

FOR PETS

The magazine for Blue Cross supporters

SPRING 2020

A WORLD UNLOCKED

DEAF DALMATIAN PUPPY'S LIFE IS TURNED AROUND

Rescue horse gives owner hope

Cat locked in cupboard rescued

Scared guinea pigs saved



Pets change lives
We change theirs



Pets change lives
We change theirs



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COVER STORY

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Deaf puppy Dylan gets a fresh start

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WELCOME

As the country prepares to mark 75 years since VE day, this issue honours the many animals that helped Britain in its hour of need, as well as the Blue Cross people who cared for pets injured or left homeless by the Blitz. On pages 18 to 21 you'll find out about hero pets such as the dog who dived into the sea to save his owner after their ship was torpedoed, and read how our vet hospitals performed emergency surgery by candlelight. Often, Blue Cross workers put their own lives on the line to dig out animals buried in the rubble by devastating bomb blasts. We did all of this because we exist to be there for any pet that needs us, as we still are today. And, because we believe in pets' tremendous ability to change the lives of those that love them; and this issue is full of shining examples of just that.

Aimee Brannen, Editor



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A WORLD UNLOCKED

Dalmatian puppy Dylan came to Blue Cross confused, scared and frustrated as nobody knew he was deaf, but we gave him the diagnosis and fresh start he needed...





Dylan training with Hannah and (right) Jasmine

Trapped in a world of silence, the first 11 months of Dylan's life must have been a bewildering time.

Oblivious to the fact he was completely deaf, his owners were unable to train him – and the poor pup couldn't understand what was expected of him. He had no idea what was right or wrong.

And in May last year, after months of frustration on both sides, the dalmatian arrived at our Tiverton rehoming centre in need of a new home as his family could no longer cope.

It was immediately apparent to our team that Dylan had severe hearing problems, and they soon established that he was completely deaf; a diagnosis confirmed by a vet.

SIGN LANGUAGE

So, our team immediately started using sign language to kick start Dylan's training and enable him to understand the world that had, up until then, seemed all too overwhelming.

Amazingly, the clever boy made huge progress within a matter

of days, largely thanks to Animal Welfare Assistant, Jasmine Coles.

Centre Manager, Hannah Miell, said: "He didn't know any commands when he came to us. Jasmine put a lot of effort into his training and he learnt to sit and lay down in just one weekend.

"Once he started getting feedback as to what we wanted from him and how to get it right, the whole world started to make a lot more sense to him.

"It's important to remain natural with dogs like Dylan and continue to talk to them even though they can't hear you; your face will change as you express how you feel, and the dog will be able to read that. They also get a lot from your body language and gestures."

NEW START

He remained at the centre for nearly three weeks, during which time he mastered the basic commands and grew in confidence.

It wasn't long before his face on our website caught the eye of Jude and Mark Bowers.

They had been contemplating getting a four-legged friend to join their family for a while, but with son Cole now settled into secondary school life, it felt like the right time.

And, having had a deaf dalmatian when she was a child, Jude knew that Dylan was the dog for them.

Within days, the family was embarking on the 250-mile round trip from their Berkshire home to meet Dylan at the centre, and soon brought him home.



“

Once he started getting feedback as to what we wanted from him and how he can get it right, the whole world started to make a lot more sense to him

Hannah Miell,
Tiverton centre manager

”

CONFIDENT

At first, he was unsure of many things, so settling him into family life wasn't without its challenges – but, nearly a year on, he's confident, happy and living life to the full.

Having missed out on so much during his puppyhood, Dylan is still very much a youngster at heart – but

his training is continuing well.

"He's just great," said Mark. "The hand signals are going okay. We just do the basics."

And despite the number of odd socks that have gone missing since Dylan's arrival, his doting family wouldn't change their much-loved pet for the world.

FAMILY TIME

Dylan has brought them closer together as a family and has given them the excuse they needed to get out and enjoy the great outdoors more.

"It's great to get out and about and have a reason to do that. I always used to like to go for walks before but always felt like a bit of an idiot without a dog," said Jude.

"When he's calm and lovely, and that's most of the time, he's just the best dog in the world."

Jasmine added: "It's such a fantastic reminder that if you put the effort and time in, you can get a dog that is truly amazing!"

"Although we miss Dylan, we are so happy for him and his family."



Dylan with his new family

FOUR COMMON HAND SIGNALS FOR DEAF DOGS



SIT

Move your palm towards your chest

1



STAY

Hold your hand out with your palm facing your dog

2



GOOD DOG

Use a thumbs up to give your dog praise

3



TOUCH

Hold your hand flat, out to your side

4





‘WE RESCUED EACH OTHER’

When Jasmine and her new owner met, both were struggling to cope – but, together, they found the light at the end of the tunnel...

It just felt like she understood,” said Amanda Gaughran, of her Blue Cross rescue horse Jasmine.

When the 56-year-old rehomed the cob in 2014, she was on the brink. Her beloved daughter, Genna, had died 18 months earlier from a brain tumour, aged 26, and the crippling grief left her deeply depressed, at times suicidal.

Desperate to help Amanda, husband Ed and son Phillip encouraged her to get a rescue horse to give her a focus.

The family already kept two horses in the stable yard attached to their Norfolk home, but these were ridden by showjumper Phillip. And Amanda was keen to get back into riding, having loved horses since her childhood.

She approached our Rolleston centre and they knew that Jasmine, who was rescued along with 70 other mistreated horses, had the potential to be a perfect match. Amanda needed no convincing.

A LIFELINE

As it turned out, the demons of Jasmine’s past meant that she could not be ridden as hoped, but she became so much more than Amanda could have ever imagined. She was a lifeline when Amanda needed it the most.

"I'd go in there and cry in her mane and give her a cuddle, and she'd nuzzle me, as if to say: 'everything's going to be okay, mum'."





"I didn't realise how poorly I had got until I had to leave the job that I really liked," said Amanda.

"I had got myself in a right state. I was at home a lot on my own and the other horses would look at me as if to say: 'what's the matter with you?'"

She continued: "But Jasmine seemed to understand. I'd go in there and cry in her mane and give her a cuddle, and she'd nuzzle me, as if to say: 'everything's going to be okay, mum.'"

"She seemed to feel what you were feeling and understand what you were going through; maybe because she'd been through something similar herself."

OVERCOMING FEARS

At that time, Jasmine was a shell of the horse she is today. Many things scared her and, if spooked by something, she would shake in fear.

Nobody knows what trauma lies in her past, but when she arrived at Blue Cross, she was severely malnourished.

Amanda said: "The way I described her when she came to us was depressed, and that's how I had got, and the anxiety that went with it."

Slowly but surely, though, the real Jasmine began to shine through, thanks to her bond with Amanda.



Amanda said: "Gradually, over the years, she has become an absolute poppet and very confident in her own skin. You still can't ride her, she panics, so we just let Jasmine be Jasmine. She's an amazing horse – lively and cheeky."

FRIENDS

Jasmine also enjoys spending time with best friends Chucky and Smudge, who also share their stable yard with the family's two other horses, Alvin and Freddie.

Far from the quivering wreck she



once was, Jasmine has even entered show competitions with Phillip's wife Jean as her handler and has secured several rosettes.

And just like Jasmine has put her darkest days behind her, so has Amanda.

"Gradually I recovered from the depression," said Amanda.

"Although I miss Genna terribly, I know she wouldn't want my life to stop because of her."

She added: "Caring

for Jasmine gave me a purpose.

We rescued each other in our times of need."

“
Caring for Jasmine gave me a purpose. We rescued each other in our times of need
”



TERRIFIED GUINEA PIGS OVERCOME FEARS

When Pumba and Timon arrived at Blue Cross, they were terrified of being handled and were scared of grass.

The three-year-old friends came to us in a group of 32 guinea pigs given up by their owner who had become overwhelmed by caring for so many, and our centres around the country rushed to find space for them all.

But while most of the pets quickly found loving owners, poor Pumba and Timon were among the most timid of the group, and our Torbay centre in Devon has struggled to rehome them as a result.

Animal Welfare Assistant, Krystina

Murray, who has fostered the inseparable pair, said: "Because there were so many of them, the owner must not have had time to handle them much. When they first came to us, they needed a health check, and were screaming when they were picked up."

ONE STEP AT A TIME

It was a gradual process, but Krystina worked hard to put them more at ease with being handled.

She said: "They were terrified of me initially. When they first went on grass, they didn't know what to do. They just froze.

"It took them a few hours to get used to it. But I did things really slowly. I sat outside with them and let them come to me, and when I did pick them up, I used a towel with their scent on so they had a familiar smell when sitting on my lap."

Krystina added: "They are at a different foster carer's home now and getting on very well. They are indoors and being handled a lot more and enjoying grooming, so they have certainly made great progress."

Sadly, after nearly eight months in our care, the pair's search for a fresh start continues. We hope they will find an understanding home soon.

Can you give Pumba & Timon a home? Visit bluecross.org.uk/rehome/guinea-pig

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LEFT FOR DEAD

Locked away without any food or water, Jarvis was days – if not hours – away from death. Thankfully, he was found just in time and brought to Blue Cross...



Poor Jarvis was starving, thirsty and confused when he was found locked inside a cupboard in an abandoned flat.

He had already gone at least three days without any food or water after being left behind by his previous owners.

Thankfully, the landlord found the Burmese-cross behind a pile of clothes while clearing out the property and alerted our nearby centre in Torbay, Devon.

Had Jarvis not been found there and then, the alternative doesn't bear thinking about.

Jo Dempsey, Animal Welfare Assistant, said: "The landlord said the tenants had left the property about three days before Jarvis was found. He was very thin and we had to give him small meals four times a day to bulk him out a bit without him eating too much and getting poorly.

"But considering what he went through, Jarvis was the loveliest boy and just wanted attention and company."

NEW BEGINNINGS

It therefore didn't take the young cat, then aged between seven and 10 months old, long to find a loving family.

And after 10 days recuperating in our care, he went to live with Amy and Lionel Cassidy and their two daughters, Gracie, four, and Bella,

who is 18 months old. He was an instant hit with the children.

Amy said: "He settled in pretty quickly. We were worried about whether he would take to the girls, but I think he took to the girls more than us. He's really patient with Bella, he must know she's a baby."

Jarvis snoozes for much of the day but springs into life for playtime when Gracie arrives home from school, where she often draws pictures of her beloved pet.

He was still very thin when he arrived home with the family and was – quite understandably – scavenging for food following his horrific ordeal.

Amy said: "We couldn't believe what had happened to him. Not that it should happen to any cat, but he's so lovely it was such a shock."

A FAMILY COMPLETED

Now, Jarvis is a healthy weight and has put the demons of his past behind him.

And for Amy and Lionel, who lost their previous cat, Stitch, in an accident several years ago, the affectionate boy has made their house a home again.

"He was definitely needed," said Amy. "He's completed the family.

"We miss him when he's not around, like when we're on holiday."

Lionel said: "There was definitely a void that he's filled."

"He's perfect, he's made for us," added Amy.





SECOND CHANCES

Dennis was fighting for breath when he arrived at Blue Cross due to problems associated with his flat-faced breed, but the English bulldog is now enjoying a fresh start...

A spirited English bulldog who was held back by a catalogue of breed-related health problems is now living life to the full in a new home.

Dennis arrived at our Kimpton rehoming centre in October 2018, aged two, because he didn't get along with his previous owners' other dog, but our team quickly realised that he was very poorly.

English bulldogs are classed as a brachycephalic breed. This means they are shorter-nosed and flat-faced, and often suffer from breathing problems as a result.



IRRESPONSIBLE BREEDING

A range of other health issues from skin complaints to eye problems are also common among the dogs, which are often bred irresponsibly to meet demand.

Dennis had already had surgery to widen his nose and soft palate, but it hadn't helped enough.

Sarah Miller, Animal Welfare Assistant, said: "Like many other brachycephalic breeds, Dennis's welfare and health were compromised as a result of his flat nose and face. He was struggling to breathe and could only run for

around five to 15 minutes before he collapsed due to a lack of oxygen.

"On top of this, he had very sore eyes and skin because of excess skin folds, and an underbite."

STRUGGLING TO BREATHE

Dennis needed surgery at our Victoria animal hospital in London on his nostrils to help him breathe, as well as on both eyes to correct a genetic condition known as entropion, where the eyelids grow inwards. Every blink must have been agony for him.

Dennis was due to have further

surgery on his soft palate and the skin rolls on his face, but vets decided to leave this when he began to have minor seizures during his recovery from the first operation.

Instead, the team put him up for rehoming in the hope that a family would take him just as he was – and Annie and Paul Hutchings weren't put off by his medical issues.

Dennis, now four, has lived with the couple and their foster son, Ronnie, in Bedfordshire, for a year.

HAPPY NOW

His vibrant character continues to shine through and he has had no further seizures. The only treatment he needs at present is daily drops to stop his eyes from getting too dry.

Annie said: "He seems to be doing everything that he wants to do. And if he doesn't want to do something, he'll just stop. If he's had enough, he slows down."

They couldn't be happier to have Dennis in their lives, and nor can he.

"He's loveable and playful," said Paul. "He's brought us lots of fun and laughter, for sure."

Annie added: "He's got his own little character. And it's made us come together more."

SOLE SURVIVOR

One lonely kitten is alive thanks to a quick-thinking cat lover and Blue Cross vet care...

Simba was nameless when he entered the clinic with the man who saved his life.

The tiny kitten had been discovered the day before in a garden shed; the only survivor of a litter of four, with their mother nowhere in sight.

Mohammed Rajput received a call for help from a relative one Sunday when she made the upsetting discovery. The keen cat lover took the lonely kitten into his home and brought him straight to our Merton animal hospital the following day.

"Simba's eyes were watery, he had a runny nose and he was sneezing," said Blue Cross vet, Galla Remolins.

"Mohammed had been cleaning his eyes and handfeeding the kitten to help him gain strength, but knew he needed veterinary attention."

Galla diagnosed Simba with cat flu and gave Mohammed medication for his newly rescued pet. Cat flu can cause serious eye damage, and can even be fatal, so prompt vet treatment is essential. Galla weighed Simba and, importantly, discovered the youngster was a boy! On finding out, Mohammed named him Simba.

"Simba weighed less than half a kilo and was only about five weeks old when he was found," added Galla.

"He is lucky to have been discovered when he was, and to have an owner who cares about him so much."



Hundreds
of pets are
just waiting
to meet
you

COULD YOU TAKE ME HOME?

Can you give any of these Blue Cross pets a place in your heart and your home?

SHADOW AND STORM

We've heard that good things come in threes, but not in our case! We're a degu double act that will always keep you entertained and promise to snuggle up with you for a cuddle and snooze when we've worn ourselves out playing.

Hertfordshire, 0300 777 1490



ROBBIE AND ROSIE

Rosie here! Me and my best friend Robbie are full of mischief and fun. But we're struggling to find a home, as Robbie is scared of men. We've been through a lot in the past, you see. Are there any ladies out there with room for a pair of misfits like us?

Burford, 0300 777 1570



FRED

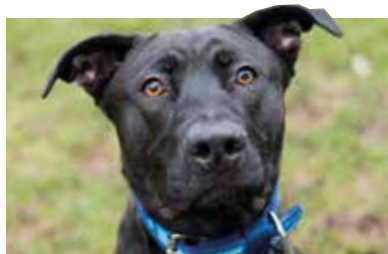
How do you do? I've been here a while now but, you see, it's because I'm quite particular about things. Some call me sassy, but I'm just a boy who knows what he wants – and that's lots of open space to explore around my home. Do you have some land to spare me?

Lewknor, 0300 777 1500

BEAR

Hiya, I'm Bear – a German shepherd with a bit of American bulldog thrown in. At only two years old, I'm a spring chicken with plenty more to learn. Could you help me continue my training and give me the love and stability I crave?

Bromsgrove, 0300 777 1460



JOEY

I may look cute and small, but I'm not your average little lap dog. I wish I was. I need lots of help and patience to build my confidence. My friends here say that I'm a bit of a 'project', whatever that means. Here and waiting for my perfect match!

Tiverton, 0300 777 1560



GRACE

Hey, I'm Grace. I've been here for nearly two years, now. I'm a good girl who loves attention and just need a home where I'll be a companion to a human or two, and some other pony friends. It's not too much to ask, is it?

Rolleston, 0300 777 1520

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

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ANIMALS IN WAR

As the 75th anniversary of VE Day and the end of the Second World War approaches in May, we remember the role our charity played in one of the world's darkest times...

As soon as Neville Chamberlain's declaration sounded over the wireless in September 1939, we knew our services would be in great need at a time of war once again, as they had been during the First World War.

Our Charlton quarantine kennels in Blackheath were put to work providing shelter for the animals of war, just as they had done two decades before.

During the First World War they had housed dogs who had become faithful friends to soldiers on the battlefields and were brought back to the UK as pets, until their new owners could collect them.

REFUGEES

This time, we took in the animals of European refugees whose pets were often all they had left of their former lives, and looked after them until the six-month quarantine period was up and they could be reunited with their loving owners. We also had many foster carers outside of London so that pets could be 'evacuated' away from danger.

We looked after animals belonging to servicemen and women – some could not afford private kennelling



In 1945 alone, Blue Cross rescued more than 208,000 animals across the country. We remember, with thanks, our vets and volunteers

fees and others had no one to leave their pets with while on service overseas.

When they came home on leave, owners were welcome to come and visit their pets and we witnessed many happy meetings, as well as joyful reunions after the war ended.

TORPEDOED

Those we looked after, fed, comforted and treated while their

owners were away on duty included a little dog called Judy, who had travelled with her sailor owner on ships and was torpedoed twice.

Understandably, she was described as a "frightened young lady" when she arrived with us in 1942, but within a few days she made friends with our staff and other dogs, and was much happier.

There was also a setter belonging to a couple fleeing Nazi-occupied France to join the resistance; all three were picked up by the Navy trying to cross the channel, and we fostered the dog for free.

BLITZ

During the Blitz, a powerful blast tore down the kennel's walls and fences, but we managed to round up all animals that were loose against a backdrop of falling bombs and gunfire before making repairs to ensure we could continue to help more pets. Several other Blue Cross locations suffered bomb damage.

The site later became a pet cemetery, which it remains to this day. Now known as The Old Blue Cross Pet Cemetery, it has 240 grave stones, many inscribed with moving tributes from their owners.

STRAY CATS

The stray cat population spiralled out of control during the war. Blue Cross issued special collars so the pets could be reunited with owners and called on the government to make cats wearing identification and registration the law. It was one of our many areas of political lobbying. We also asked the public to bring stray male cats to us for neutering. In one year alone, we did this for nearly 8,000 cats.

HEROES

Our brave staff and volunteers so often put their own lives on the line to save pets during the war. Among the many heroic stories, is the rescue of 11 horses trapped in a bombed building in central London. Bombs were still falling around them as staff and police saved the eight animals that had survived the blast.



BLUE CROSS MEDAL

Many stories of animal bravery emerged, and some were awarded the Blue Cross Medal. One of those was La Cloche the dog, who dived into the sea to save his owner, a French marine, after his ship had been torpedoed by a German submarine. The marine was pulled from the water, but a swell scuppered the dog's rescue. La Cloche was assumed drowned but was later found riding the waves with a log he had found, awaiting rescue.





KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON HELPING PETS

With a surge in demand for our Victoria animal hospital in central London, staff and volunteers worked day and night to relieve suffering and treat sick, injured and frightened animals.

The Blitz devastated the city and many long, exhausting hours were spent rescuing animals from the rubble and taking in those made homeless.

CANDLELIGHT

During the blackouts, pets arrived for treatment by candlelight. By the end of 1940, over 150,000 animals had been taken in, treated, found new homes or painlessly put to sleep if nothing more could be done. The number of pets helped grew to nearly 210,000 per year by 1945.

Although our Victoria hospital was built to treat sick pets, we opened our doors to considerable numbers of animals each night during the Blitz so their owners would know they were cared for as they made their way to air raid shelters.



AIR RAIDS

Our other branches offered this service too, and owners often made heartfelt pleas to us to find loving new homes for their pets if the worst should happen to them overnight. Sadly, our Hammersmith shelter alone had to do this for 16 animals.

We opened a veterinary clinic at a Salvation Army centre in the East End, offering free treatment to pets in need.

In the West Midlands, two cats aged 15 and 12, were buried alive when our Birmingham shelter was bombed. Ivy Slater, who ran the branch, kept digging and after nine and 11 days respectively, rescued both cats.

Our Camden Town branch treated a dog found buried under rubble for six weeks, surviving on rain trickling

through the cracks. He was on death's door but, against all odds and with devoted care, he pulled through.

A PROUD HISTORY

Today we're known as Blue Cross, but when our charity was founded in 1897 it was called Our Dumb Friends' League. We changed our name in 1950 in recognition of the vital work of our Blue Cross Fund, which helped animals during both world wars after first being set up to aid horses on the frontline during the 1912 Balkan War.

We are immensely proud of our heritage and each year we take part in official remembrance services to honour the brave men, women and animals who have fought and died in conflict.

We will remember them, always.

LOYAL COMPANIONS

Badger was found wandering the streets scared and alone, but arrived at our Newport rehoming unit just at the right time...



Watch Badger in action at
bluecross.org.uk/badger

Elwyn Parsons spends six days a week with his beloved wife at the nursing home where she now lives. By his feet, always, is his loyal companion, Badger.

The 74-year-old rehomed the jack russell from Blue Cross two years ago and the former stray immediately brought some joy back into his life following wife Carolyn's devastating dementia diagnosis.

She suffers from an aggressive form of the disease, which took hold when she was just 68 and left her needing full time residential care within two years.

At around the same time that Carolyn, now 74, went into care, the couple's much-loved dog, Dylan, passed away. Suddenly, home felt very empty for Elwyn.

He initially ruled out getting another pet but after two years of living alone, the former army quartermaster sergeant was missing the presence of a four-legged friend more than ever.

Elwyn said: "We always had dogs. Dylan broke my heart and I never thought I would have another dog after that. But I was watching a TV show about dogs and I thought I'd have a look around."

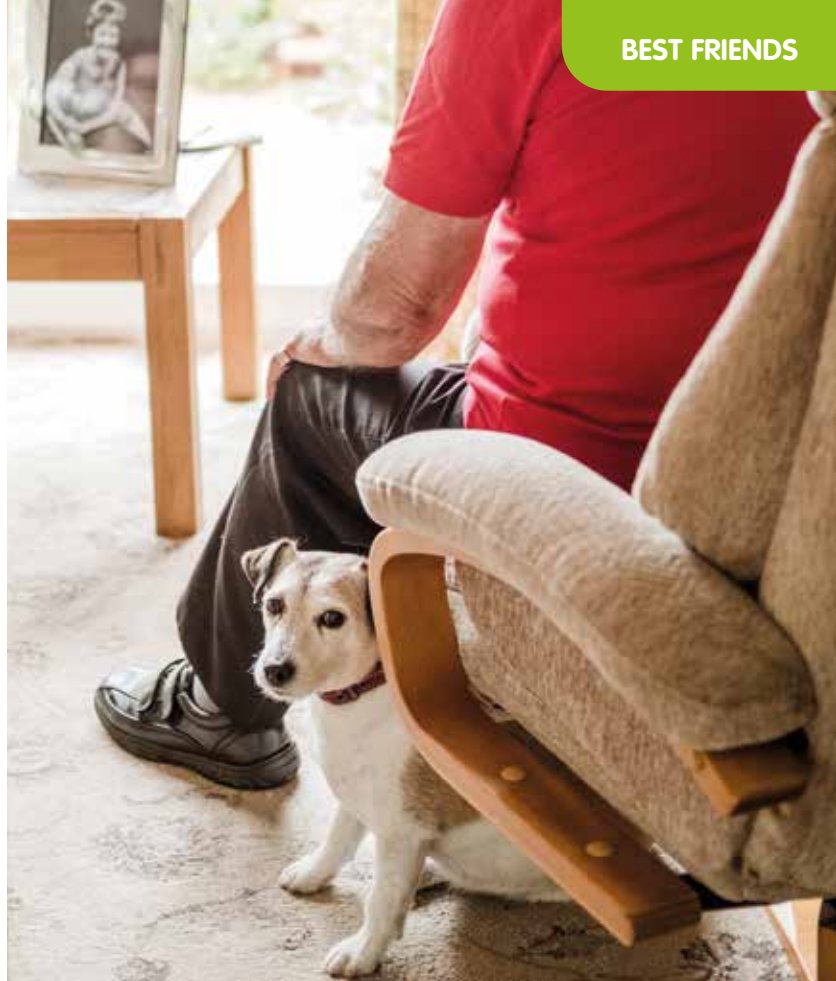
However, Elwyn had a very specific criteria; it was essential that any dog could happily accompany him to Carolyn's care home as his world revolves around being by her side as much as possible. They have been married 53 years after meeting at a dance near their Welsh hometowns, aged 19.

PERFECT MATCH

Thankfully, Carolyn's care home – a specialist Alzheimer's care facility – allows dogs to visit.

Elwyn spoke to the nearby Blue Cross rehoming and advice unit in Newport, Wales, about what he was looking for after initially enquiring about another dog. And when Badger came through the door, the team knew they could be a perfect match.

But first, they took Badger with Elwyn to the



care home to see how he reacted.

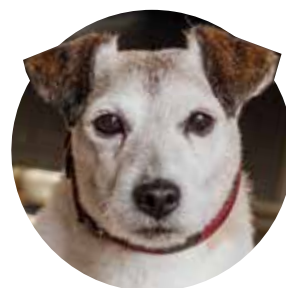
Hannah Wiltshire, Newport Manager at the time, said: "It turned out that Badger loved the attention from the carers and nurses. He strolled straight into the living room where all the other patients were relaxing. Badger was rehomed to Elwyn the following day."

Since then, this once timid boy has thrived with Elwyn, who says Badger has given him a new sense of purpose.

"There's things I've got to do," said Elwyn. "I've got to feed him, I've got to walk him."

"Before having him all I would be doing was going from my chair down to the car and to the home where Carolyn is, getting out of the car and walking a few steps. Now I take three walks a day with him."

Elwyn added: "I couldn't have wished for anything better. I think he's brilliant. My brilliant little boy."



“

I couldn't have wished for anything better. I think he's brilliant. My brilliant little boy

”

GET READY TO PAW-TY

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THIS IS HARRY

We got him from the Tiverton Blue Cross in 2007 as a timid four-month-old.

Both my partner Steve and myself had had dogs many years previously but this was our first dog as a couple. What a faithful friend and companion he came to be. Intelligent (as border collies are), stubborn, protective but most loving.

We had some wonderful holidays with him, and he loved the Cornish coastline, swimming at every possible moment in sea and river.

In October 2016 Steve and I got married but sadly he passed away in December of that year.

Harry really helped me with my loss, though initially I think he was as much at a loss as I was. He gave me such comfort as only dogs know how.

At 11 years old he enjoyed two walks a day and he was still chasing those tennis balls. However, at the beginning of the year Harry was diagnosed with bladder cancer and in April this year I had to make the inevitable decision to say goodbye to him.

I just want to thank the Blue Cross for giving me such wonderful memories to treasure.

Little did we know all

those years ago just what a faithful friend he would be.

I now get my doggy fix from helping out friends by walking their dogs for them, and for now Harry will not be replaced. But when the time is right and I'm ready for another companion you can be sure it will be the Blue Cross I shall visit.

Keep up the good work and thank you.

With best wishes

Jean Taylor, Taunton

WE LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Please send us your news and pictures of your pets!

BLUE FOR PETS CROSS



YOUNG AT HEART

In our last issue, we brought you the story of Maureen, who rehomed Chihuahua Bandit from Blue Cross after being turned away by another rescue centre for being 'too old'. Their moving story got people talking about how age should be no barrier to rehoming a pet.

Good for you Blue Cross! I work with the elderly in their own homes. Many would benefit from the companionship an animal offers. One of them was turned down by rescue organisations. It broke her heart as she'd always had animals. The irony is that so many rescues ask for someone to be at home most of the time and the elderly fulfil this need. They seldom take holidays and their animals will be loved, adored, spoilt – family.

The lady I mentioned was fortunate enough to rescue two cats from a family whose child was allergic. She gave them so much love.

Patricia Adams, Facebook

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

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Enter now at lottery.bluecross.org.uk

BREAST CANCER AFFECTS DOGS TOO

Reading this information very likely saved the life of one Blue Cross employee's dog, and now Rachael Millar wants to pass this vital material on...

About this time two years ago I was proofreading a leaflet written by a veterinary colleague on the topic of canine mammary cancer. I discovered that breast cancer, as the disease is known in humans, will affect 25 per cent of un-neutered female dogs during their lifetime, and although it can still affect neutered dogs, evidence suggests spaying before they are aged two-and-a-half reduces this risk tenfold.

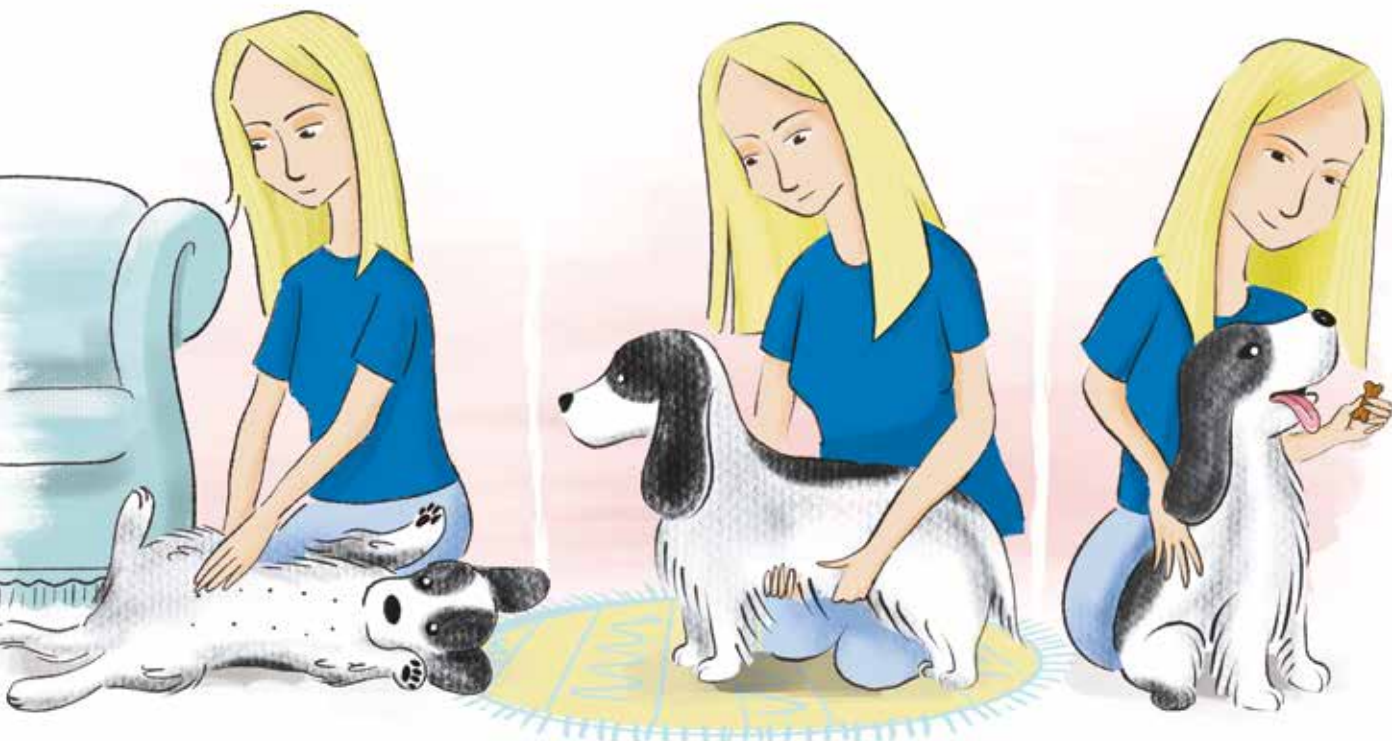
My dog Millie was found straying at a guesstimated three years of age, at which she was also spayed. Realising she fell into this higher risk category, I thought I'd better check her 'boobs' just in case and – to my utter dismay – my fingers found a small, kidney bean-sized lump next to a nipple nearest her tail.

Surgery and check ups followed, and as I write this now, I am delighted and relieved to tell you Millie is curled up on the sofa following a long morning sniffing session, and she is healthy and happy.

If you have an older girl, please make it part of your routine to check them regularly and call your vet if you do find a lump – and share this information with fellow dog-owning friends and family. You might save a life. The earlier the disease is caught, the more likely a happy outcome.

Blue Cross recommends spaying bitches before the age of two years to prevent this, and other, potentially fatal diseases.





HOW TO CHECK YOUR DOG

1 Find your dog's mammary glands. To do this, you need to look at your dog's chest and belly. You should see five pairs of nipples running in a line along their underside, from their chest area towards their hind legs. Their nipples show where their mammary glands are. Some dogs only have four nipples, but this is normal. The easiest time to look is when your dog is enjoying a belly rub and is relaxed. (Please don't force them to show you their tummy as this is very stressful for dogs.)

2 With your dog in a position that is comfortable for them, gently feel the area around each of your dog's mammary glands. You should be able to move the nipple and gland gently from side to side and there should be no solid lumps on or around the nipples. Your dog might let you examine them while they are lying down, or they might prefer you to do this when they are standing.

3 Praise them calmly and gently while you are doing this, and give them a good fuss or a treat to thank them when you are done. It should only take a minute or so.

If you do find a lump – whether it is hard or soft – on your pet's mammary gland, book them an appointment with your vet to get it checked out.

Read more at bluecross.org.uk/mammarycancer



"I thought, 'what if it reminded him of what happened to his tail and his ear?'"





CRUELTY KNOWS NO BOUNDS

When a young puppy arrived in a cardboard box, having been abandoned in a car park, our Lewknor rehoming team was shocked by what they saw...

Hamish should have been a pristine white, but he was mucky and sad.

He had been left all alone with a soiled blanket, a filthy toy, and some food, but no water, so he was terribly thirsty.

As with all abandoned pets brought through our doors, we gave the bewildered boy the once-over so we could make sure he got any urgent treatment he needed – but we discovered something upsetting.

Where a pointy and alert right ear should have been was a stump, with a wound showing a clean cut had been made across it. Someone, we believe, must have chopped off part

of the tiny pup's ear. And that wasn't the last of it. His tail was missing; we suspect that it too had been removed deliberately.

SAFE FROM HARM

We placed Hamish in a comfy and cosy foster home while he recovered from his ordeal.

"I don't think he knew what a home was," said Sandra Brooks, Hamish's foster carer. "When he came in he was a bit in awe."

Hamish soon became a happy and healthy puppy. Sandra and husband Chas took him for check-ups with our vets, and they got him ready for life as a pet by introducing

him to the sights and sounds of a home.

And now Hamish is part of a family. New owner Katherine Stubbs said: "When we first had him, I was really paranoid when I would get a knife out to chop carrots and that sort of thing, because I thought 'what if it reminded him of what happened to his tail and his ear?', but he wasn't worried at all."

Hamish now spends his days chasing balls around the garden and exploring on walks, before cuddles on the sofa with Katherine and family. His tragic past can be left there. Forever free from harm, life is just a joy and Hamish is so loved.

BITESIZE STORIES

ALL THE LATEST NEWS FROM BLUE CROSS



New owner Charlotte Banks with May

ABANDONED PUP FINDS LOVING HOME

A lurcher puppy found sick, skinny, afraid and alone in a supermarket car park has had her life turned around and is now thriving in a loving home. Aged just three months old, May was found by a passer-by who took her to a local private vet practice.

May was suffering from parvovirus, which can be fatal in young puppies. But as a stray the vets could not help her, so she was also in grave danger of being put to sleep after seven days.

Fortunately, Blue Cross stepped in and admitted May to our animal hospital in Victoria, central London.

Alison Thomas, Head of Veterinary Services, said: "She was extremely weak and dehydrated, just skin and bones. It was heartbreaking to see a dog in this condition."

HEARTBREAKING

Our veterinary team worked round the clock to save her life and once she was out of the woods, the sweet girl went to our Bromsgrove rehoming centre to find a home and soon caught the eye of Charlotte Banks.

Charlotte said: "I'd been looking for a rescue dog for a while and something about May's picture pulled on my heartstrings. When I discovered her terrible past and how she had been so neglected and left to die, I knew I had to take her home and make up for the first few miserable months of her life."

Without your support, we couldn't help pets like May. Thank you.

HAMSTERS DUMPED OUTSIDE PET SHOP

A hamster and her five babies have been rescued by Blue Cross. Syrian hamster Helen and her litter, named Sizzle, Sausage, Salsa, Sauce and Smokey, were abandoned outside a pet shop in Torbay, Devon. Despite the awful condition of their cage, they were all healthy and went on to find loving homes via our Torbay rehoming centre.





ELDERLY HORSE'S FRESH START

At the grand age of 31, Tin Tan found himself looking for a new home when his elderly owner became unwell.

The Shetland pony was suffering from Cushing's disease, a condition that affects a horse's hormone production, and this had led to his feet showing signs of laminitis damage.

Thankfully, this could be managed with medication and a special low-sugar diet.

Sadly, his Shetland pony companion of 15 years, Dimmo, had to be put to sleep due to ill health.

To help Tin Tan through his loss, we introduced him to a new companion called Snoopy, who had come into our centre because his owner was moving.

Verity Anderton-Johnson, Horse Rehoming Coordinator at Blue Cross Rolleston, said: "It wasn't long before the pair became best friends."

Tin Tan and Snoopy have now found a wonderful home together.

COUPLE DONATE GENEROUS LEGACY

Having always been surrounded by animals, it was Margaret and Joseph 'Joe' Harry Bowater's wish to help pets for many more years to come with a generous legacy of £50,000 left to our Bromsgrove centre.

Margaret and Joe dedicated most of their lives to running a farm, during which time they had an ever-expanding family of pets, including cats and their beloved boxers.

LIFELONG PASSION

The couple's passion for animals continued right up until they passed away – Joe, in 2014, 91, and Margaret, in 2018, 96.

Niece Julie Hipkiss said: "Margaret and Joe were never happier than when looking after a sick animal, feeding treats to the boxer dogs, or looking after a stray cat; it was their wish to help all animals."

More than half our income comes from legacies left by kind supporters like Margaret (pictured below) and Joe.



REJECTED KITTENS GET ROUND-THE-CLOCK CARE

A litter of two-week-old kittens rejected by their mum have been hand-reared by Blue Cross.

Festive littermates Gingerbread, Candy Cane, Frosty, Tiny Tim and Cinnamon came to our Torbay rehoming centre in Devon just before Christmas as the owner could not care for them.

The centre, which saw record numbers of unwanted kittens last autumn, worked day and night to feed the kittens every two hours until they grew strong enough to be weaned.

Once they were eight weeks old, we found them loving homes.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO?

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



Poor Chive should have been curled up on a comfy sofa next to a doting owner.

Instead he found himself wandering the streets all alone, aged 11.

The jack russell terrier was picked up by the dog warden and spent seven days at the council pound waiting to see if anyone came to claim him. They didn't, and he came to Blue Cross.

As an ageing boy, Chive needed some dental work to remove some teeth and a hernia repair before we could

find him a loving home.

We put him in foster while he recovered, to make sure he got all the TLC he deserved.

And soon enough, his gorgeous face caught the eye of a new family.

Dani Smith, Animal Welfare Assistant at Southampton, said: "His owners have popped in with him and he is doing so well.

"Everyone who meets him falls in love with him and he has been an absolute joy for his owners. We're so happy for him."

'ONE OF A KIND CAT' FINDS LOVING HOME

A cat who was in Blue Cross care for a heartbreaking 110 days while she waited for a new home has finally got her happy ending.

Incy, six, arrived at our Lewknor rehoming centre in May last year with terrible skin problems which her previous owner was unable to continue funding the vet treatment for.

Nyki Lawn, Animal Welfare Assistant, said: "Incy was in a bit of a sorry state. She had multiple skin sores and wounds from a previous skin allergy and was very worried and confused."

Although nervous, Incy quickly gained trust in the team and her affectionate personality shone through.

After three months of treatment, she was finally ready to find a home – but, by this point, she seemed to have lost her spark and began being overlooked by potential owners as she shied away from fuss.

Thankfully, with plenty of love and some sunshine along the way, Incy's spirits lifted - and she met a wonderful family.





PUPPIES SAVED FROM DEATH

We couldn't say no when we heard their story. There was no one else to help.

At just four weeks old, three Labrador puppies had nowhere else to turn when their breeder could not pay for the veterinary treatment they needed.

The youngsters, just babies, were suffering from hernias, and the breeder faced having them euthanised because of the cost.

Fortunately, the trio had been taken to a private veterinary practice that runs a Blue Cross pet care clinic from its premises, and instead of putting the otherwise-healthy puppies to sleep, the breeder agreed to hand them over into the care of our

rehoming team.

Hannah Wiltshire, Blue Cross Newport Rehoming Manager, said: "Apart from their hernias, they were healthy and happy puppies with so much love to give."

Each puppy was easily treated with surgery and neutered at the same time.

We named the puppies – all boys – Podrick, Gendry and Samwell, after some of the bravest characters from the Game of Thrones smash hit TV series.

They played at our centre by day, and one of the team fostered them at home in the evenings, to make sure the puppies got the constant care and socialisation they needed to give them bright futures.

Once the puppies reached eight weeks old, they each went off to begin their new lives as much-loved family members.



Thanks to your support, we helped 41,755 sick, injured and homeless pets in 2019.

Thank you so much!



WIN! A PROFESSIONAL PORTRAIT OF YOUR PET

A professional animal portraitist is raising money for pets in need after being appointed Blue Cross's official artist.

Stephen Yorke, who lives in Oxfordshire, kindly donates 10 per cent of all commission from his paintings and drawings of animals to our charity.

To celebrate this partnership, Stephen is offering *For Pets* readers the chance to win a watercolour or pencil portrait of their pet, drawn from a photo.

Stephen said: "Animal portraiture has always been a favourite amongst my work. It's an honour to be working with Blue Cross and I'm pleased to donate 10 per cent of all my commission fees to the charity."

Stephen can produce paintings of pets from photos, and prices start at £195. Visit yorkefineart.com for more information.

HOW TO ENTER

Answer the following question for your chance to win:

On pages 14 to 15 we brought you the story of Dennis, the English bulldog that has suffered with a catalogue of health issues related to his flat-faced breed. What is the name given to flat-faced breeds? *(please tick)*

- Brachyphobic
- Brachycephalic
- Bronchiphalic

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

Freepost BLUE CROSS FOR PETS

Or, enter online at

bluecross.org.uk/forpets

Closing date Friday, 1 May 2020.
*Strictly one entry per household.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Sue Southwick is the winner of £150 credit for Bloom and Wild in our autumn 2019 For Pets competition. Congratulations!

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*You can change your preferences at any time by contacting our Supporter Care Team on 0300 790 9903 or email info@bluecross.org.uk

We have **57** shops and **20** national rehoming network locations

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Our animal hospitals

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

Our pet care clinics

- 5 Ashford (Kent)
- 6 Cwmbran
- 7 Derby
- 8 Luton
- 9 Torbay
- 10 York

Our rehoming centres

- 11 Bromsgrove
- 12 Burford
- 13 Cambridge
- 14 Hertfordshire (Kimpton)
- 15 Lewknor
- 16 Manchester
- 17 Newport
- 18 Rolleston
- 19 Sheffield
- 20 Southampton
- 21 Suffolk (Ipswich)
- 22 Thirsk
- 23 Tiverton
- 24 Torbay



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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



Pets change lives
We change theirs

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Pets change lives
We change theirs



We're a charity that has been helping sick, injured and homeless pets since 1897

“Remember me in your Will”

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

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

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Title:

First name:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

B120

Thank you for your continued support.

Blue Cross is a charity registered in England and Wales (224392) and in Scotland (SC040154). *From time to time we may wish to communicate with you by phone with news about the pets you are helping and ways you can help in the future. If you are happy for us to do this, please fill in your details above.

