots of lap time.

But things did not go well when she tried

to introduce Sammy to her other cat. They went so badly, in fact, that she made the difficult decision to see if he could find a new home through The Cat House.

"It broke my heart but I knew it was a chance for him to live his best life," Phyllis said.

Once at TCH, Sammy made it clear he was not happy. For weeks, he growled and swatted and hissed at volunteers, but he was still sweet with Phyllis and Dennis when they visited. They showed up regularly in hopes of easing his transition. Eventually, the patience of volunteers and the support from the Gaiblers broke through and Sammy turned a corner.

He started allowing pets from volunteers he once growled at. He realized that he could enjoy other people, too, and began calling to visitors in hopes of getting attention. That's how Sammy was when Phil Lemons and family met him. They had come to TCH to look for a cat who would be good with the family, including an 11-year-old boy. Sammy poured on the charm, rubbing



up against them all. It worked.

He went home with them in June. He was happy there from the first night, soaking up all the pets and snuggles he could get. By now, he has gotten comfortable with the dog, loves to play with the child, and enjoys lap time. When Phil is home, Sammy follows him around and talks to him. He still hisses if he gets startled but it's usually brief and then he's back to his friendly self.

"He's bringing a lot of joy to our lives," Phil said.



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