

# FOR PETS

The magazine for Blue Cross supporters

AUTUMN 2023

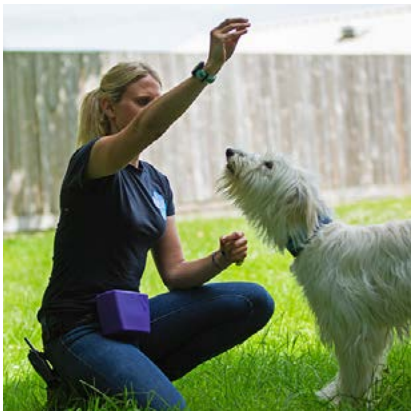


No more  
**suffering**

Greyhound racing must end



Pets change lives  
We change theirs



# Behaviour and Training Service

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- A tailor-made behaviour plan for you and your pet
- A summary of your session



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We change theirs



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**COVER STORY**

**18 Racetrack to rescue**  
Our campaign to end greyhound racing

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**WELCOME**

Here at Blue Cross, we see all too many sad cases of abuse and neglect. We're always there to pick up the pieces, but we'd love to live in a world where there was no suffering among pets in the first place. That's the driving force behind our campaign to end greyhound racing and the pain it inflicts on the dogs involved. You'll read all about our work to end this brutal spectator sport in this issue. There are also plenty of stories of hope and happy endings, like dog Libby who has found love with a family devoted to caring for elderly pets. And the story of horse Pilgrim, who overcame horrific burns caused by a barbaric attack to find a wonderful new home. I hope you enjoy reading all about them.

**Aimee Brannen, Editor**

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# Elderly dog **LOVE**

Jack russell Libby is given a second chance by a family devoted to loving ageing pets...

**"**It's an honour and a privilege to look after older dogs, even though they are a short-term lease and that within 18 months to two years, you're likely to be saying goodbye," says Alan Williams.

Despite knowing the heartbreak that inevitably lies ahead, Alan and his partner are unwaveringly devoted to adopting elderly dogs in need and "spoiling them rotten" in their final months or years.

Libby, a 15-year-old jack russell, is their latest in a succession of four Blue Cross rescue dogs and has now been living with the couple, as well as Alan's 97-year-old mum Dorothy, for 18 months.







Before Libby came Yorkshire terrier duo, Tom and Jerry, and Marley, a former army sniffer dog, all from Blue Cross, followed by Gus – a miniature pinscher cross jack russell – from another pet charity.

### ARRIVAL

Libby arrived in the care of our Bromsgrove rehoming centre near Birmingham as her previous owner, who she had spent her whole life with, could no longer keep her.

Kennels are no place for elderly pets, so we placed her straight into foster care so she could continue to feel the security a home brings.

“  
It never gets easier  
saying goodbye.  
Or making decisions.  
But I think it’s getting  
a little simpler to know  
when to let go, although  
the feelings are still  
the same.  
”

With health issues, including heart disease and arthritis requiring medication for life, we feared that it

would take a long time to find Libby a home – as it often does with elderly dogs in our care.

But it wasn’t long before the sweet girl was adopted by parish priest Alan and his family.

She settled in quickly, enjoying two daily walks – now down to one of around 40 to 45 minutes due to her slowing down a little more – in between snoozing on the sofa and pottering around in the garden.

Alan, 62, says: “She leads me. She’s got a little route and still smells everything.

“Some days she can be quite nippy. But there are occasions that, for the



Alan's mother Dorothy enjoys the company that Libby brings



last 10 minutes, I have to pick her up because she's really just slowed to a halt, but that's what you would expect at that age."

As well as getting Alan out and about and meeting new people on walks, Libby has also brought the whole family plenty of "joy".

Alan continues: "She may not be bouncy, she might not always do what I want her to do, but it's just the pleasure of having an amount of unconditional love.

"She brings such steadiness. I like to think that, underlying everything, Libby's grateful for being in a home. I reciprocate by being grateful that

she's consented to living with us, without fuss. It's a two-way thing."

### UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

As well as the rewards that rehoming elderly dogs bring, Alan says that it also fits in well with their lifestyle.

"I haven't got the time or energy to put into training a young dog. As I've got older and slowed down myself, it has been nice to go with their pace really," he says.

"She [Libby] models chilled-out behaviour. She reminds me not to be too busy and not to be too bothered," adds Alan, who sometimes takes her to work with him.

Older dogs who find themselves homeless need stability, love, understanding and a warm home to live out their twilight years.

So, Blue Cross is immensely grateful to kind families like Alan's for taking on elderly pets knowing that their time with them will be limited.

"It never gets easier saying goodbye. Or making decisions. But I think it's getting a little simpler to know when to let go, although the feelings are still the same," says Alan.

He adds: "It's rewarding because, otherwise, what life would they have? And when the sadness occurs for her [Libby], we'll be back [to Blue Cross]."





# Our little ray of **SUNSHINE**

Tiggy has transformed the lives of her owners while she now enjoys the freedom and love she deserves...

**"**I've had a rough few years with my health, and she's brought me happiness," says Julia Wassell, of her beloved Blue Cross rescue cat, Tiggy.

Endometriosis, a condition affecting the uterus, has left 42-year-old Julia needing three operations, and she

often experiences chronic pain which makes it a struggle to even get out of bed in the morning.

But in Tiggy she has found strength and purpose in the lowest of times.

She continues: "I've had it [endometriosis] for 17 years, and I get massive amounts of pain with it.



You can get quite low. When you feel really low, you don't really know how to start the day.

"But just coming down and seeing Tiggy and her 'talking' to you perks you up and gives you a purpose."

Julia and her husband Simon, who are both construction project managers, adopted Tiggy from our Bromsgrove rehoming centre near Birmingham in 2019.

### NIGHT AND DAY

The difference it made to Julia's mental health from day one was like "night and day", says Simon.

He continues: "To see Julia build

“

**When you feel really low, you don't really know how to start the day. But just coming down and seeing Tiggy and her 'talking' to you perks you up and gives you a purpose.**

”

that relationship with Tiggy was just brilliant. When she [Tiggy] comes on here [the sofa] for a cuddle in the evening, you can see she's Julia's

little world. She's brought so much to both of our lives, but she's especially helped Julia.

"It's been so much help looking after a cat – it gives you structure to your day and that sunshine whenever you see them.

"And it can make you laugh as well – they can be really funny. They're great for lifting spirits.

"We look after Tiggy and Tiggy certainly looks after us."

Meanwhile, Tiggy, now five, has clearly landed on her paws. Along with four other cats, she spent her early life living in a flat with no access to the outside.



## ADVENTUROUS

Now, since finding happiness with Julia and Simon, there's no stopping the adventurous tabby from exploring her garden and the rolling fields backing onto her home.

But she still puts aside plenty of time in the evenings to snuggle up beside her besotted owners on the sofa to enjoy some fuss.

Simon continues: "She's really good company. Whether you're having coffee out in the garden and she's coming to join you or you're doing some work, she'll spend a lot of time with you when she's not exploring.

"She really is like a little ray of sunshine. Even on a cold winter's morning when you don't want to get up and start work and go into the office, she's just that ray of sunshine."

"It's great to be able to give her a better home. And she's brought so much to our lives, we couldn't imagine not having her," he concludes.

Julia adds: "Words cannot explain how much we love her. She's kept us going. We're so grateful that she came into our lives. We cherish her every day."



Tiggy is like a 'ray of sunshine' for her family



**DOG TRICK**

Teaching your dog to spin

**Step one:** Hold a treat in front of your dog's nose. Slowly move the treat to the side of their head, letting them follow it with their nose.

**Step two:** Slowly move the treat in a circle around your dog's body until they turn in a circle.

**Step three:** Once your dog has completed a circle, give them the treat. Repeat steps one and two until your dog is turning more confidently.

**Step four:** Add the verbal cue "spin" and then have your dog turn a circle using the treat. Repeat this until your dog turns on cue.

Find more expert advice at [bluecross.org.uk/dog-spin](http://bluecross.org.uk/dog-spin)

**TOP TIP**  
If your pet is getting frustrated or bored, stop the training session and give them space



# Back to SCHOOL

Teaching your pet new tricks is a great way to keep their brain busy and build your bond.

**CAT TRICK**

## Teaching your cat to high five

**Step one:** Hold your cat's treat in a closed fist in front of them. They will usually start to investigate your hand.

**Step two:** As soon as their paw leaves the ground to touch your hand, mark it by giving them the treat.

**Step three:** Repeat until their paw has touched your hand a few times. Begin saying the cue "high five".

**Step four:** Once they have mastered this, switch to using an open palm. Reward them for each touch.

Find more expert advice at [bluecross.org.uk/cat-high-five](http://bluecross.org.uk/cat-high-five)

**TOP TIP**

If your pet is unsure what to do, go back to the previous step so they know what you're asking

**HORSE TRICK**

## Teaching your horse target training

Target training is best used together with clicker training and is a brilliant way of interacting with your horse during their usual training routine.

**Step one:** Select something for them to target – it should be safe and easily moveable.

**Step two:** Show them the object at nose level, say

"touch" and click and reward them when they touch it with a tasty treat or a scratch.

**Step three:** Repeat this until they're consistently touching it with their nose when cued.

**Step four:** Hold the object at different heights, say "touch" and reward them straight away.

Find more expert advice at [bluecross.org.uk/target-training](http://bluecross.org.uk/target-training)



# INSEPARABLE rabbit family

Sweet mother and son bunnies hop into a loving home after a 150-day wait...

**D**aphne and Groot share a special bond that melts the hearts of all they meet.

And now, the mother and son pair have found a loving home where they can remain together.

Daphne arrived at Hertfordshire Blue Cross in November last year alongside two other pregnant rabbits and a male from the same home.

Within days, eight-month-old Daphne and her sister Velma had given birth to nine kits between them. The third litter, belonging to their friend Fidget, sadly died during birth.

## SOCIAL CREATURES

Rabbits are social creatures and need to live in pairs to be happy, and neutered bunnies of the opposite sex are normally the best matches.

So, as Daphne proved to be such a wonderful mum, instead of re-



bonding her with Velma, the team decided to keep her with Groot, the kit she was particularly close to.

Both have been neutered, which is essential for any opposite-sex pair to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Animal Welfare Assistant Aaron Potter says: "Their bond is really sweet – they're often grooming each other and sleeping cuddled up together. Groot really looks up to Daphne and gets a lot of confidence from her."

Daphne's other kits – Twiglet, Florence and Pringle – were either bonded with one of Velma's offspring or put up for adoption to be matched

“

**Their bond is really sweet – they're often grooming each other and sleeping cuddled up together. Groot really looks up to Daphne and gets a lot of confidence from her.**

”

with a bunny already living in a home.

The case is sadly indicative of the ongoing rabbit welfare crisis.

A surge in bunny purchases during the pandemic, with many of them wrongly sexed, has led to unprecedented numbers of unwanted rabbits. And a worrying number of these have been abandoned on the streets.

Aaron says: "Sadly, a lot of people also buy rabbits unaware of the costs involved. They need regular worming treatments and vaccinations.

"Providing the correct diet of quality, dust-extracted hay is also expensive, and they need lots of enrichment. A pair of rabbits can easily cost more to keep than a cat does."



# Still here for the PETS OF WAR

**I**t has been 18 months since the outbreak of war in Ukraine, and the devastation inflicted on its people and pets shows no sign of relenting.

At least 9,000 civilians and up to 20,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed while thousands have been wounded and millions displaced.

Many pets have made the journey to safety with their owners, including those helped by our Hertfordshire rehoming centre during their crucial quarantine period last year.

But thousands – and a number that's sadly growing – have been left behind on the streets of Ukraine.

Shortly after Russian tanks rolled over the border in February last year,

Blue Cross stepped in to provide support to partner charities helping innocent pets caught up in the horror of the conflict.

Our Ukraine Pet Welfare Fund, which has raised over £500,000 to date thanks to kind supporters, including the Pets at Home Foundation, continues to be a lifeline for so many pets needing help.

One of the charities the fund supports is Save the Dogs and Other Animals (STD), based in Romania.

In the past year it has helped 1,000 pets leave Ukraine, rehabilitated dogs rescued from a bombed-out shelter and aided animals caught up in the Kherson flooding caused by the destruction of the Kakhovka dam.

Day-to-day, Save the Dogs helps brave civilians to feed thousands of cats and dogs struggling in harsh conditions and Russian shelling.

But there are increasing numbers of mouths to feed. So, a neutering programme has been launched in Odesa to prevent more puppies and kittens being born into a warzone.

More than 300 dogs and cats have so far been microchipped and neutered and the programme is gaining momentum.

Gregg Tully, Country Director of STD, says: "We're so grateful for this help to reduce the number of stray dogs and cats in the Odesa area and prevent thousands of kittens and puppies from living short lives on the streets."



# Rehoming Could you take me home?



These wonderful pets are in search of a second chance

## TINK

At the ripe old age of 15, you'll normally find me napping in my cosy igloo bed here at the cattery. But I wish I had a quiet corner in a warm home. A lady like me should be relaxing in her retirement.

**Burford, 0300 777 1849**



## MOLLY AND LILLY

We've been best friends for years, and hope there's someone out there who can give us both a fresh start. We're 21 and 23 years old, looking for a home as non-ridden companions where we're happy to live out all year.

**Burford, 0300 777 1846**



## LUNA

Relaxation and fuss with friends here at the centre is my favourite. Oh, and the odd zoomie when I'm feeling energetic. But I'd love to find a quiet home to call my own. I promise I have lots of love to give to my new family!

**Suffolk, 0300 777 1843**



## TWIGLET

I'm a handsome chap, don't ya think? I have a sweet personality to match but it's not bringing me much luck. I've been searching for a new home with a neutered lady bunny for a while now. Fancy setting me up?

**Hertfordshire, 0300 777 1844**



## COLA

I've been here a long old while now. But look at my face! I don't know why. I'm only one year old but I'm told some medical needs I have might be putting off a new family. All I want is a human to love and snuggle with.

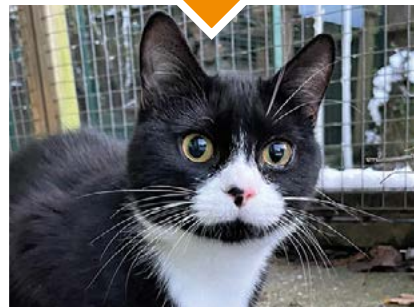
**Hertfordshire, 0300 777 1844**



## EARL

My life didn't start well. I was on the streets of Romania before I found myself in the UK, in a warm home. Now I find myself in search of a new family again. I'm a good boy, I just need help building confidence.

**Manchester, 0300 777 1852**



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



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Greyhounds continue to die on and off the track. It needs to stop

# It's time to end **GREYHOUND RACING**

The industry hasn't listened to welfare advice. It's time to stop dog exploitation and retire racing greyhounds for good...

**G**reyhounds are family pets. Gentle souls, they're not here for our entertainment.

Yet every year, thousands of injuries are recorded in the 'sport'.

Since 2018, the racing industry's own statistics revealed more than 2,000 dogs died on licensed tracks.

For many years we at Blue Cross have worked with the racing industry to try to raise animal welfare

standards both on and off the track, and while some concessions have been made or pledged, unfortunately too many of our recommendations have not been acted on.

We can't continue to call for significant changes and see no action taken. We're now calling for an end to greyhound racing across the UK.

## **POPULARITY WANING**

The nations of the UK make up four of only 10 countries where greyhound racing still takes place legally. But its popularity here is waning, too.

A recent YouGov poll\* found 91 per cent of the British public do not follow or participate in greyhound racing at all. And statistics show that race track crowds are overwhelmingly

Join us as we call on the UK governments to outlaw greyhound racing

made up of owners, trainers and representatives of bookmakers.

The practice is inherently risky. While sighthounds – hound types with incredible sight, also including whippets and salukis – have been bred for generations to run at great speeds, moving at pace around an oval track purpose-built to maximise excitement does not come naturally.

The high pressures and asymmetrical forces that greyhounds' bodies are put under while travelling around anti-clockwise bends means injuries in the left foreleg and right hindleg are common.

With up to six high prey-drive dogs in full chase mode in the same curved space, track congestion is part and parcel of the practice. And when uneven forces load their bodies at the bends, the dogs have two options to avoid falling; slow down, or run wider. It's at this point the often-fatal collisions happen.

## FATALITIES

At speeds of up to 45mph, slowing down or stopping in time is often not possible. A New Zealand study\*\* found 68 per cent of injuries and 75 per cent of fatalities occurred at, or approaching, the first bend.

Faster track conditions directly result in increased injuries, but over the last few years British tracks have moved to the faster surface of sand, replacing slower grass tracks.

Away from the tracks, too many greyhounds are suffering from puppyhood to retirement.

Significant welfare concerns remain around kennelling, standards of care,

and the travel involved in the industry. These relate to space – or lack thereof – provided in kennels, lighting levels, exercise opportunities, diet, dental and veterinary care.

Despite this, we're not seeking an overnight ban. Shutting down the industry immediately would leave many thousands of dogs homeless at once, and many rehoming dogs would be euthanised.

Rather, we're looking to bring greyhound racing to an end over a five-year period, allowing the industry to wind down while working with dog welfare organisations to ensure the safety, welfare and rehabilitation of all racing dogs, and find them loving retirement homes.

Instead of often cold, cramped kennels, let's give them loving homes with comfy beds. Instead of isolation, let's give them the chance to socialise naturally with other dogs on a walk.

It's time to retire racing greyhounds for good.



Greyhounds make wonderful family pets

## RACING FACTS

# 2,392

deaths from 2018 to 2022

# 22,284

injuries from 2018 to 2022

# 91%

of the British public neither follow or participate in greyhound racing

Just

# 14%

of the British public feel greyhound racing is important to British culture

# 2-3yrs

is the average age of a racing greyhound



Bluebell hadn't known life outside of kennels

## From RACETRACK to RESCUE

Blue Cross helps ex-racers ease into retirement, writes Animal Welfare Assistant Sophie Stewart-Smith...

**M** eet Frog and Bluebell. This beautiful greyhound pair arrived in Blue Cross care when they came to the end of their racing careers.

Currently being looked after at our Hertfordshire rehoming centre,\* neither has known a life outside of the industry; outside of kennels, the racetrack, and travelling in between.

Our role here is to help the pair prepare for their future as much-loved pets, enjoying both the comforts of home and venturing out in public.

### NEW EXPERIENCES

As with all pets who come into our care, ex-racing greyhounds receive a vet check on arrival so we can treat any potential health problems.

Neither Frog nor Bluebell are neutered, so we will arrange for this to happen. Bluebell has come into season while she's with us so we're carefully having to plan her exercise spots to avoid her scent driving the males wild. This does present a logistical challenge but it's part and parcel of caring for dogs in a centre environment.

Today we're introducing Frog to a sofa. Despite their image as

\*at time of writing. By the time of publication we expect they will have loving new homes.

energetic athletes, greyhounds are actually typically lazy souls who love nothing more than lounging around in comfort.

But having only ever lived in industry kennels, Frog is initially a little unsure of the sofa. He looks at me sitting on it while I reassure him he's very welcome to join me. The soft cushions are an unusual feeling under his feet.

Fortunately he's not shy of food, so a few treats help to encourage him. Once he's comfy, he likely won't want to move. We always advise people taking on a greyhound that they may need to invest in a new sofa!

## BRIGHT FUTURE

Of Frog and Bluebell, we expect Bluebell to find a new family first. Black male greyhounds tend to be one of the hardest types of dog to rehome so Frog has his looks against him. I hope people can see past his fur colour and recognise the sweet, cheeky, gentle soul he is.

He loves being around people and will make a wonderful addition to



Sophie with Frog. She hopes a new family recognise his gentle soul soon

a family – as long as they don't have small furry pets.

Greyhounds have an innate prey drive, and it's not something that can be trained out. For this reason, we advise that most greyhounds need

to be walked on-lead – with some muzzled too – unless in a securely fenced area. Many sighthounds love off-lead running so hiring an enclosure can allow them this fun time to run and explore as they please.

## WHY DO GREYHOUNDS MAKE SUCH GREAT PETS?

When people think of greyhounds, they often conjure up images of super-fast, competitive dogs speeding off in pursuit of a small fluffy animal. So it's no surprise that we assume they are high maintenance, aloof and need huge amounts of exercise.

"They really don't", says Kirsten Findlay, Rehoming Supervisor at our Hertfordshire site. "A couple of short

walks a day or a blast in an enclosed area and they will then spend most of it sleeping in random positions, legs in the air!"

Greyhounds tend to be extremely gentle with people and make excellent family pets. Although ex-racers have spent most of their lives in kennels before retirement, with a bit of support with housetraining and introduction to the sounds of a home,

like the TV and washing machine, they can adapt very quickly.

Sighthounds do love to run and some enjoy chasing after small furry things. This means that they may need to be muzzled and on a lead.

Most greyhounds will not be suitable to live with cats, but there are always exceptions. If you have a cat and want to adopt a greyhound, talk to a rescue charity like Blue Cross.



## LOVE AND SUPPORT works wonders

Only ever having known his own breed, Amos needed support after retiring from the track...

**A**fter a chance meeting as a girl led to a lifetime love affair with greyhounds for Kit Lendon, as soon as she bought her first house it became ex-racer Davey's home too.

Later, another ex-racer, Holly, joined the family. But when Davey passed away, Holly was bereft without a brother, and it was she who chose Amos at the greyhound rescue centre.

Kit and her partner were aware that Amos could be reactive to other dogs, and that he'd already been returned by another owner, but he and Holly were so comfortable around each other that they decided to give him a go.



“  
We’ve started to do an ‘on me’ - where he’ll look and focus completely on me and we’ll hold that. We’ll have that moment together and in that time it’s just him and me.  
”

Amos now enjoys home comforts rather than cold kennels



Friends Amos and Holly with Kit

## REHABILITATION

The next day they visited the centre again to take him for a walk, and the extent of his reactivity became clear. On seeing a staffie far in the distance, Amos became anxious.

Kit says: “We had spinning, we had barking, we had yelping, we had all manner of strange noises. He was very, very, agitated. I thought, crikey, that is probably one of the most reactive greyhounds I’ve ever seen.”

Soon after adopting Amos, Kit turned to the Blue Cross Behaviour and Training Service, a new service available nationwide via video or phone consultation, with our expert team. Kit chatted to Becky Skyrme,

Blue Cross Animal Behaviourist, about their aim of being able to take Amos out without him being really stressed. Becky listened to Kit’s concerns and observed Amos’s behaviour around other dogs, before coming up with a plan of action.

“We’ve started to do an ‘on me’”, Kit explains. “Where he’ll look and focus completely on me and we’ll hold that. We’ll have that moment together and in that time it’s just him and me. And then whatever else is going on, whatever distractions are happening, he can focus on me.”

This instruction keeps Amos distracted from other dogs and keeps his arousal levels down, allowing him

to cope with the situation. This, along with other tips and methods in his behaviour plan, has helped Amos come on leaps and bounds over the past seven months.

Kit says: “A lot of the time we can have a really peaceful walk with no whining, no barking, no lunging, which, to be honest with you, when we first met him... I just thought that would be a dream.

“I can’t tell you how much of a massive difference [the service has] made. The advice that they’ve given us and the help and guidance that they’ve given us has made me much more confident to take Amos out and be able to face the world together.”

Find out more at [bluecross.org.uk/behaviour-and-training-service](https://bluecross.org.uk/behaviour-and-training-service)



# GOT A FEW HOURS TO SPARE?

## VOLUNTEER FOR BLUE CROSS

Thousands of volunteers give up their time to help us support pets. They are the friendly face of Blue Cross within their communities. Whether helping at dog shows, chatting to local businesses, baking for a bake sale, or supporting our runners at cheering points, we would love you to join our Community and Events Team.

### Available roles include:

- **Online Data Researcher**  
- Researching fundraising ideas
- **Community Fundraiser**  
- Supporting local activities
- **Community Pet Hero**  
- Placing collection boxes
- **Oxford Half Marathon**  
- Cheer Team supporting runners  
- Event Photographer



Pets change lives  
We change theirs

**If you can only commit to a few hours a day, our volunteering roles are flexible to fit with your lifestyle.**

**For further information on volunteering opportunities please visit [bluecross.org.uk/volunteer](http://bluecross.org.uk/volunteer) or email [events@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:events@bluecross.org.uk)**

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



Letters



# We love to hear from you

Please send us your news and pictures of your pets!



## CAPTURING HEARTS

We acquired our lovely Simba from Blue Cross in 2012 and he has captured many hearts since, including that of our other cat, Leo, who rubs up against him and licks him. He is still very active but loves to lie by the fire when it's cold.

**Pippa Bourne**

## PATCH IS LOVING HIS NEW LIFE

Having read the latest magazine issue, I thought I must send in a photo of our old man Patch, who we adopted from you in April 2021, during the pandemic, and on my son Lewis's birthday (26 April).

Patch is now 16 and doing really well, bless him. He loves nothing more than finding the best place in the house for a spot of sunbathing – and also likes licking us a lot!

We are so very glad we adopted him – he is a truly sweet, and lovely natured cat.

Thank you!

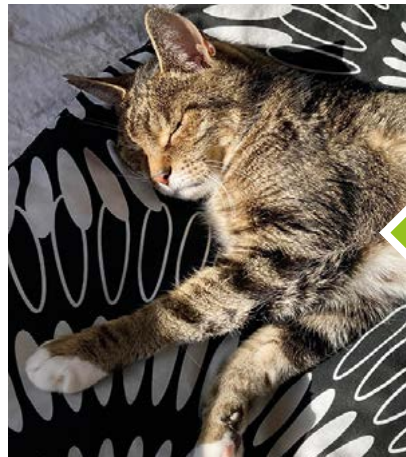
**Sam and Lewis Heggie**



## 'WONDERFUL ADDITION' TO FAMILY

I was looking at the photos in your magazine of other lovely pets from Blue Cross and thought I'd share mine. This is Clover and Chive, two fluffy boys we adopted from Burford in April 2021. They can often be found binkying round the garden and eating my herbs. Chive is very sociable and enjoys flopping on the sofa, Clover is a gentle soul and very sweet. They are such a wonderful addition to our family. Thank you for choosing us!

**Janine Fox**



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

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

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# Brave horse's **FRESH START**

Innocent Pilgrim was set on fire in a barbaric attack which nearly killed him...

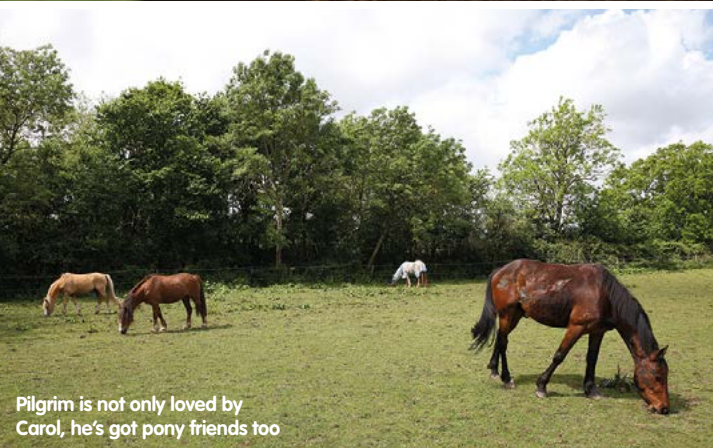
**A**t Blue Cross we sadly deal with the aftermath of animals who have suffered truly horrific abuse, but it's not often we are able to bear witness to the events as they unfolded.

Grainy CCTV footage documents the moment Pilgrim's life changed forever, and it makes for very distressing viewing. Two figures, their identities obscured by hoods, pour flammable liquid over an innocent horse tied to the railings of the garden, and set him alight.

The vile attack, which took place in north Dublin, Ireland, in 2020 is deliberate and calculated; meant as a warning message to the horse's owner amid a bitter gang feud, the Irish police believe.



Pilgrim suffered horrific burns in the attack, which left scars all over his body



Pilgrim is not only loved by Carol, he's got pony friends too



In a matter of moments, the undeserving and wholly innocent Pilgrim – aged just two years at the time – becomes a victim of horrendous suffering. His face, ear, neck, flank and hind quarters all burned. No one has been prosecuted in connection with the attack.

But now, two years on, Pilgrim is not only safe from harm, but he is loved, thanks to Blue Cross finding him a home.

When we took a call from Claire Owens, Equine Welfare and Rehoming Manager at the Dublin Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (DSPCA), which saved and rehabilitated Pilgrim, we knew we had to help.

Claire wanted to find him a home well away from the location of the attack to give him a fresh start. She was one of the first to meet Pilgrim when the charity's inspectors – who operate similarly to RSPCA inspectors in England and Wales – brought the injured horse to the DSPCA shelter. She remembers: "His head was very, very swollen and he was just completely shutdown."

## COMPLEX

The DSPCA veterinary team worked closely with equine vet specialists from the University College Dublin veterinary hospital to help manage his wounds, due to their complexity.

Injured in the summer, his burns were at real risk of serious infection, so for the first four weeks the team kept him stabled.

But feisty Pilgrim felt the strong call of the outdoors, and so for his welfare, the care team decided to

turn him out during the day; meaning he needed constant monitoring.

Treating his wounds with medicated cream was stressful for Pilgrim – he must have found it so painful – but Claire discovered he loved to be groomed on his unaffected side and used this to gain his confidence. Slowly but surely, and with Claire's tenderness and care, Pilgrim began to trust humans.

Claire says: "He's a horse that taught me an awful lot of patience, and his saving grace was his love of people and despite the burns, he

“

**I thought it would suit him to come here where there was never going to be any pressure for him to do anything other than be a horse and be happy, which hopefully is what we've achieved.**

”

loved being groomed, where it wasn't sore. That's how I taught him to stand and was able to get a headcollar on; I just did that basic handling."

Pilgrim travelled to our Blue Cross Burford rehoming centre in Oxfordshire, where our dedicated team continued his rehabilitation and began the search for his new home.

## SANCTUARY

Now, Pilgrim has found sanctuary in the south of England with new owner, Carol Hunkin. His burns, no longer

painful, have turned to scars that only hint at his sad beginning, and he is happy. Part of a five-strong herd of rescue ponies, Pilgrim is free to enjoy a carefree life.

Carol says: "A four-year-old with his kind of medical history, which means that he might never be able to do anything else in his life, needs a secure home, I think.

"I thought it would suit him to come here where there was never going to be any pressure for him to do anything other than be a horse and be happy, which hopefully is what we've achieved."

Though more confident than Carol expected when he arrived, Pilgrim – six months on – is now more relaxed, less fidgety, and seems truly at home. And no signs of trauma have emerged. Pilgrim is remarkable.

Carol says: "How could you not fall in love with him? I mean, he's just gorgeous, isn't he? He's got such a lovely, open, forgiving nature despite what's happened to him."

## FORGIVING

She continues: "His story made me think it'd be right to take him on because ponies can come here, and I just want them to live as naturally as possible. I don't necessarily want them to do anything else.

"They already do a job for me by coming here and being themselves, and getting me outside, exercising, and spending time getting to know them. They heal us really!"

And now, Carol is encouraging others to take on a rescue animal. She adds: "What it brings is incredible." We couldn't agree more.

News

# Bitesize stories

All the latest news from Blue Cross



## Once-bullied cat is happy now

**A**fter being bullied by a group of children as a stray, Lizard's trust in humans could have been shattered. But he's still so full of love.

The young tabby, thought to be about one, was thankfully saved by a member of the public who then ensured he got the care he so desperately needed at our Hertfordshire rehoming centre.

Sarah Miller, Animal Welfare Assistant, says: "Lizard was hanging around an area and some teenagers were throwing stones at him, and then someone witnessed him being put in a bin."

Unsurprisingly, Lizard was very nervous initially. But it didn't take him long to come out of his shell.

Sarah continues: "He did hide in the corner of his pen for the first few days. And he does still find loud noises or banging sounds frightening.

"But he's really come out of himself and is a real sweet little character. He will now want to sit on your lap and loves lots of fuss."

And it didn't take long for a new family to fall in love with Lizard, either. He's now enjoying life in a new home where he's busy exploring the surrounding countryside in between plenty of fuss.

### SAFE AND LOVED

A puppy found tied to a lamppost in the cold and rain has been found a loving home.

Boris, a 10-month-old boxer-cross, was found by the local dog warden and admitted into Blue Cross Burford's care in April.

Luckily, he was healthy and just needed flea and worming treatment and some training with the team, before we quickly found him a new home.





## Bereft degu's new friends

A degu, left sad and alone after both his brother and friend died, has found new companions.

Ash, two, arrived at Blue Cross Burford needing the company of his own kind, as all degus do.

He was neutered – so he could potentially be rehomed with females – and given lots of fun activities like foraging to keep him busy.

### LOVING HOME

Ash soon found a loving home with a group of female degus, who he was gradually bonded with.

Owner Hana Rulc says: "He is excited to be handled and often calls you to the cage when he feels you don't give him enough attention, in which case you get the angry degu grunt noises and have to pick him up immediately. He keeps talking to us and to all our other degus."

Katie Stiles, Animal Welfare Assistant at Burford, adds: "We were very sad to see Ash leave as he was such a lovely character but so happy that he found a loving home with companions."



## NEGLECTED HORSE

A once-neglected horse has put his sad past behind him.

Felix was overworked and injured when he was rescued by the RSPCA, which prosecuted his previous owner, last year.

The 14-year-old thoroughbred type arrived at our Burford horse unit with both mental and physical scars.

He spent almost a year in our care, during which time we had to carefully introduce him to other horses as he had always lived alone and was under-socialised.

Julia Bartlett, Horse Welfare Assistant, says: "We found he thrived off companionship and we slowly worked with him to integrate him into bigger herds.

"Felix is the most lovable horse who settled really well and enjoyed routine and a one-to-one connection with his trainer. It was so rewarding to see how he blossomed in our care."

Felix is now enjoying life with his new family, which includes a horse friend called Ice.

"We're so happy to have given him a loving new home after his ordeal," adds owner Heidi.



## PADDY THE RAT

An escaped pet rat has been rescued after hiding in a car for nine days.

Paddy was being brought to Blue Cross Devon when he managed to chew through a fabric carrier and scurry under the vehicle's dashboard.

We tried to lure him out with treats for two days before the car was taken to a local garage. After a further seven days, a mechanic – who Paddy was named after – finally captured him.

He needed treatment for dehydration and electrical burns on his tail and feet but is now in good health and enjoying life in a new home.

Meanwhile, the car was written off as Paddy had chewed through so many electrical wires.



## Whatever happened to?

Rem, featured in the spring issue of *For Pets*, was one of the dogs rescued and rehabilitated by the Blue Cross Ukraine Pet Welfare Fund...



### REM

Despite all the horror he'd endured, Rem never lost his sweet, sunny disposition. He was one of 30 dogs displaced when Russians bombed a Ukrainian pet shelter last year.

He was rescued by Save the Dogs in Cernavoda, Romania, and his care was paid for by the Blue Cross Ukraine Pet Welfare Fund.

Now called Remi, we're pleased to report that he is enjoying life in a new home in Sweden.

His new family, Ann and Lars, say: "He was a bit cautious and scared at the beginning but now he enjoys long walks in the forest every day and he likes to meet new people who can pet him. Once you start petting him, he doesn't want you to stop."

What they love most about Remi is his calmness and willingness to learn, they added.

### INJURED CAT

Stray cat Elsie was hiding under a shed, injured and alone, when a dog sniffed her out.

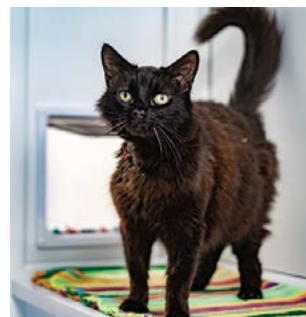
Thankfully, she soon arrived at our Victoria animal hospital in central London, where our team noticed an open wound on her neck that had begun to heal.

Vets believe the scab was the result of untreated eczema, rather than an injury, and prescribed soothing cream to treat it. She was also a little underweight.

Elsie, who is around two years old, was transferred to our Hertfordshire rehoming centre for continued treatment, with lots of treats and fuss to keep it positive.

As she had been neutered, we know that Elsie had a home at some stage but without a microchip, no owner could be traced.

But, after 36 days in our care, she found a loving family to start the next happy chapter of life with.







## Abandoned newborn puppy **SAVED**

**T**iny Mitzi wouldn't have survived if our team hadn't intervened.

The German shepherd puppy was abandoned aged only three days old alongside her terrified mum, Mila.

They were taken to the local authority kennels by a man who said he found the pair abandoned under a bush. They soon found themselves in the expert care of Blue Cross Burford.

We suspect Mila had been used for breeding, with her worried nature also indicating a sad past.

"She was so scared," says Rachel

Hazley, Rehabilitation Trainer and Behaviour Advisor. "She would just cower in the back of her kennel and bark or growl out of fear. It took two weeks to get near to her."

### **PETRIFIED**

Normally, with pets as petrified as Mila, the team would take a complete step back. But, when Mitzi was no longer getting enough milk, there was no time left to wait.

"Mitzi would have died if we didn't intervene. We had to start to provide supplementary feeding," says Rachel.

The displacement, trauma, and stress Mila had endured was likely behind her struggle to mother.

But, thanks to the sleepless nights, hard work and dedication of our team, Mitzi survived, and Mila learned that humans could be kind.

Both are now in happy, loving homes where they'll always be safe.





Buddy, the last Blue Cross winner (middle) and Bugsy (below) and Tiny (far left), another two of Stephen's commissions



# WIN! A professional portrait of your pet

**A** professional animal portraitist is offering one lucky reader the chance to bring their pet to life in art.

Official Blue Cross artist Stephen Yorke will create an A4 watercolour or pencil portrait of a pet, drawn from a photo, for the competition\* winner.

Stephen has kindly been donating 10 per cent of all commission made from any drawing or painting of an animal to our charity for three years.

Prices start at £395 for an A4 head and shoulders portrait.

Visit [yorkefineart.com](http://yorkefineart.com) or email [stephenyorkeartist@gmail.com](mailto:stephenyorkeartist@gmail.com)

**Chris Casey was the lucky winner of a £2,000 voucher for a pet-friendly Sofology sofa featured in our spring edition. Congratulations!**

## HOW TO ENTER

Answer the following question to be in with a chance of winning:

On pages 14 and 15, we brought you the story of an inseparable pair of rabbits in search of a new home. What are their names?

- Daphne and Fred
- Groot and Wilma
- Daphne and Groot

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

**Freepost BLUE CROSS FOR PETS**

Or, enter online at [bluecross.org.uk/forpets](http://bluecross.org.uk/forpets)

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Closing date 30 November 2023  
\*Strictly one entry per household.

\*Terms and conditions apply to this competition. The prize is for one A4 head and shoulders portrait in watercolour or pencil. The prize will be sent to the winner in February 2024. \*\*Blue Cross respects your privacy and will keep your information safe and secure and will only use it in accordance with our Privacy Policy. We will not sell, rent or share your personal data with other organisations for their marketing purposes. We may use your data for profiling purposes to make future communications more relevant to you. To see more about how we will use your information visit [bluecross.org.uk/privacy](http://bluecross.org.uk/privacy). You can change your preferences at any time by contacting our Supporter Care Team on 0300 790 9903 or email [info@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:info@bluecross.org.uk)

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- 2 Hammersmith
- 3 Merton
- 4 Victoria

## Our pet care clinics

- 5 Derby
- 6 York

## Our rehoming units and centres

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



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

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

### Pet Bereavement 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:** [pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk)

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