

FOR PETS

The magazine for Blue Cross supporters

AUTUMN 2019

TRANSFORMED

SKINNY STRAY LAB JAKE
IS UNRECOGNISABLE

PLUS

Rescue dog turned assistance pet

Lonely hearts find love

Hero horse retires



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We change theirs



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THINKING ABOUT GETTING A KITTEN? – COMING SOON...



COVER STORY

15 Starving and alone

Jake has now found happiness

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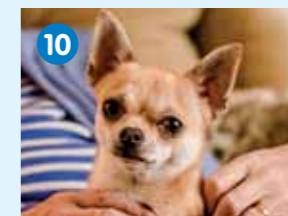


Welcome

We look after thousands of pets each year, but helping people is an important part of our work too. We match families with pets they love and adore, take in animals from those that can no longer keep them and help owners when they can't afford the vet care their companions need. We're also there for those that have lost a much-loved pet with our Pet Bereavement Support Service (PBSS), which marks its 25th anniversary this year. On pages 22 and 23 you'll hear from Jackie Buckle, who used the service when she lost her beloved cat, and now helps others through the pain of losing a pet as a PBSS volunteer.

We're there for people and pets through the ups and the downs, and always will be. Just like we were there for poor Jake, our gorgeous cover star, when he was found as a starving and emaciated stray. Now he's happily bounding around the countryside surrounding his new home; his transformation, which you'll read about on pages 16 to 17, is incredible. This issue also celebrates some of our hero pets, like Fudge (pages four to nine) – a once homeless dog who is now one of the world's smallest assistance pets. And lovely horse Shadow, on pages 24 to 27, who has been a constant at our Rolleston rehoming centre for 13 years, helping the team match people to the right horses. I hope you enjoy reading all about them.

Aimee Brannen, Editor



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‘HE’S SAVED MY LIFE’

Fudge was given up by his last owners due to his high energy levels, but Blue Cross knew this busy nature could be channelled into work – and now, he’s a hero assistance pet...



Pets bring their owners happiness in all kinds of ways – but for Judith Margolis, Blue Cross rescue dog Fudge is not only a trusty companion, he's her lifeline to the outside world.

When the former university lecturer started to need a wheelchair due to a progressive brain disorder 13 years ago, she felt totally isolated and unable to leave her home.

"You become invisible in a wheelchair," she said. "Sixty-five per cent of people say that if they see someone in a wheelchair they won't talk to them because they don't know what to say, so it's very lonely.

"Bearing in mind my profession was teaching, I was used to interacting with people all the time so it was really, really difficult."

Judith, 66, who has cerebella ataxia – a rare condition which affects coordination – became increasingly depressed until, five years ago, she decided to rehome a dog.

Alfie, an abandoned Lhasa apso puppy found tied up outside a rescue centre, became her saviour and was trained by the charity Support Dogs to provide assistance to Judith.

He changed her life instantly but sadly went blind at a young age, leaving Judith cut off once again.

"It seemed to happen overnight and all of a sudden I became invisible again," she explained.

So Judith contacted Support Dogs for help and together they found border terrier-cross-pug Fudge at our Thirsk rehoming centre in Yorkshire. He had been given up at 14 months for having too much energy, which Support Dogs and Blue Cross thought would be best channelled into work as an assistance dog.

Rachael Myers, Training and Behaviour Coordinator at Blue Cross in Thirsk, explained: "We could see Fudge was a highly intelligent dog who needed jobs to do. We felt he



would be best placed in a working home so that he would not get frustrated or bored. He is such a fun character and was loved by everyone during his time at Blue Cross.

"We are delighted that he is now happily in a new home where his busy nature is being put to such good use."

Danny Anderson, Fundraising Manager at Support Dogs, said: "We work with a variety of dogs, including those from rescue centres or unwanted pets. We don't have our own breeding programme and love being able to give an amazing dog a second chance and transform them into a lifesaver."

Fudge went to live with Judith in St Neots, Cambridgeshire, alongside her husband Irv and Alfie in 2016.

Training had its ups and downs; challenges included keeping Fudge focussed when out and about as he would bark and try to play with other dogs he met.

But he quickly took to fetching things for Judith, who is the chair of Disability Cambridge and a weekly volunteer at her local branch of the MS Society, and soon became an enormous help to her around the house.

And eventually, after six attempts, Fudge made the grade as an

assistance dog and was given his blue Support Dogs vest, which he now wears with pride.

"It was just the social stuff that took about 18 months to get right," Judith said.

At home, Fudge fetches the phone for Judith, brings her slippers to her, helps to take off her socks, trousers and jumpers and opens and closes doors and gates.

Judith said: "Fudge is trained to bring me the phone so that I can get help when I need it. That's a major thing in my life as my husband feels that he can go out, when before he wasn't very happy about leaving me.

“He does all kinds of other fetching and carrying for me and picks things up if I drop them. He’ll bring me his lead when we’re going out and even puts his own toys away when I ask him to.”

And for a dog that struggled to contain his excitement at seeing others on four legs, he now has the best recall of any dog Judith has known and zooms back to her at lightning speed on walks, whatever the distraction.

Fudge has also provided unexpected pain relief for Judith.

“I get a lot of pain in my legs, and I needed pain killers for it, but I don’t need them anymore because he sits

on my legs in the evening and the warmth and the pressure helps with the pain. I didn’t realise but the drugs that I was taking were making my head foggy and after I stopped taking them it was like a fog lifting,” she said.

But it’s the difference Fudge has made to Judith’s confidence in getting out and about and socialising that is the most precious.

She continued: “With a dog by my side people stop and ask me about him, and it starts conversations. He comes everywhere with me. We’re a team.

“I think to say that he has saved my life is a cliché but actually, I think he has. Because without

Fudge I would probably not go out and not see anybody. I’m quite a positive person, but without people and doing things it’s very easy to sink into depression if you’ve got cerebella ataxia.

“And it’s easy to say ‘well I’m just going to sit here and not do anything’, but with a dog I have to get up and go out, and just that pressure alone makes such a difference. So he’s saved my life, really.

“He is the most loving, adorable dog I have ever had. He sits on my lap all the time, and loves to be stroked. I’ve had lots of dogs in the past but never one quite like Fudge.”

Judith says that having Fudge means that she is no longer “invisible” when she’s out and about as he is a talking point which enables her to interact with people



Fudge helps Judith with a variety of household tasks, including opening and closing the gate

Watch Fudge in action at bluecross.org.uk/fudge



Bandit steals hearts

The tiny dog has filled a void of loneliness in his new owner's life, and together they prove that age should be no barrier to rehoming a pet...



When 81-year-old Maureen Lenehan was turned away from a pet rescue centre for being "too old" to rehome a dog, she lost all hope of finding a four-legged companion to ease the loneliness she was feeling.

She had lost her beloved husband, Carol, seven years earlier, followed six months later by the family cat, Chester. And although she desperately wanted a dog to help fill the void, Maureen initially feared that another pet may be too much of a tie.

"Everyone kept saying to me you've got the freedom to do whatever you want," said Maureen, who had owned dogs throughout her 56-year marriage. "It was true – I could go here, there and everywhere, but that's all very well until you get home and all you've got is the television."

So after much thought, she started her search for a dog early last year and was delighted when she came across a Chihuahua that needed a home at a rescue centre.

"It was all going well until the moment that I told them my age. They told me that I was too old.

It was very upsetting, and I lost all hope," said Maureen.

But, seeing how heartbroken her mother was, Maureen's daughter Emma didn't give up.

"I really was made to think I was too old," Maureen said. "But my daughter told me that I wasn't, and said that I had a lot of love to give, was active and had a lovely home."

"He makes me want to get up in the morning. In fact, I think he's given me a new lease of life – I feel younger now than I did at the beginning of the year."

Maureen, Bandit's owner

Thankfully, Emma came across Blue Cross, where age is no barrier to rehoming a pet.

She found a Chihuahua called Bandit at our Tiverton centre in Devon, described as a "tiny chap with a big personality"; he too had plenty of love to give and was at his happiest around people. It sounded like a perfect match.

Emma and Maureen were soon embarking on the seven hour-round trip from Walsall, West Midlands, to meet the two-year-old dog, who had to be given up by his previous owner due to a change in circumstances. The rest is history.

"Myself and Bandit gelled straight away," said Maureen. "He walked through the door and the first person he made for was me, and he was straight on my lap and all over me."

And Bandit wasted no time in settling in with Maureen at home either. They go for a walk each morning and then play in the house with Bandit's forever-expanding collection of toys.

Bandit sits and watches as Maureen – who is a whizz with her electric saw – crafts furniture in the garden, and in the evening he snuggles up on her lap while she watches TV and crochets.

On the day Blue Cross visits, Maureen is working on a new blanket for Bandit, and he contently curls up underneath it while she knits away.



Maureen with Animal Welfare Assistant Charlotte Gowing on the day she took Bandit home

"He's just adorable, the best thing that's ever happened to me," Maureen said. "He makes me want to get up in the morning. In fact, I think he's given me a new lease of life – I feel younger now than I did at the beginning of the year. So we're just right for each other."

She continued: "He's brought me a lot of love and a lot of joy. We have great times together; we play in the house and we go on little walks. All the family love him. The grandchildren idolise him. And I take him to see my daughter-in-law's mum and dad, so he's getting a lot of love."

And the incredible bond they share is clear for everyone to see. Her daughter Emma added: "I haven't seen mum smile like this since before we lost dad. To say it's a match made in heaven would be an understatement."

Charlotte Gowing, Animal Welfare Assistant at Blue Cross Tiverton, who fostered Bandit during his time in our care, said: "I was honestly so disappointed for Maureen when she said that other rehoming organisations had refused to give her a dog before she even talked about the amazing support network she had."

"Maureen has given Bandit a life better than some people half her age could offer."

Louise Thomson, also an Animal Welfare Assistant, added: "We knew Bandit would make someone a fantastic companion, but I don't think any of us could have imagined what a perfect pairing Maureen and Bandit would be – it is evident that Bandit is very content in his new home!"

"It just goes to show that age should never be a barrier to rehoming. In fact, we often find our older rehomers are the ones who have the most time to give to their pets."

Maureen has only one complaint, and that's how Bandit – for a dog so small – manages to take up so much space in the bed.

Laughing, she said: "He seems to grow in the night. He glides his way closer and closer until I'm out of bed and then I go round the other side and get back into bed and he glides back again. He just wants to be as close to me as possible."

They are inseparable, and the unconditional love that they've given each other is a gift that money can't buy.



You can read more about Bandit at bluecross.org.uk/bandit

COULD YOU TAKE ME HOME?

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

KAI

Hiya! I'm eight years old and I love nothing more than making people smile. I'm told I'm a real goof ball, whatever that means. I promise to make you smile too, if you give me the chance.

Tiverton, 0300 777 1560



BLUE

I was pretty Blue by name and by nature when I arrived here, as I find the world quite scary. But everyone has been so kind and I'm slowly learning to trust people. Can you help me overcome my fears?

Southampton, 0300 777 1530



MISS KITTY

I do like to take things easy, you know. Before ending up here, I lived a wonderful, quiet and relaxed lifestyle with my elderly owner, and I'd love to get back to that with someone new. Any space on your sofa for me?

Cambridge, 0300 777 1470



PEPPER

I was in a sorry state when I was found fly-grazing, but the lovely people here at Blue Cross have helped to build up my confidence lots over the past two years. Now I'm looking for a best friend, could you be the one?

Rolleston, 0300 777 1520

Hundreds of pets are just waiting to meet you

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

BRIDGET

I'm a nervous girl in new situations, but I have so much love to give to the right person – I've just got a bit of learning to do along the way. Will you be the friend I need?

Burford, 0300 777 1570



PRINCESS

As my name suggests, I like the finer things in life. But I'm no diva, I promise! I love nothing more than being around people and making them smile with my funny antics. Give me a chance, and I'll show you how much fun I can be.

Lewknor, 0300 777 1500



How to make a snuffle mat

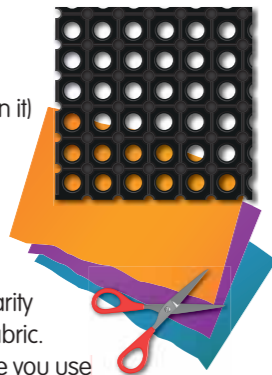
Snuffle mats are a great way to keep your dog mentally stimulated by encouraging them to solve a puzzle using their impressive sense of smell.

The idea is nice and simple; hide your dog's favourite treats under the fabric and ask them to sniff them out. Depending on how many treats you have hidden, this can keep them focussed on a task for quite some time, helping to satisfy their curious minds and engage their natural instinct to sniff.

What you need:

1. Rubber bath mat (with holes in it)
2. Fleece fabric cut into strips
3. Scissors
4. One hour of your time!

TIP: Cut up an old fleece blanket you no longer need or hit the charity shops to find some nice fleece fabric. Be sure to wash the fleece before you use it and cut off any seams around the edge to avoid choking hazards for dogs.



Step one:

Cut up your fabric into one inch-wide strips and roughly six to eight inches in length.



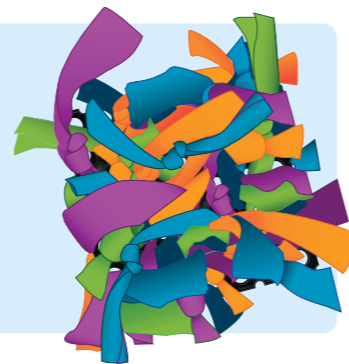
Step two:

Take one strip of fabric, with your rubber mat in front of you, and thread this through a hole in your mat. Tie the two ends together that you've passed through the mat.



Step three:

Repeat until you have a full snuffle mat with material covering all gaps.



Mary, Mungo & Midge

Born to a stray mum, this kitten trio didn't have the best start to life – but with the help of Blue Cross, they all have happy and healthy futures.

At just a year old, Mary, Mungo and Midge's mum Boo found herself all alone and pregnant.

Thankfully, a kind couple noticed the stray's expanding tummy as she drifted between gardens in the hunt for food, and took her in.

A day later she gave birth to her three precious kittens in a spare room of the house, and the feline family was soon brought to our rehoming centre in Cambridge for the care both litter and mum needed.

Sarah Bates, Rehoming and Operational Supervisor at the centre, said: "Boo wasn't underweight but hadn't had any flea treatment and was a little bit nervous. Apart from that, she was very happy to be somewhere safe with her kittens. She was only young herself.

"If she hadn't been taken in by the couple she would have had no choice

but to have the kittens outside, and without human contact, they wouldn't have been as lovely as they are, or could potentially not be here at all."

Once the kittens were old enough to be weaned, we found a loving home for Boo. Due to her lovely nature, we believe that she lived in a home previously, but with no microchip, her owner can never be traced.

And at eight weeks old, it was her litter's turn to begin their new lives.

"They were your typical kittens; very playful and very loving. We knew it wouldn't take us long to find them homes." Sarah adds.

Each year, Blue Cross cares for hundreds of unwanted or stray kittens and their mums. Having cats neutered not only prevents unexpected litters, it also reduces the likelihood of them straying and picking up diseases.

You can read more about Mary, Mungo & Midge at bluecross.org.uk/marymungoandmidge

Starving stray Labrador thrives in loving home

Starving and all alone, Jake was found helplessly wandering around a woodland. Nobody knows how such a sweet dog ended up like this, but by the time he arrived at our Burford rehoming centre he was one of the most emaciated strays the team has ever seen.

With his ribs and hips protruding, he weighed just 25.4kg when he was first picked up by the local dog warden – just two thirds the body weight of a healthy black Labrador his size.

The eight-year-old was so thin that he was unable to regulate his body temperature, so needed to wear a jumper at all times. And he had suffered muscle wastage on his back legs, which left him even weaker.

Amber Cooney, Animal Welfare Assistant, said: "We've seen worse cases in females that have had puppies, but Jake is definitely one of the worst cases we've seen in a stray male dog."

Rebuilding Jake's strength from so little was a challenge, and one that needed to be done slowly; food needed to be gradually introduced to avoid causing other health complications.

Alicia Fay, Animal Welfare Assistant, explained: "He had three meals a day, so that he put weight on gradually, and he was fed with puzzle games so that he didn't wolf it down, as his stomach wouldn't have coped."



Jake before



Due to his leg problems, walks also needed to be approached with caution; short and on-lead to ensure he didn't run around and do more damage while we built up his fragile muscles.

Understandably, Jake hated to be left alone after his ordeal – and wanted to be around people at all times.

"He was really stressed in kennels," said Amber. "He really didn't like being on his own. He loves people and loved having cuddles, so we gave him as much time out of kennels with us in the offices as possible. Although he was older, he was still very active and loved to play with his tennis balls. He was lovely, a really good boy."

Alicia added: "He was also really good with other dogs, so he would regularly go out with other dogs to keep his spirits up. He had lots of doggie friends here. And the volunteers walked him loads as he was so sweet."

Jake was making great progress at Blue Cross, but he was struggling to put on weight due to being so sad when he was in his kennel, and suffered a further setback when he caught kennel cough.

What he really needed to fully recover was a loving home and, after 25 days in our care, he found just that with Jacqui MacMaster in the rolling Somerset countryside.

And nine months on, Jake is thriving – unrecognisable from the sad, skeletal dog that first arrived at Blue Cross.

Despite a bout of pneumonia, he has hit his target weight and his hind legs are getting stronger by the day, helped along by regular hydrotherapy sessions and the many walks he enjoys with Jacqui by his side.

His unwavering love for tennis balls has continued, and on the day Blue Cross drops by, Jake is bounding through the long grass of a field beside his home on a farm, playing fetch with his favourite toy.

Jacqui, who had recently retired and was missing the company of dogs after losing her two Labradors a few years earlier, said: "He settled in on the sofa straight away. He has got the loveliest nature."

Together, Jacqui and Jake love to explore new places and have lakes and the Blackdown Hills on their doorstep.

As Jake is largely deaf, Jacqui was initially nervous about letting him off lead – but the special bond they now share means that she can do so with confidence as Jake will always look back to check that she is still there.

"I have had the most amazing walks with him," said Jacqui. "He loves to go on walks and visit new places.

I've got a friend on Exmoor, who has four spaniels that Jake loves, so we often meet up with them there for walks."

Jacqui continued: "He's brought me great companionship. I love to walk and so having him has been brilliant as it means that I'm always getting the map out and looking for walks. And it has been good for him too. I get a lot out of our walks together and he does as well. You just don't have the motivation to do it unless you have a dog."

Jake is also a big hit with Jacqui's grandchildren, who live next door with her daughter and son-in-law. They have hours of fun playing with Jake in the garden and he's never short of someone to throw his tennis ball.

"He loves children, so much so that if he sees children when we're out you have to hold him back as he just wants to follow them," said Jacqui.

Jake clearly could not be happier and, for the team that cared for him at his lowest ebb, it's a wonderful end to his sad tale. Amber added: "It's really nice to see him from how he was in kennels to now, with such a lovely home."

Read more about Jake at bluecross.org.uk/jake



Two cats who got the cream

Cats are said to have nine lives, but sadly at Blue Cross we know fortune doesn't always favour those who have suffered horrific injuries.

For two particular felines however, not only did miracles occur but so, too, did second chances at happiness.

Stray cat Kimovich was hit by a car in November 2016. Seriously injured and dazed by the impact, he needed urgent surgery to save his leg. With no one to foot the bill, the homeless cat faced euthanasia until our Victoria animal hospital stepped in.

Arabella was not so fortunate with her injury. In July 2018, the curious kitten fell from a third storey window and fractured her front leg so severely that amputation was our only option.

Once they were well enough after their respective incidents, both cats were transferred to our Southampton rehoming centre where they got the care they needed, including that from long-time volunteer Tony Davidson-Brewer, from Salisbury.

The Davidson-Brewer home had always been full of pets, but when much-loved cat Katcha passed away at the grand age of 21, Tony and his wife Caroline were forlorn. They planned to wait a while to allow their hearts to heal before welcoming

another pet, but the house felt empty, and Kimovich needed a family.

Caroline says: "He looked into my eyes and I looked into his, and I thought 'I can't resist you'."

"I'd had a partial mastectomy and had to have another part of the treatment soon after we got him, and he was so lovely. He came and sat on my lap and purred and said, 'Come on, get better'. He knew there was something. He's very much a caring cat."

Kimovich's unusual name nearly got him into a pickle at the height of the Salisbury Novichok investigations, when one evening he failed to return home on time.

"The whole car park next to the police station at the end of our street was taken over by the army to remove police cars for decontamination and they had put cordons in place," Caroline remembers.

"I called 'Kimovich, Kimovich!' a couple of times because he wasn't in the back garden," Tony adds. "And then I opened the gate to find a policeman standing right outside. I had to assure him Kimovich was a cat and not a Russian spy! I said, 'please don't shoot him if he crosses your cordon!'"

"He looked into my eyes, and I looked into his, and I thought 'I can't resist you'."

Caroline Davidson-Brewer



Then, in August 2018, Arabella joined the family.

Introducing the cats initially was challenging, and not helped by Arabella suffering a setback when her amputation site opened up, requiring further surgery. During recovery she had to remain as inactive as possible to allow healing to take place. Her boredom led to creating her own fun; the unfortunate recipient being Kimovich. Tony and Caroline had already decided to call on Tasha Cole, Animal Behaviour Coordinator at Southampton Blue Cross, for help.

It wasn't a walk in the park, but after several months, and lots of hard work integrating the two cats, they are accepting of each other and sometimes rub noses.

Arabella is also deaf so Tony and Caroline have taught her a series of hand signals to aid communication. Tony adds: "If we want to show we're interacting with her we wiggle

our fingers at her gently, and we will blow her kisses too. She sees our lips and she sees the fingers, and sometimes she'll let out a little miaow back at us."

"If we want to show we're interacting with her we wiggle our fingers at her gently, and we will blow her kisses too."

Blue Cross stitched Kimovich and Arabella back together, but by taking a chance on these two broken and unwanted cats, and going further still to ensure a happy and healthy life, Tony and Caroline have given them the gift of the perfect future they could only dream of when they were recovering on our hospital ward. And in return they have brought such joy to their owners. And as Tony says: "Cats and dogs make a house a home."

Below: Arabella's X-ray after her fall
Bottom left: Kimovich recovers in a Blue Cross hospital
Bottom right: Arabella with owners Tony and Caroline Davidson-Brewer



Bunny love

They must have been so frightened. Plucked from the life they knew and abandoned outside one of our rehoming centres in a small carrier, with just a note to say their owner could no longer care for them.

Mr McGregor and Bobtail may have been found by safe hands, but the lack of vital information about them meant that it was harder for our Burford team to work out how to best help the rabbits.

Simon Yeats, Animal Welfare Assistant, explained: "We struggled to find out the basics. We didn't know if they were indoor or outdoor bunnies and we didn't know what food they were on, and a sudden change in diet can sometimes be a bit of an issue.

"Although the note had information about them being neutered and vaccinations, it didn't state which ones they had had. There are lots of other questions that we would have asked their owner; things that help us

to start building a picture of what they like so that we can match them to a suitable home."

Thankfully, though, four-year-old Mr McGregor, and five-year-old Bobtail, were resilient, and it wasn't long before they found a home.

But they sadly suffered another setback when their owner had to move and could not keep them. We took them in again, and gave them all the love and care they needed.

Thankfully, sisters Ali and Katie McNeil were on the lookout for a pair of rabbits at just the right time.

And the bunnies have lived in Oxfordshire with the siblings, along with Ali's partner, Kyle, since November last year.

Ali, who has fulfilled her childhood dream of owning rabbits and shares a birthday with

Bobtail, said: "They've brought a lot of love to our lives. They just make me happy whenever I see them. If I've had a bad day I just come in the garden and sit and watch them and it makes me happier."



You can read more about Kimovitch and Arabella at bluecross.org.uk/kimovitchandarabella



You can read more at bluecross.org.uk/bunnylove

'Goodbye my friend'

a story of pet loss



This year marks the 25th anniversary of Blue Cross's Pet Bereavement Support Service. Since it launched in 1994, we have helped thousands of grieving pet owners of all ages, from all walks in life. One of them is Jackie Buckle, who used the service when she lost her beloved cat, Max. She is now a PBSS volunteer, after the experience inspired her to help others struggling to cope with the loss of a pet. Here, she tells her story...



OK, I know I'm biased but Max was a really handsome cat. A typical tuxedo with the softest green eyes and whiskers like piano wires. He was very huggable (although he would only tolerate being held for about eight seconds) and loved to follow me around the house, purring and occasionally coming out with that loud, chirrupy miaow of his.

One day Max looked different. He was quiet and sleepy, not his usual self at all. I was a little worried but didn't think too much of it. Later that day, though, he started panting heavily. We took him to the vet. I remember my tears falling onto the black consulting table as I was told the bad news: Max had congestive heart failure.

There followed a whole raft of veterinary visits and medical procedures to help save our boy. Max hated the vets and fought hard whenever he had to go into his carry case – despite his condition he could still be quite feisty! After many weeks of these trips, of hoping against hope, crossing everything, and praying for him to get better, it was clear he wasn't going to. We decided it was time to say goodbye.

The house without Max was not a good place. I suddenly realised what a hole he had left. A big physical, emotional hole. All the little routines we had shared; the uncomplicated affection; that constant, comforting everyday togetherness.

My daughters helped a lot, taking me out for coffees and letting me go on and on about how much I missed him. They loved and missed Max too

but were busy studying and enjoying hectic social lives, whereas because I worked from home, it had just been me and Max together. I guess he'd become a bit of a mummy's boy – or at least I liked to think so.

I looked online for things to help – perhaps hearing about other people's experiences would make me feel less alone. This is where

The world keeps turning of course and new challenges, problems and opportunities demand our attention. As the months wore on, I began to accept the loss of Max and slowly build my life around it. I had made a little montage of some of his pictures and I still touched it every day. Whereas in the first weeks the pictures had filled me with regret, I now felt

happy looking at them. What a great cat he was! Feisty, friendly, funny and beautiful. How lucky we were to have had him. I felt like I had waded through what felt like a swamp of grief and finally reached dry land. It had been hard but I realised that the main thing that had helped was the ability to tell people how I was feeling and how special our bond had been.

I felt ready now to offer support to others going through the loss of a pet and so I signed up for the Blue Cross Pet Bereavement Support Service. I have now been a volunteer for two years and spoken to hundreds of people. The calls are all totally unique but some things unite them, such as the tremendous social and emotional support pets give

us and the purpose and laughter they bring to our lives. I have felt privileged to listen to people's stories, which are often incredibly moving and heartfelt, and to offer whatever I can in terms of hope and support. I believe that pets are a huge force for good in the world and that despite the dreadful pain we feel on their passing, it is a price worth paying for their unconditional love and the wonderful memories they leave us with.

HOLD THE LINE

for everyone who has lost a pet

Seek threads of their love and you'll find them: on cushions and coats, hard-trodden paths and tongue-worn toys. Remember, you are not alone. We are here. Hold the line.

Hear paws padding on floors to greet you, or the gravel-scratch of claws on the sofa; each can be a tribute in time. Stay connected, you are not alone. We are here. Hold the line.

Happy days make for happy lives, so let your spirits multiply, your pains divide. Count the monuments, recount the good times. Make the call – you are not alone. We are here. Hold the line.

By Russell Jones,
Blue Cross's Pet Poet Laureate

I came across the Blue Cross pet memorial wall. With tears streaming down my face (again), I read the many touching tributes. It actually helped considerably and I decided I would like to write my own memorial to Max.

I wanted to tell people how special he was, what a great little character. I wanted to honour him and, on a more practical level, to have something tangible to do.

Are you grieving for a pet? Call 0800 096 6606 (8.30am to 8.30pm) or email pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk or to find out more visit bluecross.org.uk/pbss

We'll miss our Shadow

From naughty schoolboy to retiring headmaster, Shadow's looking forward to putting his hooves up...



We'll be wishing one very special resident a fond farewell later this year as he goes to a home of his own.

Shadow, a cob, is taking a well-earned retirement after spending many years working alongside human members of staff at our Rolleston rehoming centre, near Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire.

The 19-year-old horse has been employed as our schoolmaster for 13 years, and during that time has helped hundreds of people rehome their new best friend.

Maria Kavanagh, Acting Horse Rehoming Manager at Blue Cross Rolleston, explained: "A schoolmaster is a horse that works alongside us as part of the team.

"Usually schoolmasters help inexperienced riders to learn the basics, but Shadow has done so many important roles during his time with us, including helping us assess potential rehomingers so we can match them up with the right horse, and guiding our younger horses both in the school and out hacking."

"He's part of our team so it will be sad to see him leave but nice for him to have one to one care. We will really miss him but wish him a very happy, and well deserved, retirement"

Shadow has also played an active role in helping to train our team.

Kath Urwin was the centre manager at our Rolleston centre when Shadow first arrived back in 2006. She remembers it wasn't all plain sailing for the now-dependable horse, and at one point he left the team wondering what to do with him.

Kath says: "Shadow came in with some behavioural issues, and he wasn't very steady. We worked with him on some of his issues before rehoming him but he came back almost immediately.

"At that point we hadn't got a schoolmaster. He was a nice, easy going chap with ability and I think

the environment at the centre suited him. He was relaxed and enjoyed working with different riders."

Thanks to Shadow's help at our appointments for new owners looking to take on a horse, we've been able to find loving homes for hundreds of horses; many of whom had come from welfare situations, including being abandoned to fly graze at the roadside. Shadow has also helped to bring on young and nervous horses who needed encouragement having suffered neglect in their early lives.

He has also been the star of many shows, including representing Blue Cross on display at the

prestigious Badminton horse trials, even bringing home a rosette for his polished performance, and educating children in pony care days at Rolleston. He even dressed up to take part in a historical re-enactment of Blue Cross's history of caring for equines for one open day (pictured).

Alice Pettitt, Horse Welfare Assistant at Rolleston who has worked alongside Shadow for several years, said: "He's part of our team so it will be sad to see him leave but nice for him to have one to one care. We will really miss him but wish him a very happy, and well deserved, retirement."

Shadow, you will be missed!



"He was a nice, easy going chap with ability and I think the environment at the centre suited him. He was relaxed and enjoyed working with different riders."



You can read more about shadow at [bluecross.org.uk/shadow](https://www.bluecross.org.uk/shadow)



HEIDI

We've absolutely loved welcoming our new cocker spaniel Heidi into our family.

She's loving, intelligent, extremely lively and adored by everyone - especially our children and grandchildren who can't wait to visit her.

Huge thanks to Blue Cross for bringing this bundle of energy into our lives!

**The Boullemier family,
Northampton**

It's just £1 a week to enter our weekly lottery and you will have the chance of winning up to £10,000, and support pets in our care at the same time! Enter now at lottery.bluecross.org.uk

Would you like to see your pet on this page?

We love to hear how Blue Cross pets are changing lives. Please email your letters and photos to editor@bluecross.org.uk

or write to *For Pets* Editor, Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4PF

**Find us on
Facebook & Twitter**

@The_Blue_Cross

@thebluecrossUK

We love to hear from you

Please send us your news and pictures of your pets!

HAPPY EVER AFTER

You loved reading about the pets we've helped who featured in the last issue of *For Pets*. Here are just a few of the well wishes dog Jack, who found a loving home with Laura and Terry Lloyd, after becoming homeless at the ripe old age of 12, received:



You are two lovely, lovely people. So happy you found Jack and he's found his forever home.

Catherine Atherton, via Facebook

I'm in tears... Laura and Terry you are amazing.

Tracy Hazledon, via Facebook

Thank you so much Laura and Terry!! So grateful that you got Jack and made him happy again.

You gave him the best Christmas gift ever

Terry Ignacio, via Facebook

What an absolutely beautiful boy! Such special people for giving him a home. Thank god for people like them.

Joanne Davis, via Facebook

Laura and Terry... Thank god you gave him a beautiful home! Can we clone people like you please so the world is a kinder place?

Jo Ashworth, via Facebook

You are such lovely people. Thank you for saving that gorgeous boy. Wishing you many healthy, happy years together.

Rosie Titmus, via Facebook

Aw bless him, lovely old lad. So pleased he's found a loving home. I adore senior dogs with their wise old faces and grey muzzles.

Janice Duerden, via Facebook

What fantastic people, good for you giving a lovely old dog a chance again. Heart warming story. xxx

Vicki Raine, via Facebook



ZOMBIE

I adopted Zombie from Blue Cross 13 years ago, and chose him mostly because I knew that black cats were often overlooked by people, and I think that all animals are wonderful regardless of their colour. He rolled over onto his back, when I asked to meet him, as if to say "please choose me, as I will be your loyal and loving friend". Needless to say, I promised him that I would always love him and look after him, and frequently told him how lucky I was to have him... But I think that he knew this anyway!

He gave me years of happiness and laughter, and supported me when I had to learn to cope with a life changing injury; in fact, Zombie seldom left my side. Just over a year ago, he suddenly became very ill, and had to have radio iodine treatment, but this gave him another happy year of life. He loved to sleep on the end of our sofa, and would pull a cushion over himself (like a little duvet), to keep himself nice and cosy; however, if our other black cat was in his spot, he would regularly place the cushion on top of her, and then climb on top of the pile!

Sadly, we recently had to have our old boy put to sleep, but we think that he was 18 years old and we can console ourselves with the thought that at least he had a long and happy life, thanks to Blue Cross bringing us together. He is sorely missed.

Caroline Joss



Before

After

Blue Cross Week

BLUE FOR PETS CROSS

Seven days to change a life



Get involved in our biggest fundraising week of the year, **7-13 October.**

Bake sales, sponsored walks, car boot sales and more... there are so many ways to change a life during Blue Cross Week.

Find out more and get your free fundraising pack at bluecross.org.uk/bluecrossweek



BITESIZE STORIES

ALL THE LATEST NEWS FROM BLUE CROSS

Thanks to your support, we helped 40,574 sick, injured and homeless pets in 2018.

Thank you so much!

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 they're doing.

Vincent

Little Vincent was found all alone in a cardboard box in a car park, without any water. When he arrived at Blue Cross, we were shocked and distressed by what we found.

Not only was the seven-week-old West Highland Terrier sad, thirsty and filthy, his right ear was just a stump, with a wound showing a clean cut had been made across it. His tail was also missing, and we believe that both were deliberately chopped off.

It's lucky this tiny, precious boy arrived at our doors when he did. We cleaned him up, got him out of pain and taught him that humans were not to be feared. He thrived in foster care and soon found a home. Laura Smart, Blue Cross Animal Welfare Assistant at our Lewknor rehoming centre, said: "Vincent found a loving new home with a family who have had the breed before. Sadly their much-loved westie died two years ago at a grand age of 16.

"We're so happy he has got the happy ending he deserves, as the story could have had a very different ending."



Scar-face Ginny finds a home

A dog whose face is covered in scars due to her painful past has found a loving owner to look past her disfigured appearance.

Lurcher Ginny spent a heartbreaking 93 days in the care of our Lewknor rehoming centre in Oxfordshire earlier this year and was continually overlooked before finally finding a home.

Nobody knows the horrors that the stray might have been through previously, but with deep scars all over her face, our team suspected that she had been used for illegal hunting.

X-rays also revealed an old fracture in one of her legs – another sure sign of the neglect and pain she likely experienced before being abandoned in Wales.

Laura Smart, Animal Welfare Assistant, said: "We're not sure what kind of life she has had, but we have our suspicions that she was used for hunting due to the scars on her face.

"Sadly, she's not the most photogenic dog as a result and we were worried that was why she was missing out on interest from people. But she was such a loving, affectionate girl, so we couldn't be happier that she's found the home that she deserves."



DUTY CALLS FOR UNWANTED PRESENT PUP



A puppy who had a very sorry start is now set for life as a canine hero, thanks to Blue Cross.

Belgian shepherd Suzie was bought online as a gift, but she was not wanted and was given to a friend who too soon realised they were unable to provide the care a young puppy needed.

When they brought Suzie to our Victoria animal hospital in central London she was skinny and suffering from a bacterial infection which can make puppies weak very quickly.

Amanda Marrington, Animal Welfare Officer at Blue Cross Victoria, said: "Sadly it is all too common to see sickly puppies coming through our doors having been bought online. We believe Suzie was likely born in a puppy farm before being sold at the click of a button.

"The dire conditions in these places mean disease spreads quickly

there, and young puppies like Suzie are more at risk because of their immature immune systems."

After a couple of days of careful treatment, Suzie was given the all-clear to travel to our Bromsgrove rehoming centre in the West Midlands, where she continued to grow in strength.

Suzie still needed to remain in isolation at Bromsgrove, but she had much more freedom to get outside, sniff exciting things, and tear about the puppy play pen, which she thoroughly enjoyed. In just a couple of days, she had mastered sitting and learning to target.

Suzie is a Malinois, a type of Belgian shepherd famed for their appetite to work and high intellect – and no ordinary once-around-the-block-before-a-snooze-on-the-sofa kind of breed.

Even at just a couple of months old, Suzie's curious, watchful and steady character showed us that a working home would give this gorgeous girl the active and mentally challenging lifestyle she needed to reach her full potential.

Amy Howard, Veterinary Supervisor at Bromsgrove, said: "She is a beautiful girl, but she's so much more than a pretty face. Her mind is keen, she's highly intelligent and she needs a job to do."

Having impressed the top brass of a police dog training school, Suzie left Blue Cross to become the force's newest recruit. There she will undergo many months of training to get her ready for life protecting the public.

Everyone at Blue Cross is so excited to see what the future holds for Suzie, and we'll be following her journey through the training academy and hopefully one day soon, on to the beat.

TINY KITTEN FOUND ABANDONED IN SHOP

A six-week-old kitten found dumped in a homeware shop in south London has been found a loving home by Blue Cross.

Betty was found in the gardening section of Wilko in Mitcham Road, Tooting by a customer who alerted staff after hearing tiny miaows.

Marion Terry, 20, customer assistant at Wilko, said: "When we first found the kitten she was understandably frightened as it was a busy lunchtime in our store. I picked her up and put her in our staffroom. She was soon purring and fell asleep on my colleague's arm."

The kitten was taken to our rehoming

centre in Lewknor, Oxfordshire, where she was found to be in good health and was cared for until she was old enough to find a home.

Laura Smart, Blue Cross Animal Welfare Assistant, said: "Betty should have still been with her mum and litter mates. She must have had such a scare being dumped in a busy store surrounded by strange smells and noises.

"Every year we take in many unwanted litters of kittens and strays and it is important to know that very young cats and siblings are likely to produce a litter if not neutered."



Self-taught assistance dog wins Blue Cross Medal

A hero hound credited with saving both of her owners' lives has been awarded the 2019 Blue Cross Medal for extraordinary animal achievement.

Lily-Rose, an eight-year-old papillon cross, saved her owner, Jenny Deakin, from choking to death on a snack and alerted her when her mother, Tina, collapsed in the night after a heart attack.

She also performs essential tasks around the house like picking up items dropped by Tina, who struggles with arthritis, and helps with essential household chores including the laundry.

Jenny, of Brentford, west London, said: "I owe my life to Lily but it isn't what she has done for me that made me nominate her for the Blue Cross Medal, it is what she does for my mum on a daily basis. She takes care of her every day, gives my mum her independence and gives me peace of mind that I can leave for work every day."



Bereaved husband completes 'toughest footrace on earth' for Blue Cross

A husband has completed the challenge of a lifetime in memory of his beloved wife and Blue Cross veterinary nurse, who sadly passed away last year.

John Hunsley ran the Marathon des Sables, a six-day ultramarathon across the Sahara Desert in Morocco, as a tribute to his wife Janice, who died following a long and difficult illness in 2018.

Janice Hunsley had worked at Blue Cross Grimsby animal hospital for over 40 years and was a well-liked and respected member of the team and local community, having spent decades caring for pets in the area.

The Marathon des Sables is described as "the toughest footrace on earth" and

requires entrants to run the distance of about six regular marathons amid temperatures in the forties, all while carrying a backpack. And in completing this epic feat, John raised more than £1,500 for Blue Cross to continue Janice's legacy of helping pets.

Faith Woodcock, Grimsby animal hospital manager, said: "Everyone at Blue Cross was fully behind John and spurring him on. It's very fitting that the money John raised will go towards helping sick and injured pets, just as Janice did for so many years."



Neglected ponies nursed back to health from brink of death

Two foals found abandoned, emaciated and infected with a potentially-fatal disease are now thriving after Blue Cross saved their lives.

At just three months old, Cupcake and Gateau were suffering from strangles, a highly contagious, upper respiratory tract infection which causes painful abscesses around a horse's face and lymph nodes.

No one had sought the vital veterinary care they needed to fight the disease, and because they had been weaned at too young an age, their bodies had been left weak.

Laura Pearce, from the Blue Cross Horse Rehoming Team, said: "At just three months old, the foals should still have been with their mothers learning from their every move, but sadly this wasn't the case."

Both foals were utterly bewildered and frightened when they arrived at our Burford horse unit. They had been through so much in their short lives and didn't know where they were or what was happening to them. No one had ever shown them that people could be trusted, so our team had a long road ahead of them to introduce Cupcake and Gateau to human kindness.

Laura added: "The team have been doing all we can to restore Cupcake and Gateau's faith in humans by using food as a reward during training. By bringing them on with tasty treats when they've done a really good job, they are learning that humans are positive, and they are beginning to trust us."

Gateau has now found a home where she continues to grow, and the team hopes that her pal Cupcake won't be far behind in finding the fresh start she also deserves.



MIA-OUCH! Cat saved after swallowing needle and thread

A Blue Cross animal hospital team was shocked to find a needle embedded through the roof of a cat's mouth while treating her for eating a piece of sewing thread.

Two-year-old Bella was rushed to our Hammersmith hospital after her owner realised the piece of string was stuck, but had no idea just how close his beloved pet was to catastrophic injury.

Veterinary Nurse, Francesca Mingotto, said: "Bella is certainly one lucky cat. The fact that the needle got lodged in her palate rather than being swallowed could have saved her life.

"Her owner was lucky to have spotted her taking the thread and his quick actions to call us straight away meant no more damage was made. It could have been a very different story."

Cats typically love playing with dangly threads and ribbons, which can be extremely dangerous.

Blue Cross advises pet owners and visiting friends and family members to be extra vigilant when doing craft-work and sewing, because a piece of string is so very tempting to our felines.

Bella's owner, Christopher Keane, said: "My niece was just sitting at the table doing some sewing and Bella grabbed the thread before we could stop her. Once I realised the string was stuck, I called Blue Cross to get an appointment for the next morning.

"I couldn't believe it when I saw the X-ray, I'm so glad she's okay. We'll be much more alert around needles and thread from now on and keep her away when we're sewing."

The 4cm long needle had penetrated the roof of poor Bella's mouth, with the string still attached and she required surgery to remove it.

Bella has since been given the all-clear by our vets - and she is steering clear of sewing time.

WIN

£150 credit to spend on gifts and flowers on Bloom & Wild



Bloom & Wild is the UK's most-loved online florist. They invented letterbox flowers to make sending beautiful blooms easier and more delightful.

So their flowers are the freshest you'll find, they pick and send them in bud. This means you'll get to watch them bloom and enjoy their beauty for seven days (or more).

Their florists hand-pack every box with gorgeous seasonal stems. To protect them on their travels, delicate blooms are wrapped in petal protectors. And every bunch is sent with fun arranging tips! But the best bit? How posties can deliver them through the door when no one's home.

And as many flowers can pose a risk to our four-legged friends, Bloom & Wild has worked with Blue Cross vets to highlight a range of pet-friendly florals.

HOW TO ENTER

Answer the following question for your chance to win:

On page 15 we told you about three kittens rehomed by Blue Cross. What were their names?

(Please tick)

- Mary, Mango and Midge
 Mary, Mungo and Millie
 Mary, Mungo and Midge

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 11 October 2019

*Strictly one entry per household.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Deborah Reed, Julie Matthews and Dave Whitlock are the winners of three 12kg bags of Burns Duck & Potato food in our spring 2019 For Pets competition. Congratulations!

Blue Cross respects your privacy and will keep your information safe and secure and will only use it in accordance with our Privacy Policy. We will not sell, rent or share your personal data with other organisations for their marketing purposes. We may use your data for profiling purposes to make future communications more relevant to you. To see more about how we will use your information visit bluecross.org.uk/privacy

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

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Discover your local Blue Cross

Our animal hospitals

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

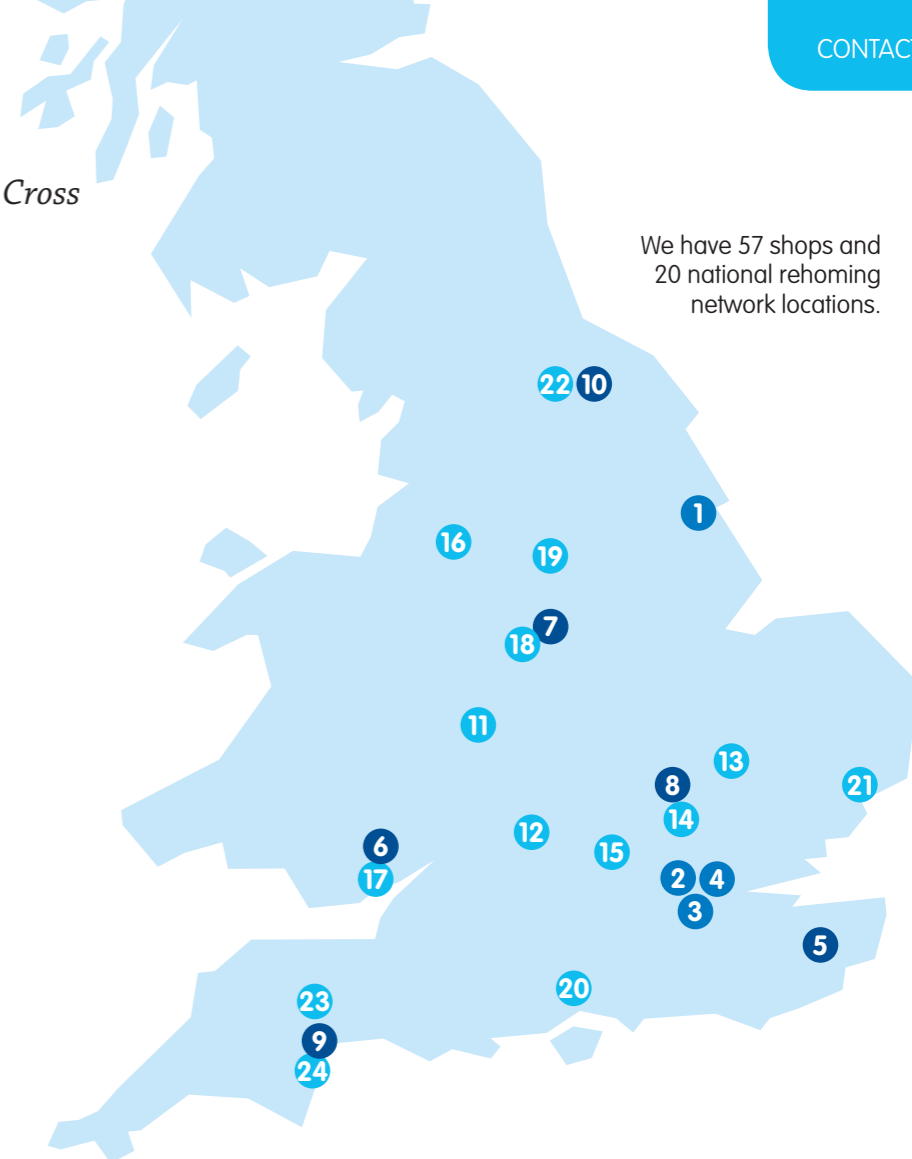
Our pet care clinics

- 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

We have 57 shops and 20 national rehoming network locations.



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

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

Write to us: Freepost BLUE CROSS FOR PETS

Book a free education talk

Animal welfare and responsible pet ownership workshops for children and young people in schools, youth groups and clubs.

Call: 0300 111 8950 **Visit:** 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



Pets change lives
We change theirs



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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B219

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.

